

PRY, SECONDARY EDUCATION

# Fewer countries achieve gender parity: report

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A NEW global gender report shows that fewer than half of countries - of which none are in sub-Saharan Africa - have achieved the goal of gender parity in both primary and secondary education, even though all were supposed to achieve it by 2005.

In countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and the United Republic of Tanzania, no gender gap exists in intake rates but fewer boys than girls survive to grade 5, indicating boys are relatively more likely to drop out. It shows 106 girls to every 100 boys in primary and 115 girls to 100 boys in secondary level education in Bangladesh.

'This is equivalent to having reached the goal in primary but not secondary. However, in primary, fewer boys than girls survive to grade 5 indicating boys are relatively more likely to drop out,' Kate Redman, communications and advocacy specialist, EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO said.

Compiled by Unesco's EFA

(Education for All) Global Monitoring Report for International Day of the Girl Child, the report released globally on Monday says the gender gaps in secondary education have emerged unlike in 1999, Redman added.

Quoting the report the specialist also said in Bangladesh, while legislation limits the age of marriage to 18, the law allows for exceptions, and the prevalence of child marriage, an estimated 66 percent, is among the highest in the world.

Bangladesh brought in various measures to try and even up the balance, including an acclaimed secondary school stipend programme for rural girls, introduced in 1991, increased girls' enrolment but appeared to disproportionately benefit girls from wealthier, landowning households, said the report.

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And in Bangladesh, where stipends for girls have driven enormous growth in secondary school enrolment, the government's action a decade earlier to bring Islamic schools into the formal education sector increased the availability of places.

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The government has made efforts to include training on gender in formal teacher

education policy and programmes.

A 12-month certificate of education course for teachers in Bangladesh includes a unit on gender issues, which gives teachers ways to explore their own practices and develop more inclusive approaches and a large education initiative in the country had explicit components aimed at eliminating gender bias from curricula and/or textbooks.

Irina Bokova, the director general of UNESCO, said educating a girl educates a nation and it unleashes a ripple effect that changes the world unmistakably for the better. 'We have recently set ourselves a new ambitious agenda to achieve a sustainable future. Success in this endeavor is simply not possible without educated, empowered girls, young women and mothers.'

The report, released jointly by the GMR and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, shows that although the goal has not been met by all, progress towards gender parity is one of the biggest education success stories since 2000.