The Limits to Growth of Non-Government Private Schooling in Sub Saharan Africa

Keith M. Lewin

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List of Acronyms

DHS	Domestic Household Survey
EFA	Education for All
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER1	Gross Enrolment Rates at primary school
GER2	Gross Enrolment Rates at secondary school
GNP	Gross National Product
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TSh	Tanzanian Shillings
USD	U.S. Dollar
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
VAT	Value-added Tax

Acknowledgements

Preface

This paper is one of a series of CREATE publications exploring different aspects of the role non-government providers may play in supporting progress towards Education for All. The paper considers the limits to growth of the unsubsidised private sector which depends for its income on fees and contributions from households. The demographic and income distribution characteristics of many low income countries preclude truly private provision reaching out to the poorest sections of the community without subsidy. In general households much below the 20th percentile of income distribution are unlikely to be able to afford private secondary schooling and will have difficulties supporting private primary schools. Though the private sector can make useful contributions to EFA it is unlikely to be the "provider of last resort" for the poorest. It may or may not be equitable and efficient to develop partnerships with private providers committed to extending access. If so the conditions that surround these and the distribution of benefits need careful consideration, especially where the main opportunity cost may be the diversion of subsidies from extending the reach of the public school system.

Summary

There is a lively debate about the extent to which private providers of educational services can contribute to the achievement of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. There is evidence that in some poor countries private provision has been growing especially at the secondary level. The reasons for this are not simple but include excess demand (more applicants than places), differentiated demand (preference for alternatives to existing public schools), and the opportunities created for entrepreneurs by newly liberalised regulatory frameworks for educational services. This paper identifies a range of constraints and contextual realities that will shape future development. The first section draws attention to the diversity of non-government private provision and some fundamental issues that shape its likely contribution to enhanced access to schooling. Second, estimates are presented of the numbers of children currently out of school and their location in Sub-Saharan Africa. Third, data is discussed which illustrates the extent to which exclusion is related to wealth, location and gender, focusing on economic constraints. Fourth, costs related to teachers are modelled to indicate likely minimum operating costs for unsubsidised schooling. Fifth, an analysis is offered of the underlying demographic realities of expanded enrolment to reinforce the need to understand the magnitude of the task of achieving the MDGs and the need to identify mechanisms that expand services to large numbers of school-age children drawn from the poorest households. Finally some concluding remarks draw together the arguments.

The Limits to Growth of Non-Government Private Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa[1]

1. Introduction

The contribution private non-government schooling can make to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to education is a matter of widespread debate[2]. Non-government schooling has been growing in many of the poorest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. This growth has been encouraged by state failures in providing greatly increased access to schooling at acceptable levels of quality as a result of Education for All (EFA) programmes, increased opting-out of public education by those who can afford to pay, and by liberalised regulatory frameworks that allow non-government providers to offer educational services. These developments have led some to argue that non-government providers in general, and private providers in particular, offer opportunities to extend access to un-served groups and increase the rate of progress towards universal levels of enrolment in primary and secondary schools.

This paper discusses how plausible these arguments are and identifies a range of constraints and contextual realities that will shape future development. It is organised in six sections. First, attention is drawn to the diversity of non-government private provision and some fundamental issues that shape its possible contribution to enhanced access to schooling. Second estimates are presented of the numbers of children currently out of school and their location. Third, data is discussed which illustrates the extent to which exclusion is related to wealth, location and gender, focusing on economic constraints. Fourth, costs related to teachers are modelled to indicate likely minimum operating costs for unsubsidised schooling. Fifth, an analysis is offered of the underlying demographic realities of expanded enrolment to reinforce the need to understand the magnitude of the task of achieving the MDGs and the need to identify mechanisms that expand services to large numbers of school-age children drawn from the poorest households. Finally some concluding remarks draw together the arguments.

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[1] This paper is published as a Chapter 3 in: Walford, G and Srivastava, P. (2006) 'Private Schools in Developing Countries'. Symposium Books.
[2] See for example: James 1991; Colclough with Lewin 1993; Lockheed and Jimenez, 1994; Colclough, 1996; Bray 1996; Crouch 1998; Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004; Kiernan et al 2000; Lewin and Caillods 2001; Sayed and Rose 2001; Rose 2006; and Tooley 2001, 2004.

2. Mapping the Territory

Non-government school provision comes in many forms (Kitaev, 1999; Lewin and Sayed, 2005). Some provision is community based and secular, much is faith based and linked to established or fringe groups who share common religious convictions. Some is grant-aided and some is financially self supporting. Some is sponsored by enterprises (e.g. commercial farms, mines, industrial organisations), and some receives external subsidy from parent organisations. There are a myriad of different patterns of beneficial ownership and accountability which range across registered non-government organisations, legally constituted businesses, informally organised associations, and individually or family owned schools. Some pay taxes, others don't. Some are for profit and some declare non-profit status.

The non-government sector is thus not a single entity, but very diverse. The contribution that different types of non-government provision may make to greater access is therefore very varied. Discussion of the roles non-government providers can play in extending access are thus not reducible to crude dichotomies between public and private, or states and markets. Manifestly some non-government providers can and do provide valued services. Private contributions to public schooling can support expanded access. Few doubt that schools should be in partnership with the communities they serve, and that complementary partnerships can and should exist, and that individual and collective contributions to public services can be beneficial.

However, depending on non-government service providers in general, or truly private schooling in particular, to achieve EFA targets or MDGs in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), is a flawed proposition for several reasons. This is especially so if wholly private and unsubsidised providers are considered. To simplify the arguments it is this kind of provision that is the focus of this paper.

First primary schooling is a universal right – only States can make a reality of the delivery rights to populations, especially those marginalized by poverty. Universal free primary education – the EFA commitment – is essentially a state responsibility. The for-profit private sector has no essential interest delivering free services, and no obligation to provide education to the poor and ultra poor, HIV orphans, excluded girls and those with special needs. Not-for-profit providers may address the needs of these excluded groups, but can only do so on a national scale with subsidies from public or quasi-public sources. As soon as the bulk of costs are met through subsidy such provision is public from a resource point of view, though the management of delivery may be sub-contracted to publicly accountable community or private entities.

Rights based approaches to educational access depend on the existence of a "provider of last resort". It is States that have made commitments to EFA and the MDGs, it is States that have the responsibilities to protect minorities, promote equity, and diminish exclusion, and it is States (acting with or without external support), that have the most capacity to so do, especially in poor countries. Where they fail there is no simple "Stateless" solution to delivering human rights commitments to educational access, especially to the most marginalised.

Second, unsubsidised providers cannot serve the poor and the poorest if they depend on revenue from the communities they serve. This is a demographic and economic inevitability. It is determined by high dependency rates (simply the ratio of income earning adults to dependent school age children); skewed household income distribution whereby 20% of households may receive more than 60% of income; labour market rates for qualified teachers; and scarcity of domestic capital and corporate sponsors.

It is essential to recognise that there are important asymmetries between most countries in SSA and rich countries with private non-government fee paying schooling. This means that whatever the arguments are for non-government private schooling in rich countries they cannot be seamlessly transferred to low income SSA. The 0-14 year-old age dependency rates are between 90% and 100% in Uganda, Malawi, and Tanzania[3] and average 85% for SSA as a whole. In the UK, USA and Australia they are 30%, 32% and 34% respectively (UIS, 2005). The ratio of school-age children to the number in the work force is therefore very different. The availability of income to support fees is thus much more limited. Moreover the relationship between typical teachers' salaries and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is also very different. In Malawi secondary teacher salaries are more than six times GDP per capita; in the UK they are about the same as GDP per capita. And finally it is important to remember that domestic revenue (which supports public expenditure) often accounts for less than 15% of GDP in SSA, whilst in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) it averages closer to 40%[4]. Taken together these demographic and cost factors limit the expansion of unsubsidised schooling supported by fees paid from household income.

Third, greater dependence on non-government providers of educational services often presumes that such a strategy would lead to greater efficiency, lower cost, and higher quality and relevance, arising from greater competition and accountability. Though it is true that these potential benefits of marketisation of educational services can be useful in encouraging efficient and effective service provision, this can only be the case where a wide range of conditions are satisfied. These include informed choice, transparent accountability, adequate regulation, and effective legal frameworks. In much of SSA these conditions are not met. Those currently excluded may have little or no choice of school to attend for reasons of location or income; public accountability is often weak reflecting local power structures and the interests of providers rather than consumers; regulation is hampered by lack of capacity, record keeping and procedures; and legal redress for malpractice and misrepresentation fragile and inaccessible especially to the poor. Unplanned and uncoordinated growth in service provision is much more likely to be unequally distributed, concentrated in economically favoured areas, and wasteful of scarce resources, than planned growth which links school location to demographic needs, offers economies of scale from shared services (e.g. teacher training, curriculum development), and has the capacity to promote equity and meet special needs.

It may be significant that no OECD country or rapidly developing country (e.g. those in East Asia) has depended on non-government providers to universalise access to basic education. There are many obvious reasons – basic education is a public good with a range of externalities; modernising elites see the value of democratising access which

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[3] The proportion of 0-14 year-olds compared to the population of 15-64 years old.
[4] The detailed implications of this are beyond the scope of this paper. Simply put low rates of revenue collection constrain public finance for educational development; they are not a reason to increase dependence on private financing especially in the delivery of services to the poorest.

reduces inequalities and enhances national capabilities; and it is widely believed that poverty is caused and perpetuated by lack of access to education. In much of SSA education policy seeks to promote national identity to overcome the social divisions inherited by post-colonial States composed of disparate groups in competition and sometimes in conflict with each other. It is difficult to see how this goal can be achieved without predominantly public provision of basic education within a common curricula framework, without a developmental national teaching service, and without the publicly supported physical provision of school buildings, textbooks and other facilities in areas where household incomes are less than a dollar a day.

2.1 Out of School Children and Enrolment Rates

Current estimates suggest there are about 108 million primary age children in Sub Saharan Africa of whom about 91 million are enrolled. At secondary level there are 92 million children and about 25 million enrolled[5]. This means that at a minimum 17 million children of primary school age and 67 million of secondary school age children are out of school. In reality the numbers are much greater since enrolment figures include large numbers of over age pupils and repeaters. Enrolment estimates also fail to capture those who may be registered but not attending. Though reliable estimates of those not attending school across SSA are not available, it is reasonable to conclude that more than 25 million in the primary age group and 75 million of secondary age children are excluded. If private schooling is to have an impact on the achievement of EFA and the MDGs then it must provide access to these children.

Table 1 shows numbers out of school by country. DR Congo, Ethiopia, UR Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and Niger all have more than a million not enrolled in primary school. These countries account for nearly 70% of the total number of the unenrolled[6], indicating that numerically the problem of access in SSA is very skewed towards a few countries. These are amongst the poorest in SSA with average GDP per Capita of about 300 USD. The countries towards the lower part of Table 1 appear to have a surplus of primary school places over the number of primary school age children and thus Gross Enrolment Rates over 100%. This arises because of over age enrolment and repetition. It does not mean that all school age children in these countries are actually enrolled.

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[5] UNESCO Institute of Statistics data 2005 relating to 2002
[6] Considering only those countries where the age group is larger than the number enrolled

Table 1 Sub Saharan Africa – primary and secondary age group, and enrolments ('000)

	Primary age group	Enrolled	Difference	Secondary age group	Enrolled	Difference
D.R. Congo	8518	4012	4506	7322	1464	5858
Ethiopia	11285	7213	4072	9440	1786	7655
U R Tanzania	6979	4845	2134	5086	323	4763
B. Faso	2127	927	1200	2062	218	1844
Niger	1900	761	1139	1783	124	1659
Mali	2151	1227	924	1801	312	1490
Nigeria	20093	19385	708	17328	6313	11014
Ghana	3177	2586	591	2979	1151	1828
Côte d'Ivoire	2635	2116	519	2891	620	2271
Zambia	2063	1626	437	1261	345	916
Senegal	1590	1197	393	1601	306	1295
Angola	1512	1125	387	2241	242	1999
Chad	1385	1016	369	1316	188	1128
Burundi	1151	817	334	1183	119	1063
Guinea	1294	998	296	1289	301	988
Kenya	6074	5828	246	4222	1362	2860
Eritrea	546	330	216	575	159	415
CAR	621	411	210	617	66	551
Sierra Leone	729	554	175	590	134	455
Congo	614	525	89	589	164	424
G-Bissau	230	150	80	149	26	124
Gambia	204	161	43	176	60	117
Mozambique	2585	2556	29	3128	476	2652
Liberia	524	496	28	401	85	316
Zimbabwe	2561	2535	26	2057	828	1229
Comoros	116	104	12	124	38	85
Seychelles	11	10	0	7	8	-1
Swaziland	211	212	-1	138	62	77
S T+Principe	23	29	-6	19	7	11
Mauritius	126	134	-8	138	100	38
Botswana	319	329	-10	218	153	65
Eq. Guinea	62	78	-16	71	20	52
Cape Verde	73	90	-17	71	48	23
Namibia	376	398	-22	221	138	83
Benin	1107	1153	-46	1131	284	848
Gabon	210	282	-72	212	105	107
Lesotho	334	415	-81	237	81	156
Madagascar	2311	2408	-97	2721	436	2284
Cameroon	2570	2742	-172	2627	669	1958
Togo	787	978	-191	782	335	447
Rwanda	1312	1535	-223	1174	167	1007
South Africa	7052	7413	-361	4917	4109	808
Malawi	1952	2846	-894	1000	176	824
Uganda	5059	6901	-1842	3487	656	2831
Somalia	1772			1073		
	108331	91454	15104	92455	24764	66617

Source: UIS, 2005: based on 2002 data

Figure 1 shows Gross Enrolment Rates at primary (GER1) and secondary (GER2) level by country. Figure 2 shows GERs at lower and upper secondary. The average[7] GER1 for SSA is now about 93% indicating that in many countries there are nearly enough places for universal enrolment if repetition rates and overage enrolment are reduced to low levels. Secondary gross enrolment rates average about 25% overall and about 40% at lower secondary[8]. Countries which have high values of GER1 and GER2 have little immediate need to increase the quantity of private schooling to enhance enrolment rates. Those with the lowest enrolment rates are characteristically poorer with typically more than half of all households existing on less than a dollar a day and as many as 80% on less than two dollars a day. EFA and the MDGs effectively commit States to universal free primary education implying that fee paying private schooling at this level is elective for those who can afford to pay, not a method for expanding access to the poorest. Most SSA countries retain fee paying secondary schooling in which participation is heavily influenced by household income. Secondary enrolment rates are clearly lowest in the poorest countries (see Figure 3). Richer SSA countries with higher enrolment rates (e.g. Namibia, Botswana, South Africa) all have predominantly public provision at primary and secondary level with a small private sector largely addressing the needs of the relatively wealthy (Akyeampong, 2005; Bennell, Bulwani and Musikanga, 2005; Debourou et al, 2005; Lewin, 2006).

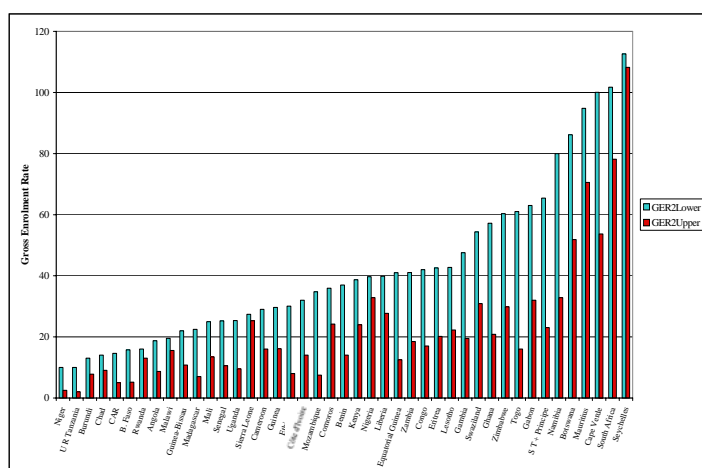**Figure 1 Gross enrolment rates at primary and secondary by country**
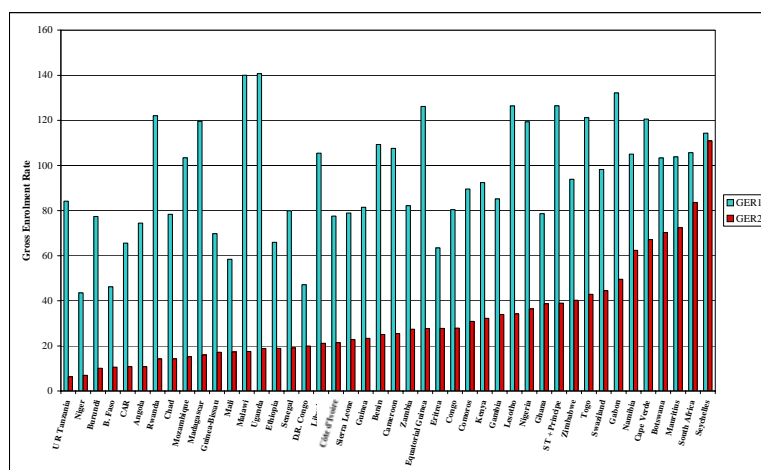
Source: UIS, 2005

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[7] Unweighted average of available data
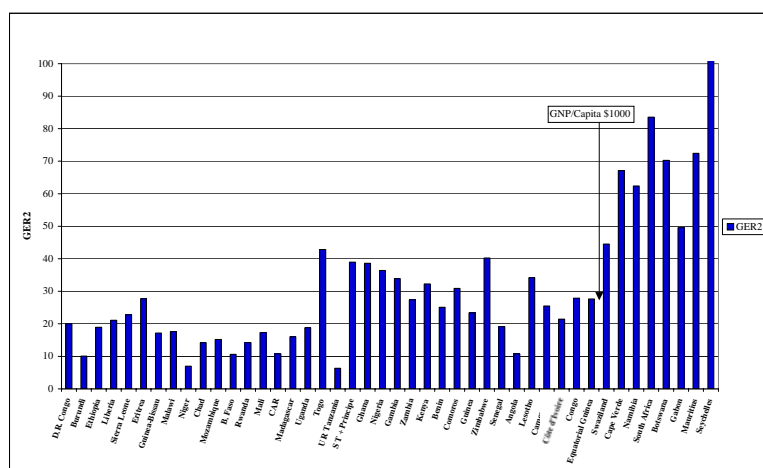[8] Unweighted average of available data

Figure 2 Gross enrolment rates at lower and upper secondary by country

Source: UIS, 2005

Figure 3 Gross enrolment rate at secondary by countries ranked by GNP per capita

Source: UIS, 2005.

UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) estimates that less than 10% of primary and about 13% of secondary education in SSA is privately provided (UNESCO, 2005). Mingat (2004) estimates that 23% (lower secondary) and 29% (upper secondary) is privately financed in a sample of 17 low income SSA countries[9]. Some SSA countries have very little private secondary schooling (e.g. less than 5% in Botswana and South Africa) and others much higher levels (e.g. Uganda and Tanzania over 40%) coupled with fairly low enrolment rates. However non-government private schools are poorly defined and documented and enrolment data is widely incomplete. UIS estimates of private schooling include both publicly financed but privately owned schools (e.g. Mauritius, Lesotho), and those that are wholly private (e.g. Uganda, Ghana).

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[9] In neither case is it clear what definition of private is being used. This may explain the differences in estimates.

Unknown but significant numbers of private schools are unregistered (e.g. in Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, and Rwanda). This is by default (inadequate and insufficient capacity to register, for example, in 2002 there were two officers responsible for the registration of over 2000 private schools in Uganda) or by design (avoidance of registration to evade taxes and meet minimum requirements for registration, for example, in Malawi in 2002 about 50% of private secondary schools captured in a recent survey were unregistered (Lewin and Sayed, 2005) and were overwhelmingly urban or peri-urban, small, household based, and casually staffed). There is plenty of scope for uncertainty about the numbers enrolled in these schools, especially where attendance records are not kept and enrolments fluctuate widely with the availability of cash to pay fees. Analysis of examination entries provides some indication of the numbers completing an educational cycle since most who do will wish to be entered for public examinations. In Uganda and Malawi this leads to the conclusion that there are not large numbers enrolled that are invisible to the national statistical data base, though undoubtedly there are some.

Some simple conclusions are that in the majority of SSA countries there are not yet enough school places to enrol all school age children at primary level, and that many more are excluded from lower secondary schooling than primary. Secondary enrolments in lower income SSA countries are very low though lower secondary is increasingly seen as part of basic education and EFA. If non-government private schooling is to have much impact on improved access for those currently excluded then it must provide access at primary level to the "last 20%" who are likely to be from poorest sections of the population. Since the numbers excluded at secondary level are much greater on average those who are out of school are likely to include children from households with higher levels of income. This means there may be some scope for more private secondary enrolment in some SSA countries. However quality secondary schooling in SSA is often five times more expensive per pupil than primary schooling and most public systems have substantial private direct costs to households. Expanding fee paying secondary schooling has equity implications which may result in greater differentiation and polarisation of access than currently exists (Adea-Mensah 2000). Inevitably poor communities with the least resources and lowest enrolments will have most difficulty in supporting unsubsidised schooling.

2.2 Participation, Wealth, Location and Gender

The characteristics of the "last 20%" excluded from primary, and the greater numbers excluded from secondary are predictable. Participation by grade level in SSA is heavily skewed by household income, location and gender. Demographic and Household Survey (DHS) data from 23 SSA countries[10] shows that those excluded are disproportionately poor, rural and female. For the 15-19 year old populations, over 93%[11] of males from the richest 20% of households completed grade 1 but only 50% of girls from the poorest 40% of households did so[12]. About 50% of rich boys had completed grade 7 but only 4% of poor girls. Over 90% of urban boys completed grade 1, but only 67% of rural girls. About

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[10] DHS census dates vary but most are from the period 1998-2003.

[11] Median values are used across the SSA data set. These indicate the proportions completing a grade in the 15-19 year old age group at the time of the census.

[12] Household income was divided into the top 20%, the middle 40% and the poorest 40%. This is appropriate given the shape of the income distribution curve with small number of households receiving the majority of household income.

50% or urban boys completed grade 7 but only 7% of rural girls (see Figures 4 and 5)[13]. Those not enrolled at primary are almost certainly from households with incomes of less than a dollar a day. At secondary level they include a majority from households receiving less than two dollars a day.

Figure 4 Highest grade reached by wealth and gender – SSA
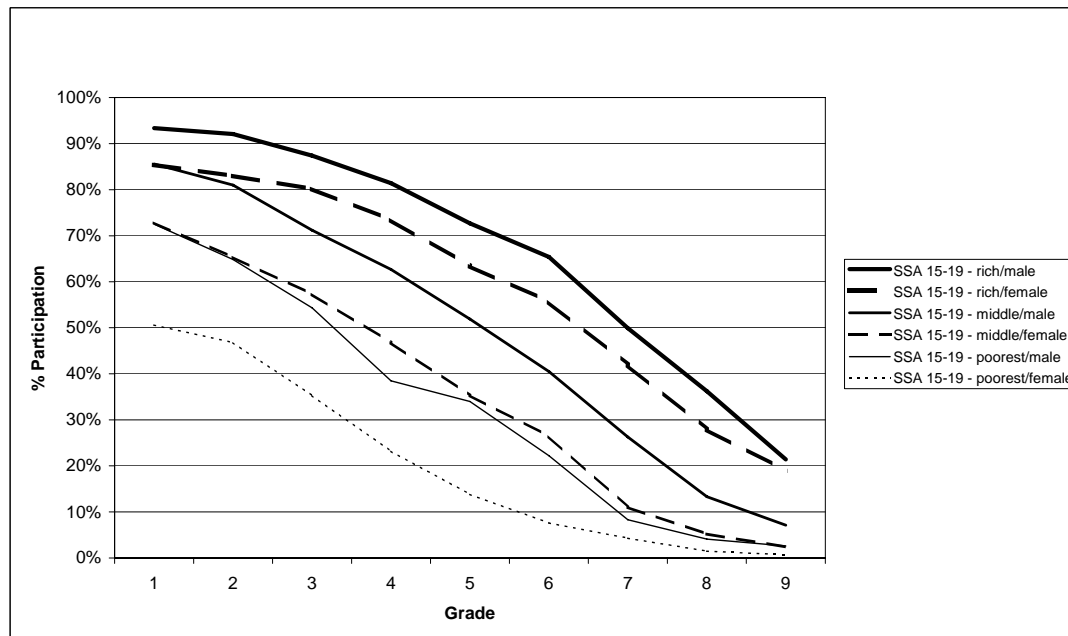
Source: Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), various

Figure 5 Highest grade reached by location and gender - SSA
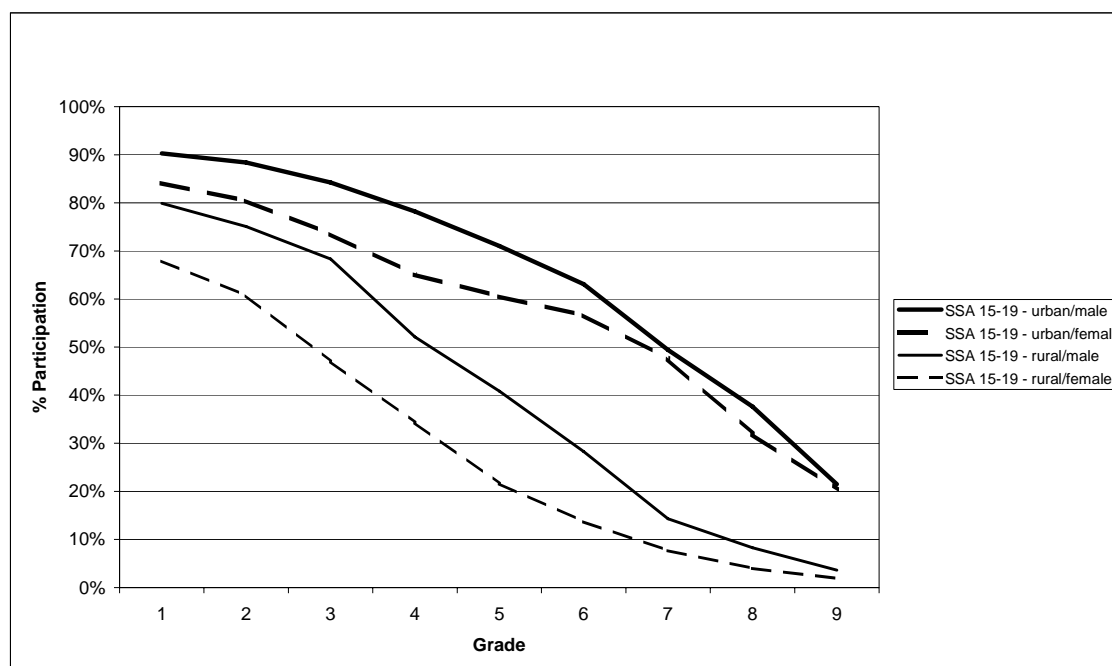
Source: Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), various.

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[13] These aggregates conceal radically different patterns in different countries - see Lewin 2006 for more detailed disaggregation of patterns of participation within countries.

Exclusion as a result of location is largely a physical problem that can in principle be greatly reduced by increasing the supply of schools in unserved areas. Gendered exclusion is embedded in socio-cultural practices in and out of school that are susceptible to purposeful interventions and changed incentives to enrol girls. Influencing both these factors is exclusion related to low household income and inability to pay the direct and indirect cost of schooling. This needs further discussion. The costs to households can be substantial even for "free" primary schooling. They are widely exclusionary at secondary level in SSA both because fee paying is common and because operating costs of secondary schools in SSA can be five or more times greater than those of primary schools. Most household surveys of expenditure in SSA show that educational expenditures are below 10% of total household income, and often below 5% amongst the poorest. These levels are widely insufficient to meet the costs of schooling for those in the lowest quintiles of household income, especially where income distribution is heavily skewed towards the wealthy.

Data on incomes, expenditure, and schooling costs at secondary level illuminates the issues that costs raise[14]. A recent analysis in Tanzania suggests that households spend at most about 5% of income on average on educational expenditures (National Bureau of Statistics, 2002:42)[15]. The poorest spend less than middle income households as a proportion of their income, since other basic needs take priority.

Most private schooling in Tanzania is at secondary level where both public and private schools charge fees. Secondary school direct private costs averaged TSh 154,000 (128 USD) a year in 2000 or about TSh 13,000 a month across all types of school. In 2003 government schools charged TSh 70,000 for boarding and TSh 40,000 for day schools a year (Ministry of Education: 2001:102),. In addition other fees and contributions totalled at least TSh 56,000 excluding costs of privately purchased books, travel etc. The total cost to households of enrolling a child in a government school is therefore between Tsh 96,000 and TSh 126,000 a year. Typical private schools appear to charge fees of about TSh 300,000 a year per student in Dar es Salaam (Lewin, 2003). Low cost private schools and dwelling house schools may well charge less than government schools but no data are available on these institutions many of which are of very poor quality.

The monthly costs to households of public secondary schooling are therefore between TSh 8,000 and TSh 10,500. Private schools average about TSh 25,000. Per capita monthly expenditure in Dar es Salaam averaged TSh 24,000 and TSh 3,300 for the richest and poorest quintiles. In rural areas the figures were TSh17,800 and TSh 3,000 in 2001 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2002:86). It is clear that households in the highest quintile of income would have to allocate a third or more of per capita expenditure to support one child at a public day school, and the equivalent of their average per capita income for a private school. Few outside the highest income quintile would therefore be able to participate without subsidy. Non-government private secondary schools are highly concentrated in just three districts in Tanzania and few are located in poorer regions

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[14] Household survey data is generally the best method of profiling consumption expenditure despite its well known limitations

[15] 5% may seem low to some readers. It is what the household survey indicates and is consistent with typical allocations across different countries. Even if this were raised to 10%-15% it would not substantially change the nature of the problem.

(Figure 6). Though their performance is often superior, costs constrain access (Lasibille and Tan, 2000)

**Figure 6 Public and non-government enrolments in Tanzania Form 1-4**
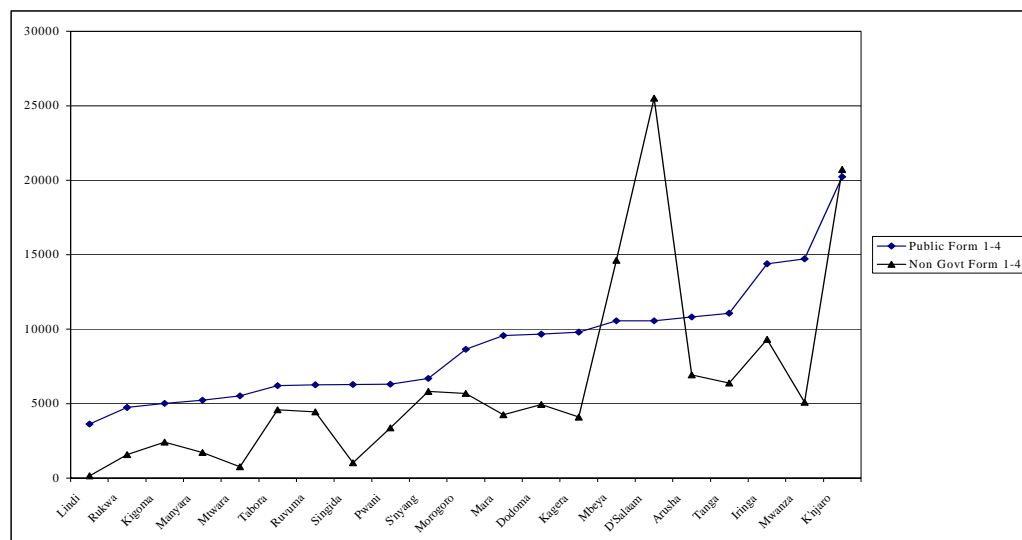
Source: Ministry of Education EMIS database, Dar es Salaam, 2004.

In Uganda public primary schooling is fee-free. Most costs (over 70%) in public secondary schools are already borne privately by parents and guardians over and above the public contributions (predominantly to salaries and capitation). The Uganda Household Survey (2001) suggests that 60% of household income is below USh 100,000 per month (55 USD) and only 1% is above USh 200,000 (110 USD)[16]. Between 5% and 10% of household expenditure is allocated to education. Average household size suggests that typically there are two children of school going age, and more in poor families. Mean annual expenditure per student at secondary level was over USh 500,000 in urban areas and USh 300,000 in rural areas. To support one child at these levels in rural schools would require 25% of the household income of those below USh 100,000 per month, and over 40% if the enrolment was in an urban school. It is evident that there is a limit to the capacity to pay the direct costs of schooling that is rapidly being approached. The private sector cannot grow much further at the fee levels it charges; nor can public secondary school enrolment unless its direct costs to households are reduced (Lewin, 2002).

In South Africa 80% of households receive income below 50,000 Rands (4500 USD) (Figure 7) per year. If as much as 10% of this is allocated to education expenditure this amounts to no more than 5000 Rands (450 USD) a year, and considerably less for most households. The cost of a secondary school place in Gauteng was estimated to be about 4,000 Rands (360 USD) in 2002 for normal public schools. Most private schools charge considerably more than this and provide places for the affluent. Those that are lower cost are subsidised. If they were not, those much outside the top 20% of household income could not afford to afford private schooling.

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[16] 1 USD = USh 1800

Figure 7 Income distribution in South Africa
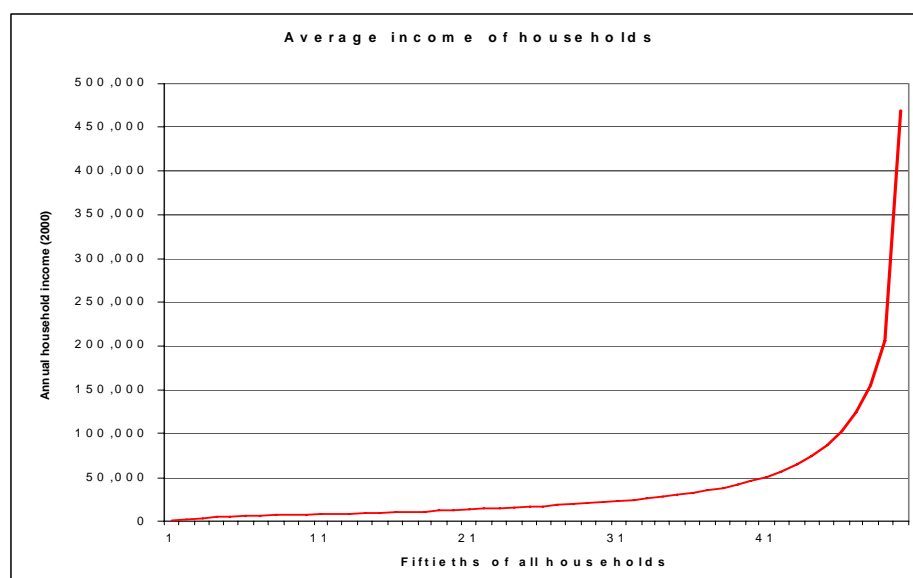
Source: Department of Education, South Africa, 2005

In sum, non-government private schools which are not subsidised have minimum operating costs which determine fee levels. The main costs, especially in low fee schools lie in teachers' salaries. When fee levels and other costs are related to household survey data, many families will be excluded from poverty by participation, especially at secondary level in full cost non-government schools. In much of SSA the effect is so strong that few outside the richest 25% of households can afford to participate. This is clearly the case in Benin, Ghana, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda (Lewin, 2006). Non-government schools that access the poor can only do so if they are subsidised, even when they minimise overheads to close to zero and pay teachers much less than in government schools, with unknown consequences for quality. Some schools receive contributions from NGOs and from faith-based communities. The point is that there are limits of affordability to participation determined by costs which will limit effective demand for non-government providers. For-profit organisations will not operate at a loss. Not-for-profit organisations are unlikely to offer schooling opportunities on a national level to large numbers without national or international subsidy. This raises issues of accessibility, quality assurance, equity and the opportunity costs of diverting public finance to private beneficial owners.

2.3 Teacher Salaries and School Cost Per Child

The economics of expanded access to schooling are closely related to the costs of salaries for teachers which in most SSA systems account for the bulk of recurrent expenditure as noted above[17]. These determine the largest part of the minimum costs at which private non government schools can operate without subsidy. There are various estimates of the costs of teachers' salaries across SSA countries. Table 2 shows estimates by Mingat (2004) for teachers salaries as a percentage of GDP at different levels across 17 low

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[17] This is true for all systems operating day schooling. Boarding schools, which are common in some SSA countries at secondary level, can have large non-teaching and non-salary expenditure. Expansion of access to near universal levels will reduce the proportion of locations where boarding is essential. Elective boarding could then become subject to cost recovery from those able and willing to pay.

income SSA countries. This indicates that on average unit costs are about three times greater than primary at lower secondary level and six times at upper secondary. The reasons lie in a combination of lower pupil teacher ratios, higher salary costs, boarding subsidies, and larger numbers of non-teaching support staff. Non-teaching costs at secondary level can account for more as much as 40% of total cost per pupil.

Table 2 Unit costs for different educational levels

			Teacher salaries (per capita GDP)	% Recurrent spending for other than teachers	Unit costs (% per capita GDP)
Primary	Sector Studies**	Average	**4.6**	**27.4**	**11.4**
		Variation	[2.4 – 6.8]	[15-43]	[4-20]
First secondary cycle	Sector Studies**	Average	**6.6**	**37.4**	**31.2**
		Variation	[3.6 – 13.1]	[24-56]	[13-64]
Second secondary cycle	Sector Studies**	Average	**9.3**	**39.5**	**63.4**
		Variation	[3.8 – 19.8]	[18-53]	[22-157]

Source: Mingat, 2004

If these actual ratios of teachers salary costs to GDP are used to model the fee levels necessary to support the salary costs of private education in a hypothetical SSA country the result can be seen in Table 3[18]. In the poorest countries fees of 61 USD and 160 USD would need to be levied to cover costs. Teachers' salary costs would be 85% of this at primary and 69% at lower secondary with other costs (e.g. ancillary staff, learning materials, equipment and furniture etc.) making up the difference. From the analysis of household income above it is clear that these levels of fees would exclude the great majority of children from poor households.

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[18] All assumptions derived from SSA data sets to determine typical values

Table 3 Fee costs needed to pay teachers salaries in private schools in SSA

Scenario 1 - SSA Typical Data	Primary	Lower Sec	Upper Sec	Other Ed. Exp
Pupil Teacher Ratio	44	30	20	
Teacher salaries /GDP/capita	4.6	6.6	9.3	
Non teaching salaries/GDP/capita	0.4	1.5	2.7	
Non salary expenditure/GDP/capita	0.4	1.5	2.7	
Teacher salaries as % of total recurrent	85%	69%	63%	
Total unit cost % GDP /cap	12%	32%	74%	
School age pop as % total pop	18%	9%	7%	
% school age pop enrolled (GER)	85%	26%	13%	

GNP per Capita (USD) Fees needed at different levels of GNP per capita

|	Primary	Lower Sec	Upper Sec
500	61	160	368
1000	123	320	735
1500	184	480	1103
2000	245	640	1470

The argument can of course be made that these typical teacher salary levels are too high and that costs per pupil could be reduced by either increasing pupil teacher ratios or by lowering salary rates. The former would need increases in pupil teacher ratios well above the 44:1 modelled for primary and 30:1 at lower secondary to make much difference to costs. There would seem little scope for this at primary level but some at lower secondary. The latter can only be judged in the context of particular labour markets for teachers. Most SSA countries have shortages of teachers and reducing wage rates might damage both recruitment and motivation. This is especially so in relation to rural areas and difficult postings which are those most likely to be in places that reach out to the "last 20%". Even if salaries could be reduced to 3.5 times GDP per capita viable schools with normal staffing practices would still need to charge fees in the order of 50 USD or more which would still be double or more the affordable limits of those in dollar a day poverty.

2.4 Demography and the EFA Challenge

Achieving and sustaining higher rates of participation in primary and secondary schooling in SSA is a challenge which is partly determined by demographic realities. Demographic transition to low growth has occurred in some SSA countries (Seychelles, Mauritius) but high growth has remained in others (Eritrea, Uganda). Most countries have high dependency rates that are only reducing slowly. In some case HIV/AIDS is responsible for exacerbating already high dependency rates.

Figure 8 shows data on the rate of growth of the school age cohort in different SSA countries. It indicates that the number of school age children is growing on average at about 2% with a variation of between minus 1.4% to over 5%. The school age population represents different proportions of the total population in different countries from below 20% to nearly 40% (Figure 9).

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Figure 8 School age population growth rates
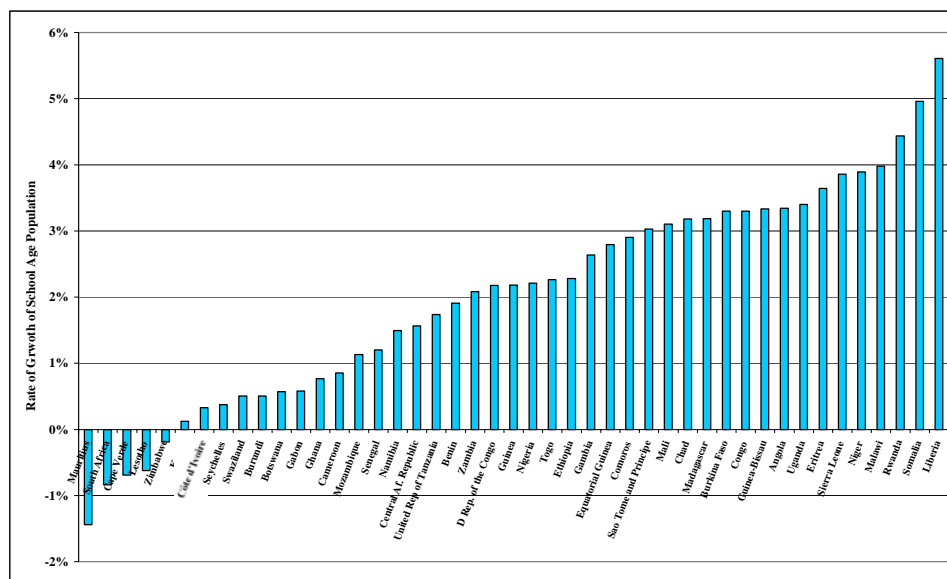
Source: UIS, 2005.

Figure 9 Percentage of school age children in the population (primary and secondary)
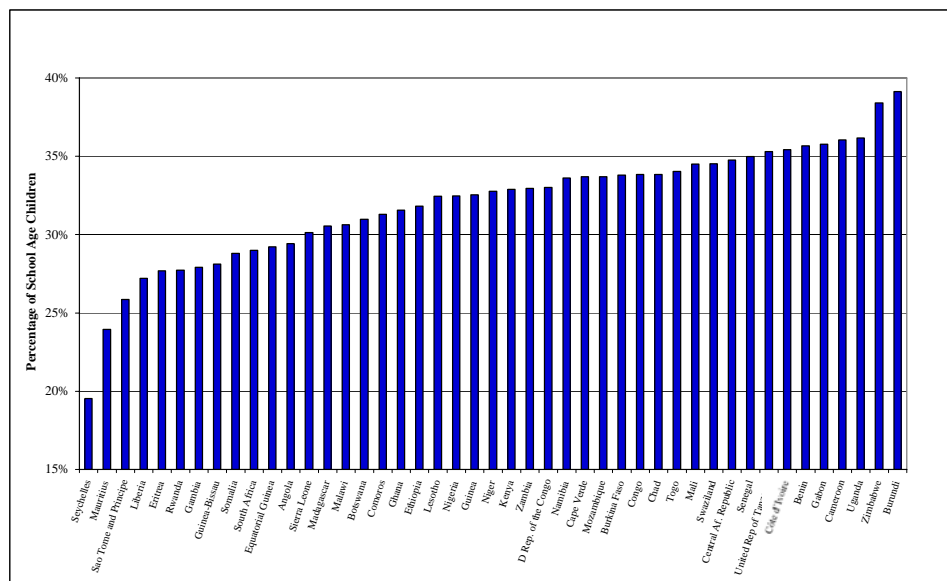
Source: UIS, 2005.

The growth rates for the primary school entry age group have been used to estimate overall growth in school age children to 2015. The result is that the primary age population[19] appears set to increase from about 108 million to 146 million. Lower secondary age children will increase from 49.2 million to 66.2 million, and upper secondary from 45.1 million to 60.9 million[20].

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[19] Defined by the official number of years of schooling and official entry ages.

[20] Assuming no change in the length of the secondary cycle

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Where GER1 is in excess of 110% total primary enrolment should stabilise and may even fall for a period as repetition and over age entry are eliminated. Where GER1 is less than 100%, total primary enrolment will need to increase more rapidly than growth in school age children if all children are to be enrolled. In both cases the numbers completing primary school will increase as greater proportions of those who enter primary school successfully reach the last grade of primary. The number of new secondary places needed depends on a range of policy choices e.g. how fast to expand primary, how quickly to reduce repetition and drop out at primary which determines the numbers completing, how to select pupils into lower and upper secondary school, how to manage the primary/secondary transition rates, and how to reduce repetition and overage enrolment at secondary.

The growth needed in school places to achieve GER1 of 110% (assumed to be a level that can provide universal enrolment with low levels of repetition and overage enrolment) averages about 1.8 times current enrolments. A quarter of the countries in SSA would have to increase enrolments to three times current levels to achieve this goal by 2015. At lower secondary level an increase of 5.6 times would be needed on average for all countries to achieve universal enrolment (GER = 100%), and for the 25% with the lowest enrolment rates, increases of nearly twelve times would be needed (Table 4)

It is clear that in the lowest enrolment countries these increases are very large. This raises several questions about the role that private, non-government providers might play. These include

- Is it likely that private providers have the capacity to increase their enrolments by the magnitudes needed?
- If they the have the capacity how likely is it that they will direct expansion towards areas where there are the greatest shortages of school places?
- Even if they do how would such additional capacity be financed if not from public funds in economies where annual per capita expenditure on all goods and services averages no more than about 400 USD?

Table 4 Growth needed in school places for different enrolment levels

	Increase for GER1 =110%		Increase needed for GER2L 100%		Increase needed for GER2U 100%	
	2001	**2015**	**2001**	**2015**	**2001**	**2015**
Seychelles	1	1	0.9	1	1	1
South Africa[21]	1.1	1	1.2	1	1.9	1.6
Cape Verde	0.9	0.8	1.2	1.1	2.5	2.2
Botswana	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.7	1.9
S T + Principe	0.8	1.2	1.4	2.2	4.9	7.7
Namibia	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.8	3.8	4.7
Mauritius	1.1	0.9	1.5	1.2	2.1	1.7
Togo	0.9	1.3	1.8	2.5	6.9	9.7
Ghana	1.4	1.5	1.8	2	6.7	7.5
Zimbabwe	1.2	1.2	1.9	1.9	18.3	17.7
Swaziland	1.1	1.2	2	2.2	3.6	3.8
Gambia	1.4	2.1	2.2	3.2	5.5	8.1
Eritrea	1.8	3.1	2.3	4	4.8	8.2
Congo	1.3	2.1	2.5	4.1	8.8	14.3
Lesotho	0.9	0.8	2.5	2.3	5	4.6
Nigeria	0.9	1.3	2.6	3.6	3.2	4.4
Equatorial Guinea	0.9	1.3	2.6	4	16.5	25
Comoros	1.5	2.4	2.9	4.4	4.4	6.7
Zambia	1.4	2	2.9	4	7.8	10.7
Benin	1.1	1.4	3.1	4.1	11.6	15.5
Côte d'Ivoire	1.4	1.5	3.4	3.5	7	7.3
Cameroon	1.1	1.2	3.5	3.9	6.8	7.8
Guinea	1.5	2	3.8	5.3	9	12.4
Kenya	1.2	1.2	4	4.1	4.3	4.4
Rwanda	0.9	1.7	4.3	8.2	7.6	14.7
Ethiopia	1.7	2.4	4.5	6.3	8.5	11.9
Madagascar	1.1	1.7	4.7	7.5	13.1	21
Senegal	1.5	1.8	4.8	5.7	10.1	12
Guinea-Bissau	1.7	2.8	5	8.3	12.2	19.9
Malawi	0.9	1.6	5.1	9.2	6.4	11.6
Mali	1.9	3.1	5.8	9.1	N/a	N/a
Uganda	1.1	1.5	7.6	9.9	31.3	40.5
Burkina Faso	2.5	4.1	7.9	12.9	26.8	43.5
Burundi	1.6	1.7	8.1	8.7	23.7	25.6
Chad	1.4	2.3	8.2	13.1	14.5	23.3
U R Tanzania	1.2	1.9	9.3	15.3	44.5	73.6
Mozambique	1.4	1.7	9.5	11.3	27.3	32.3
Niger	2.8	4.9	11.3	20.1	40.6	71.9
Unweighted Average	1.3	1.8	4	5.6	10.9	15.5

Source: Lewin, 2006.

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[21] South Africa's projected growth may be anomalous since its crude transition rate from primary to secondary grades appears to be greater than unity as there are more pupils in grade 8 than grade 7 in the UIS data base

3. Concluding remarks

Non-government private providers, both for profit and not for profit, do make a significant contribution to enrolments in many SSA countries (Kitaev, 1999). However most forms of non-government private provision, especially at secondary level are urban and concentrated in wealthy districts. Where private secondary schooling is rural it often serves urban clientele through boarding schools. There are exceptions, Rwanda has rural private secondary schools which enrol poor children. However these are heavily supported from the Genocide Fund (Lewin and Akyeampong, 2005)[22]. Higher income SSA countries appear to have lower rates of non-government private enrolment.

Clearly non-government private schools can contribute to expanded access. The most likely way in which this can happen is where differentiated demand grows and is reflected in increased numbers of the relatively wealthy opting for fee paying schooling and releasing places in the public system that can be occupied by others from lower income households. Whether in fact this does happen is an empirical question that may have different answers in different systems – it is at least possible that when governmental elites opt out of public schooling increased private spending may be accompanied by reduced public subsides, and or falling costs per pupil, directed at mass public schooling. Where the growth of low cost (and often low quality) non-government providers reflects State failure to serve low/middle income households it is not clear that this constitutes a systemic solution to extending the educational franchise, nor is it likely to reach the ultra poor and the "last 20%". Rather it is an indictment of the gaps between public policy priorities and successful implementation.

Two other issues remain of concern. The first concerns the possible destructive interference between public and private systems. Local competition for pupils, competition for and sharing of teachers, and the use of public facilities for private gain are some possible sources of conflict and inefficiency in providing basic services. The second is the consequences of weak regulation and oversight which opens possibilities for rent seeking, excessive profits, malpractice and fraud. Neither are easy to resolve but they have to be considered as possible consequences of a laissez fair approach to the contribution non-government private providers can make to expanded access.

This chapter has argued that non-government schooling, especially that which is truly private and completely unsubsidised, will have a limited impact on progress towards universalising access to basic education in SSA. The case made is that servicing rights to universal free primary schooling (and increasingly lower secondary) cannot be transferred by States to third parties not least because it is only States that can act as providers of last resort and because of commitments to services free at the point of delivery. Unsubsidised providers cannot service the poor and the poorest en masse and remain solvent. Marketised solutions which out-source service delivery may have some attractions in principle, but in practice few of their presumed advantages are likely to be easily realised when addressing the educational needs of the vulnerable, marginalized and excluded.

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[22] It is not clear how these schools will be financed as the Genocide Fund diminishes.

The analysis has shown that:

- In the majority of SSA countries enough school places exist to enrol most but not all primary age children and that the largest numbers out of school are concentrated in a small number of countries. Across SSA the majority are excluded from secondary schooling where private non-government provision is more common.
- Those excluded – the last 20% at primary and many more at lower secondary – constitute the populations that non-government private schooling would have to reach if it were to have major impact on expanded access.
- This excluded population of children is disproportionately poor, rural and female with many located in households living on less than a dollar a day per capita.
- Household income and income distribution between households is such that few of those in the lowest two quintiles could afford the full economic cost of unsubsidised schools at prevailing fee rates.
- Teacher's salary costs – the main determinant of costs – are such that much lower operating costs per pupil at primary level will be difficult to achieve, except where these are exceptionally high. In general there may be more scope at lower secondary for efficiency gains to reduce costs and related fee levels. Even with such efficiency gains the unsubsidised direct costs of schooling would exceed the ability to pay for those in the "last 20%".
- Demography indicates that a further constraint on the contribution unsubsidised providers can make is that dependency ratios remain high (meaning the ratio of school age children to income earners is high) thus limiting the availability of disposable income especially where income distribution is heavily skewed. The poor also characteristically spend less on educational services than those above the poverty line since their other basic needs take precedence, further limiting their capacity to support private direct costs of schooling.
- The growth needed to realise and sustain universal levels of enrolment is striking in low enrolment countries, many will have to more than double the number of primary places and vastly increase lower secondary access. The organised non-government private sector often constitutes no more than 10 % of the labour force in poor SSA countries and not much more of economic activity. This raises questions about the capacity of non-government agents to respond to such large needs to increase capacity.

Arguments about the role non-government providers can and will play in increasing access to basic education are more or less enlightening depending on the prejudices of their proponents and their willingness to confront economic realities. They are also coloured by ideology transposed from well developed, professionalised, regulated, and partly marketised education systems in rich countries to partly developed, poorly professionalised, largely unregulated, systems in which educational market places only exist for the relatively wealthy, not the poorest and excluded.

It may be that the issue is less of a policy question, than a practical issue. Since regulation is widely ineffective in SSA, and in an increasing number of countries there are now de facto few barriers to non-government private schools operating, their growth will be self determined and self locating in terms of where they are and who they serve. It will be limited by the factors explored in this chapter, and is unlikely either to service the needs of the majority, or to reach to poor and ultra-poor effectively by 2015. At primary level

there should be no dependence on non-government private schooling as a strategy since free education should indeed be free for those who cannot or choose not to elect out into the non-government private sector. Governments will remain the providers of last resort and will remain challenged to live up to their obligations to those they govern and to the commitments they have made to universalise access. At secondary level much provision in poorer but not richer countries in SSA is already private, or financed substantially from private direct costs. But most of these services are consumed by economic elites. Substantially increased secondary access will be impossible without lower direct costs to households.

If the policy debate is really about the possibilities of capturing domestic or international public finance for private benefit through a raft of possible mechanisms – "public-private partnerships" to construct schools, charitable status, exemption from value-added tax (VAT) and import taxes, construction subsidies, support for teachers salaries in non-government private schools, low interest unsecured loans etc – then it seems to have limited merit and high opportunity costs. Whatever the benefits and the risks they come with an opportunity cost that redirects public finance away from supporting basic services and their extension to those with little or no access to basic education.

The prediction this analysis leads to is that by 2015 those countries in SSA most successful in approaching the educational MDGs will have achieved this through extending the reach of public school systems and lowering their direct costs to the poor; in these cases the amount of non government private provision will reach a plateau and then may fall back. Those least successful in progressing will see some growth in non-government private provision but it will be insufficient to have much impact on the achievement of the MDGs and will fail to provide access to most of those currently excluded.

The short answer to the original question posed, what contribution can private non government schooling make to achieving the education related MDGs, is a little but not a lot. If it were a priority for private non-government providers to reach out to the "last 20%" this would already be happening on some scale; if the reason it is not happening is that providers need publicly financed incentives and substantial subsidy it remains to be demonstrated that this would be more effective than continuing to extend the reach of the public system, as has been done in all higher enrolment SSA countries close to achieving the educational MDGs.

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Report summary:

This paper reviews the extent to which non government providers of educational services can contribute to improved access to education. It considers the current status of those out of school in Sub-Saharan Africa and identifies key constraints on the growth of unsubsidised non-state provision. Demography, income distribution, wage rates and levels of affordability combine to make it unlikely that unsubsidised non state schooling will reach out to those much below the 20th percentile of household income, limiting the impact on Education for All.

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