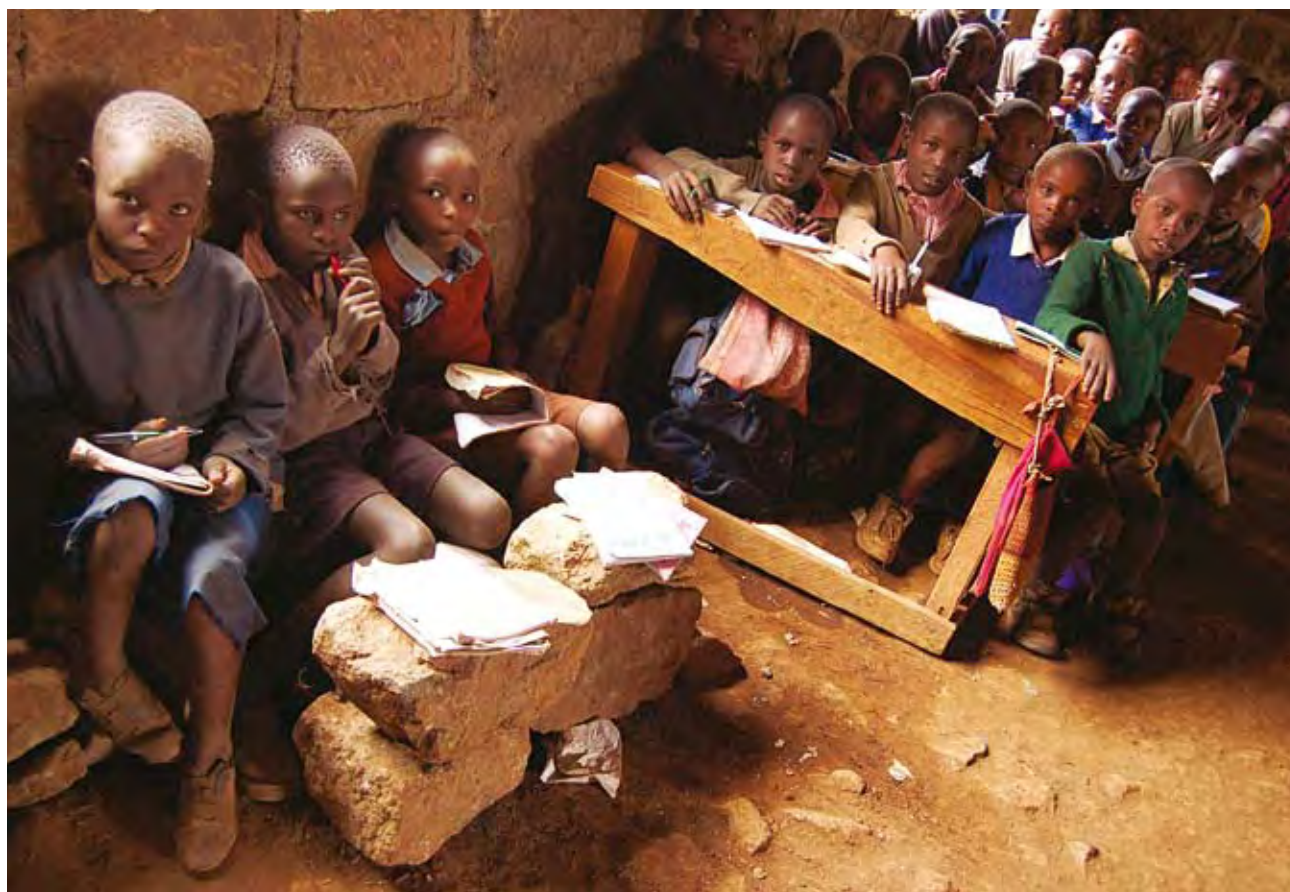


## 2.3

# Education, Employment and City Size



▲ Children in a crowded class in Molo town, Kenya  
©Allan Gichigi/IRIN

**H**armonious urbanization depends upon the progressive growth of access to life-enriching educational opportunities and sustainable employment options for all. Education – a fundamental human right and an essential precursor to informed civic participation – contributes to many important dimensions of well-being and prepares citizens for gaining employment and making healthy life choices. Cities foster healthy human development by providing easier access to education, health care and employment for young men and women than villages can, but not all cities are alike

in their accommodation of young people's education and employment needs.

In this chapter, UN-HABITAT presents a preliminary analysis of education and employment indicators based on city size and on whether the settlement is urban or rural. As the analysis in this chapter shows, in some countries, such as Lesotho and Uganda, small cities and towns can, in some cases, provide more access to educational institutions and resources per capita than do bigger cities; however, in general, big metropolitan areas provide more educational facilities than small towns and villages.

## Unequal access to education

School enrolment rates are generally much higher in urban than in rural areas, and cities have more educational infrastructure than villages or small towns. Children's access to school in cities, however, is more often determined by the ability of families to pay school fees than by the physical proximity of school buildings and programmes. Economic needs often supersede educational goals among poor urban families, who must choose between paying for basic services – including food, water and housing – and funding their children's education. Particularly in capital cities and large cities in which income and social inequalities are dramatic, many poor urban families cannot afford to ensure their children receive a basic education. Girls are especially likely to miss out on educational opportunities, as parents often rely on girls to assist with domestic work, while they send boys to school.

Causes of social inequality in basic education vary from country to country, but a common set of constraints exists, including: poverty; the embedded costs of education, including school uniforms, books and materials; shortage of school facilities; unsafe school environments, especially in poor urban neighborhoods; and cultural and social practices that discriminate against girls, including requirements that they provide domestic labour, marry and have families at a young age, and limit their independent movement to proscribed areas. More barriers to education exist for girls than for boys around the world. Where resources are limited and school systems are less responsive to the needs of girls than boys, girls risk losing important opportunities to fulfill their potential and improve their lives.

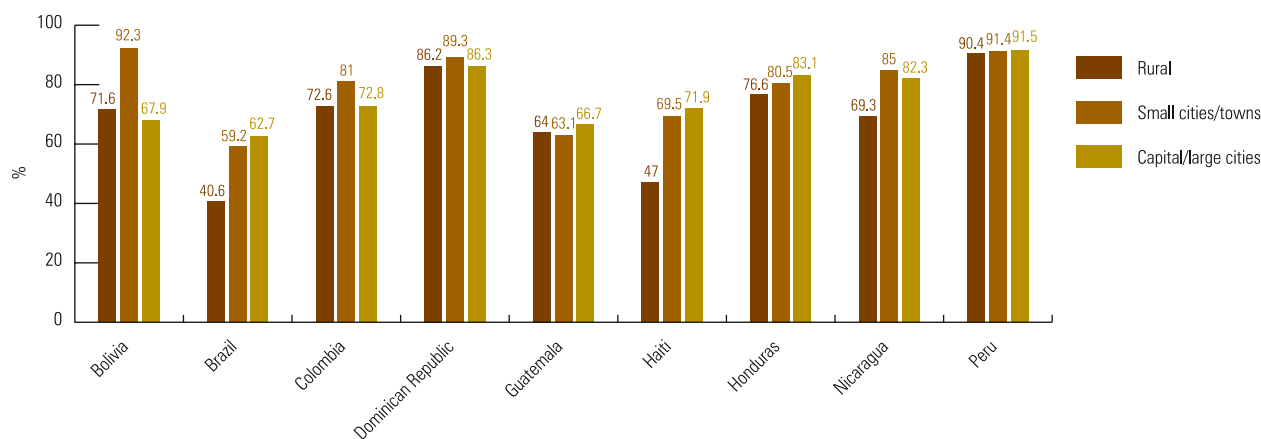
In general, children from poor families, whether urban or rural, are less likely to attend or complete school.<sup>1</sup> The lack of school affordability is more pronounced in large cities than in small cities, owing to higher overall costs of living than in small cities and towns, but governments of large cities

more often fail to address all of the barriers children face to attending school. In Kenya and several other countries in the developing world, free primary education policies have helped bolster school enrolment rates; however, lack of a sufficient number of places in overcrowded schools often means that some school-aged children cannot be accommodated. School enrolment is still higher in urban areas than in rural areas, but in terms of progress and trends, there has been a steady decline in enrolment in cities, while more and more rural children become enrolled.

### *School access and enrolment in Latin America and the Caribbean*

In some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, a higher proportion of children in small cities than in large cities receive a basic education. This gap is particularly evident in Bolivia, where 93 per cent of children in small cities and towns are enrolled in primary education, compared with 68 per cent in the capital and other large cities, and 72 per cent in rural areas. This disparity cannot be seen when analyzing the overall urban average, which shows that enrolment is higher in cities than in rural areas in general: 86 per cent versus 72 per cent, respectively. The disparity between large and small cities can be explained in part by the deep inequalities in the distribution of resources within large cities that leave parents little money for food and housing needs, ruling out paying school expenses for their children. The same situation is evident in Colombia to a lesser degree, with 82 per cent of children in small cities attending school, compared with 73 per cent of children in large cities – the same percentage of rural children enrolled in school. In the Dominican Republic, large cities also have smaller proportions of children enrolled in school than small cities. In Guatemala, this is the case only for boys; in the capital city, 64 per cent of boys are enrolled

FIGURE 2.3.1: PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICAN CITIES AND RURAL AREAS



Source: UN-HABITAT Global Urban Observatory 2008

in primary school, compared with 68 per cent in small cities and towns. For Guatemalan girls, the situation is reversed: 69 per cent of girls in the capital city are enrolled in primary school, compared with 58 per cent in small cities and towns. On the positive side, the enrolment rates in Latin America as a whole tend to be generalized compared to sub-Saharan Africa, where there are large disparities in enrolment rates between urban and rural areas and between large and small cities, and to Asia, where there are large disparities between boys and girls.

### School access and enrolment in Asia

In Asia, gender plays an important role in determining whether or not a child will be sent to school. For instance, on average, more boys who live in small cities and towns in the region attend school than those who live in capital and large cities. Conversely, girls who live in small cities and towns generally still lag behind their peers who live in capital and large cities. In the Philippines, for example, the school enrolment rate of boys is lower in large cities, at 75 per cent, than in small cities, at 89 per cent, while the differential for girls is in favour of large cities, where 95 per cent are enrolled, versus 89 per cent in small cities and towns. Clearly, both girls and boys in the Philippines are enrolled in school at a high level in small cities.

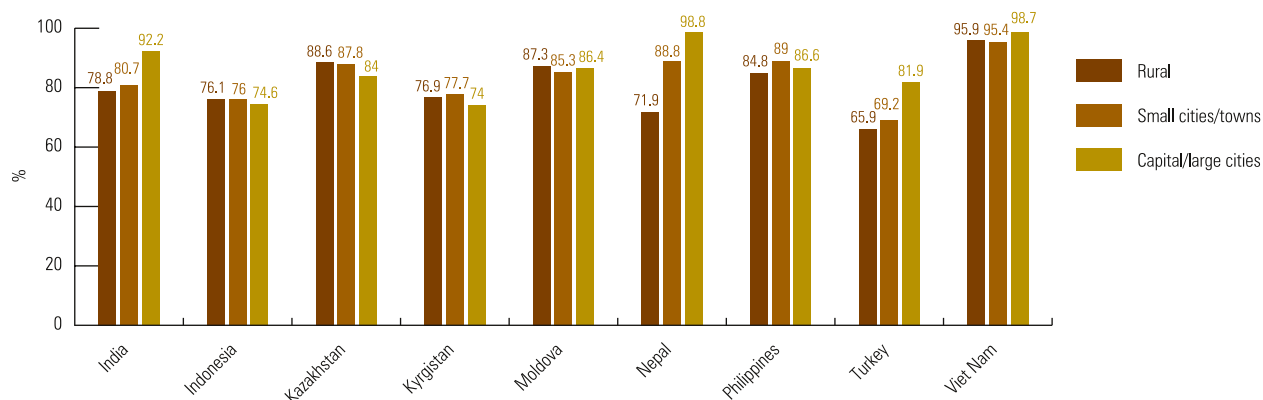
In the Central Asian country of Uzbekistan, a different pattern exists: a smaller percentage of boys are enrolled in school in small cities (55 per cent) than in large cities (61 per cent) and even rural areas (60 per cent). Only 55 per cent of girls in small cities and rural areas are enrolled, with a greater proportion enrolled in large cities. In Kazakhstan, a greater percentage of boys in small cities are enrolled than in large cities, while no differential exists for girls. In Kyrgyzstan, however, the opposite is the case: more boys in large cities are enrolled than their peers in small cities.

### School access and enrolment in Africa

In many sub-Saharan African countries, living in an urban area provides a clear advantage for access to education, regardless of whether one is rich or poor. Inequalities in access to school facilities can partly explain this urban-rural differential. In sub-Saharan African countries, schooling is more readily accessible in cities, where most schools are built; rural communities are often left without public educational infrastructure, and often rely on non-governmental or community institutions for schooling, which are often unable to meet demand. This is true in several of the countries included in UN-HABITAT's analysis, especially in Western and Central Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, and Senegal. In all of the countries analyzed here, more than 75 per cent of the children of primary school age in large cities attend school, but in rural areas, the proportion drops to less than 50 per cent. This pattern is most pronounced in Niger, where 73 per cent of children in the capital city attend school, compared with 17 per cent in rural areas; in Niger's small cities and towns, 53 per cent of children of primary school age are enrolled.

In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, schooling is quasi-generalized, with small disparities across cities and villages. This is the case in the Eastern and Southern African countries of Cameroon, Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia, and in the two North African countries covered in this study, Egypt and Morocco. In Egypt, school attendance rates vary little across different places, with enrolment rates of 86 per cent in the capital and large cities, 89 per cent in small cities and towns and 84 per cent in rural areas. A similar pattern is evident in Morocco, with school enrolment levels of 91 per cent in the capital and large cities, 92 per cent in small cities and towns, and 84 per cent in rural areas.

FIGURE 2.3.2: PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ASIAN CITIES AND RURAL AREAS



Source: UN-HABITAT Global Urban Observatory 2008

In poverty-stricken areas of many African cities, primary school enrolment is actually decreasing. In Eastern and Southern Africa, the most significant progress in school enrolment in the late 1990s was concentrated in rural areas. In Tanzania, net enrolment ratios increased in both rural and urban areas, but actually decreased in the poorest areas of cities.

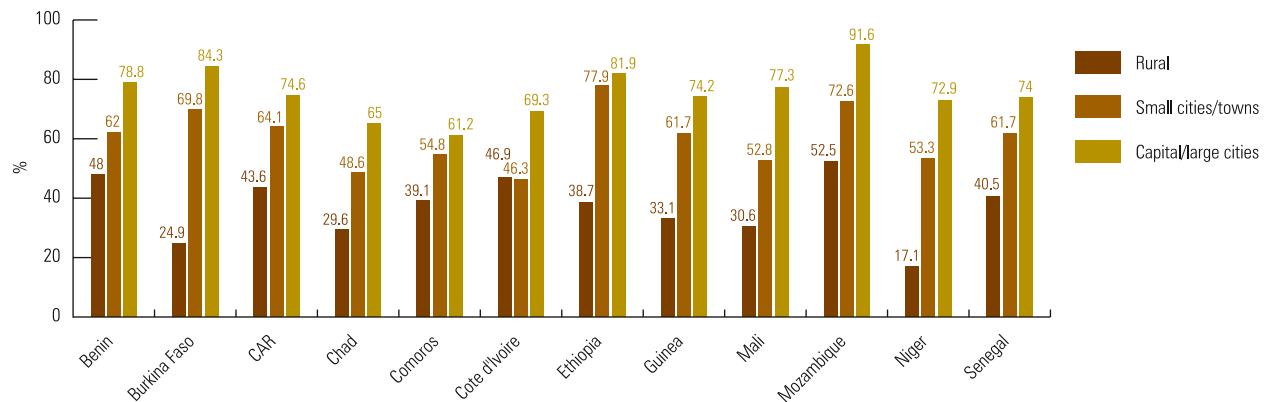
### The persistent gender gap in access to education

The gender gap in school enrolment narrowed during the 1990s in all regions of the world, and parity in gender representation in school enrolment continues to grow. Progress has been uneven within regions, however, and in a number of countries, girls are still at a significant disadvantage. Countries in which resources and school facilities are limited and enrolment is altogether low exhibit the greatest disparities; in many such countries, less than 50 per cent of girls of primary

school age are enrolled in school. Female illiteracy rates remain high in urban poor and rural areas where many girls remain out of school or drop out too early to be able to acquire the necessary skills to acquire literacy skills.

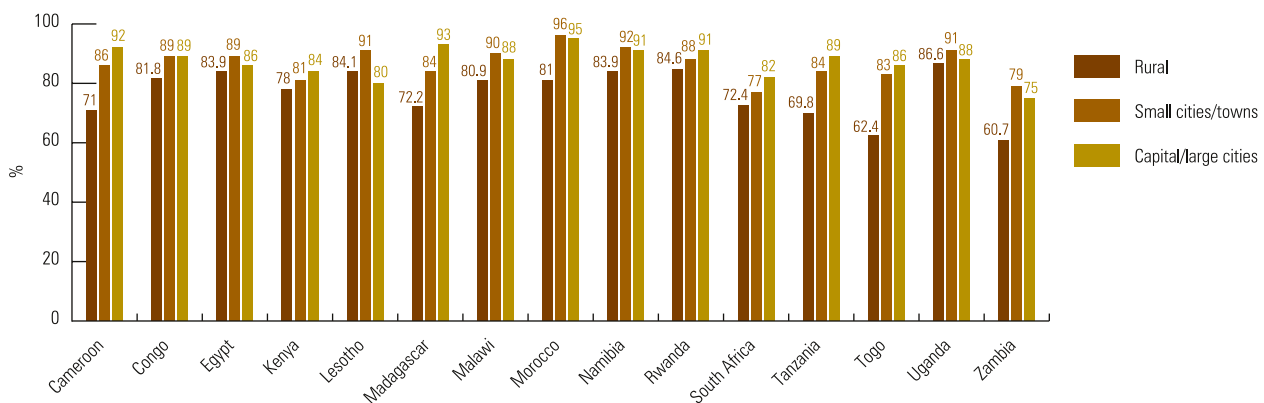
In Benin, more girls attend primary school in the capital and large cities than in small cities and rural areas, but the gap between girls and boys is narrower in small cities than it is in large cities and rural areas: the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in school in small cities and towns is 0.81, versus 0.76 and 0.75 in large cities and rural areas, respectively. In contrast, in Burkina Faso, the capital and large cities have the highest level of school enrolment and the smallest gap between girls and boys, with a gender ratio of 0.95, compared with 0.87 in small cities and 0.74 in rural areas. This is also the case in the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, and the small island nation of Comoros, where boys and girls are enrolled equally. In Cote d'Ivoire, less of a gender gap exists in rural areas than in small cities and large cities,

FIGURE 2.3.3: PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING HUGE RURAL-URBAN DISPARITIES IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION



Source: UN-HABITAT Global Urban Observatory, 2008

FIGURE 2.3.4 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN SCHOOL IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHERE ACCESS TO EDUCATION IS GENERALIZED ACROSS URBAN AND RURAL AREAS



Source: UN-HABITAT Global Urban Observatory, 2008

with ratios of 0.91, 0.80 and 0.85, respectively. The same is true in Ghana, where the ratio of girls to boys in school in rural areas is 0.98, versus 0.95 in small cities and 0.93 in large cities. For girls and boys in Niger, the opposite situation exists: the gender gap has narrowed significantly in large cities and small cities, with ratios of 0.91 and 0.83, respectively, but in rural areas, girls are lagging far behind, with a ratio of 0.52. In Senegal, Congo and Egypt, girls and boys are enrolled equally in all three environments. Similarly, in Cameroon, boys and girls are enrolled equally in cities, and nearly so in rural areas (0.94). In countries in which education is quasi-universal, boys and girls have equal access to education, and in some countries, even more girls are enrolled in primary school than boys.

### **From education to employment: Trends and opportunities**

Basic education is a fundamental human right that affords young people healthy, productive lives, but, clearly, in many of the world's largest cities with the greatest numbers of people in poverty, education remains inaccessible for a significant percentage of the population. As the cost of living in major cities increases with rising food and commodity prices, education becomes more important than ever in the quest for good jobs that pay a living wage. Education, however, does not always guarantee a decent job and a successful future. A study in India, for example, found that schooling can reproduce existing inequalities: many young people from marginalized communities often remain poor and unemployed, even after receiving a secondary education, while privileged families reap the benefits of political and social ties to employers.<sup>2</sup>

In a globalized world, the links between education and employment are increasingly unpredictable and uncertain. Today, huge numbers of young people remain unemployed in the developing world: out of the world's 1.1 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24, only about 3.8 per cent, or 548 million, are employed. Youth are more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed; despite the fact that the global population of youth grew by 13.2 per cent between 1995 and 2005, youth employment grew by only 3.8 per cent.<sup>3</sup> Young women in particular are likely to miss out on opportunities for decent, sustainable paid employment, as they often are expected to marry and bear children at a young age; in many places, young women's role as unpaid caregivers of children and other family members prevents them from joining the paid labour force. Those women who do work in the developing world tend to do so in the informal economy, owing to lack of formal job opportunities in many regions. In several countries, the informal sector is thriving in small cities and towns and rural areas. The following UN-HABITAT analysis of employment patterns focuses on young women's opportunities for paid work as an indicator of inequality in the developing world's cities.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Youth non-employment***

Youth non-employment, defined as the proportion of youth neither in education nor in employment, almost doubles the level of youth unemployment rates, particularly in Eastern and Southern African countries, where more than 40 per cent of young women are unemployed. In several Western African countries, on the other hand, more than 60 per cent of young women are in school or employed, particularly in Togo and Benin, where 85 and 76 per cent of young women are engaged in educational and productive activities, respectively. Youth non-employment rates remain much higher for women than for men.

Youth non-employment is high in small cities and towns, as well as in capital and large cities of most African countries. In some countries, a large number of children are neither working nor attending school in small cities and towns. In countries such as Tanzania, Malawi and Rwanda, there are more opportunities for young people in capital and large cities than in small cities and towns. For example, in small cities and towns in Tanzania, 41 per cent of young women are neither going to school nor working, while in the capital and other large cities, the non-employment rate is only 26 per cent. In Malawi, young women's non-employment is 52 per cent in small cities and towns and 39 per cent in large cities, and in Rwanda, the rate is 31 per cent in small cities and 22 per cent in large cities.

In some countries, however, the opposite is true: youth non-employment is particularly high in the capital and large cities. In countries such as Senegal, Mozambique and Niger, there are more jobs and schooling opportunities in small cities and towns than in large cities. For example, in Senegal's large cities, 41 per cent of young women are neither working nor attending school, compared with 33 per cent in small cities and towns. The non-employment rates are 30 per cent in large cities and 21 per cent in small cities and towns in Mozambique, and 51 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively, in Niger.

Only in a few countries are youth non-employment rates low overall, in large cities, small cities and towns and rural areas. Among the countries with overall low youth non-employment are Burkina Faso (14 per cent in large and small cities, and 1 per cent in rural areas); Chad (13 per cent in large cities, 10 per cent in small cities and 1 per cent in rural areas); Mali (7 per cent in large cities, 8 per cent in small cities and 3 per cent in rural areas); and Togo (14 per cent in large cities, 15 per cent in small cities and 16 per cent in rural areas). In general, youth in rural areas are working, primarily in the agricultural sector, despite low levels of school attendance.

### ***Women in the informal sector in Africa***

In many sub-Saharan African countries, young women from impoverished urban areas find employment in the informal sector. In the absence of an organized labour market, only a few women have access to formal employment with social



▲ Street barber in Dhaka.  
©Golam Monowar Kamal



▲ Youth washing cars by Lake Victoria, Kenya.  
©Golam Monowar Kamal



▲ Street vendors, Kisumu, Kenya: Most women in Kenya's urban areas are employed in the informal sector.  
©Golan Monowar Kamal

security coverage, paid and parental leave, retirement, and unemployment benefits; most women are instead dependent upon the informal economy for their own and their family's survival. In sub-Saharan Africa, 84 per cent of women's non-agricultural employment is informal. The informal sector remains important in capital and large cities, but informal employment is actually higher in small cities and towns and rural areas. In Kenya, 58 per cent of young women who are employed in Nairobi and the country's other large cities work in the informal sector, compared with 73 per cent of their counterparts in small cities and towns and rural areas. In Nigeria, where few job opportunities exist in the formal sector, more than two-thirds of employed women work in the informal sector.

In general, few women are employed in the formal labour markets in sub-Saharan Africa. Those who do find formal jobs are often confined to traditionally female, or "pink collar", jobs with low status, low job security and low pay that men typically do not want. In some areas, however, women and men are competing for such low-status jobs in categories such as sales and service activities. Women may be confined to low-paid jobs through discriminatory stereotyping or because they are less available for full-time work owing to family responsibilities.

In Lesotho, 29 per cent of young women in large cities are employed in the informal sector, mostly in sales and service activities, compared with 48 per cent in small cities and towns,

and 58 per cent in rural areas. While the capital and large cities offer young women more formal job opportunities than small cities and towns and rural areas, only a few sub-Saharan African capital and large cities offer regular access to formal jobs for young people; South Africa and Namibia provide the greatest access to formal-sector jobs, where 71 per cent and 61 per cent of women aged 15 to 24, respectively, hold a formal job. In North African countries, most young people attend school, and those who are not attending school are working in a formal-sector job. In Egypt and Morocco, 75 per cent and 60 per cent of young people, respectively, hold formal-sector jobs. Egypt offers a unique situation: in the country's small cities and towns, as well as in its rural areas, the majority of young women are employed in the formal sector (80 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively). In South Africa, the formal sector is also developed in small cities and towns, with 61 per cent of young women employed in it.

#### *Youth non-employment and the informal sector in Latin America and the Caribbean*

Among countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, youth non-employment is particularly high in Guatemala, where 58 per cent of young women in rural areas, 44 per cent in small cities and towns, and 22 per cent in large cities are neither attending a school nor working. The situation is similar in Nicaragua, where 58 per cent of young women in rural

areas, 27 per cent in small cities and towns, and 22 per cent in large cities are non-employed. The large cities of Haiti have particularly high rates of youth non-employment – averaging 79 per cent – while small cities and towns and rural areas offer more opportunities for young people, with only 27 per cent and 34 per cent of young women neither attending school or nor working, respectively. Colombia provides accessible educational opportunities, as most of its young people attend school. In the large and small cities of Colombia, only 8 per cent and 9 per cent of young women, respectively, are neither attending school nor working. This is also the case in several other Latin American countries, including Brazil, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Chile, and Peru, where young people have more opportunities for schooling or employment than in other countries. Colombia, Brazil and Chile also offer their young people more opportunities in the formal sector than do the Dominican Republic and Peru. For example, while less than 20 per cent of young women in the capital and large cities, as well as small cities and towns, in Colombia are employed in the informal sector, the majority of young Peruvian women are employed in the informal sector (50 per cent and 64 per cent in large cities and small cities, respectively). The informal sector is particularly developed in Haiti and Bolivia, two countries that provide fewer schooling and job opportunities to their young people than even most sub-Saharan African countries.

### *Youth non-employment and the informal sector in Asia*

The youth education and employment figures for Asia are diverse – some Asian countries offer excellent schooling and job opportunities for their young people and others do not. For example, in Armenia, less than 20 per cent of young women are neither attending school nor employed, and most of the employed women are in the formal sector. In Armenia's large cities, only 8 per cent of employed young women are in the informal sector, compared with 15 per cent in small cities and towns and 20 per cent in rural areas. In the capital and large cities of Nepal, 30 per cent of young women are neither attending school nor employed, and among those who are employed, 65 per cent work in the informal sector. The situation is similar in the Philippines, where more than

25 per cent of young women in the capital and large cities, as well as in small cities and towns, are neither attending school nor working. Half of all employed young women work in the informal sector in the Philippines. In Metro Manila, 25 per cent of young women are neither working nor attending school, and among those who are working, 45 per cent are employed in the informal sector. In the small city of Bacolod, 27 per cent of young women are neither working nor attending school, and 40 per cent of working young women employed in the informal sector.

### *Consequences of youth unemployment*

The high rate of non-employment of young people in the developing world is reason for concern; the lack of decent, sustainable jobs promotes a sense of displacement in the general youth population and often leads to crime, under-development, and a cycle of poverty. Frustrations accompanying long-term unemployment among groups of urban young men may feed political and ideological unrest and provoke violence.<sup>5</sup> Many countries have experienced “youth bulges”, which occur when young people comprise at least 40 per cent of the population, and it has been argued that in such a context, the large numbers of unemployed and idle youth may challenge the authority of governments and endanger their stability. More importantly, there is no doubt that investing in youth is investing in society at large.

To better address youth unemployment, it is important to consider young people's employability, equal opportunities for jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities, and employment creation strategies. Employability is an outgrowth of education and economic development; measures promoting equity should investigate whether young women and young men have the same opportunities; and efforts to encourage youth-run enterprises can ensure that young people grow in their skills and contributions to their communities. Public policies that lead to new employment opportunities for youth are also essential for creating jobs and ensuring access. Investing in youth requires not just better-skilled youth, but also a commitment by public and private sector partners to keep job creation as a central concern of their investment strategies.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Birdsall, Levine, & Ibrahim, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffery, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Data for this section is from UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory, based on data collected from multiple sources.

<sup>5</sup> Commission for Africa, 2005.