

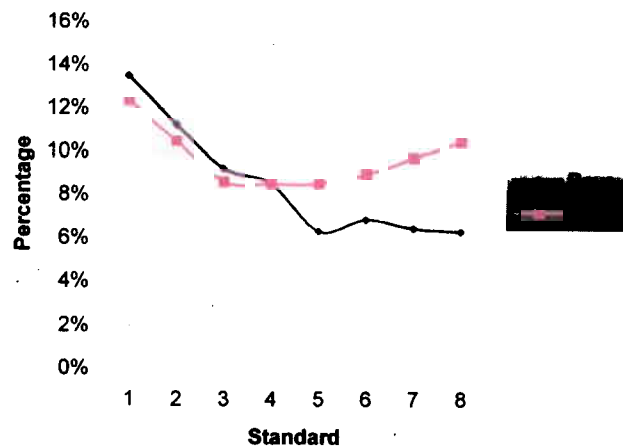
# ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

**Target : Ensure that, by 2015, children should be able to complete a full course of primary education.**

## 1. The Status of completion of a full course of primary schooling

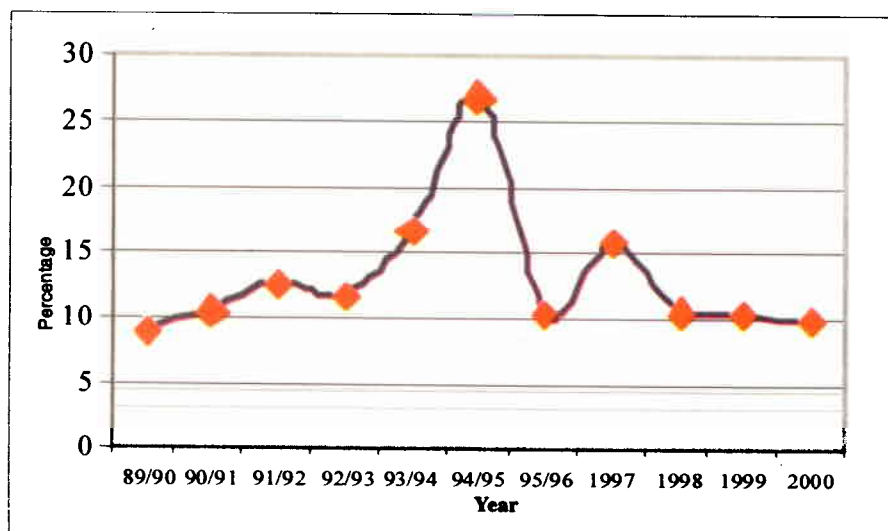
The enrolment gains registered by the introduction of Free Primary Education were quickly negated by high drop-out rates, especially between Standards 2 and 3, (Figure 4). Figure 4 also shows that the drop-out rate for girls, though lower in the first three standards, increased to surpass that of boys after Standard 4. The poor literacy situation among women could be largely explained by this factor. According to the IHS, enrolment in urban areas continued to exceed that of rural areas.

**Figure 4: Drop-out rates in Primary Education (2000)**



The reasons for the increased drop-out rate were, among other things, negative attitudes of certain communities towards education, especially for girls, long distances covered by pupils to school, early pregnancies, lack of food and clothes in households and poverty. Figure 5 shows that the drop-out rate was steady between 10 and 15 percent, except in 1994/95 when the rate rose to 27 percent.

**Figure 5: Trends In Drop-out Rates**



## 2. Challenges

Poverty and the low value attached to education were major causes of high drop-out rates. Pupils dropped out of school by choice, citing reasons such as poverty and poor quality of education. Girls dropped out due to early marriages and pregnancies. Drop-out rates by gender clearly showed that girls dropped out at a faster rate than boys.

Poor quality school environment also contributed to the high levels of school drop-out rate. Overcrowding and lack of recreation facilities were cited as reasons for dropping out in junior classes. Lack of gender-sensitivity by the teaching staff, and inadequate sanitary facilities in many schools prevented girls in senior classes from attending school during menstrual period. This led to the girls' high rate of drop-out.

## 3. Policy Framework and Strategies

In the early 1990's, the education policy could be characterized as being cautious, emphasizing increased access to education. Under the Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE), girls were not required to pay school fees as long as they did not repeat classes. Government introduced free primary education, starting with Standard 1 in 1990/91 and subsequent standards, thereafter. By 1994, standards 1 to 4 were free. In the 1994/95 school year, the Government introduced free primary education and abolished school uniform as a requirement to attend classes. This greatly increased gross enrollment in primary schools which increased from 1,895,423 in 1993/94 to 2,860,819 in 1994/95. However, this was followed, in the same year, by high drop-out rates, negating the gains in increased enrolment.

The current education policy and the MPRSP address problems of access, equity and quality. In particular, there are plans aimed at increasing the number of schools, permanent classrooms, sanitation facilities, qualified teachers, teachers' houses, desks, teaching and learning materials. The plans also provide for special education for children with learning disabilities. However, these plans do not ensure that all children of school going age enroll and stay in school regardless of the discouraging attitude of their parents.

## 4. Assessment of progress

Although progress has been made in primary school education, there is still room for improvement.