Students from around the world graduate at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, New York.

CREDIT: Barbara Alper/Columbia University – School of International and Public Affairs

KEY MESSAGES

The target on scholarships could exacerbate inequality, because beneficiaries tend to come from more advantaged backgrounds.

The target's formulation is lacking in several respects. For example, it does not specify whether a degree should be completed or whether students should return to their home countries.

Scholarships should be counted as contributing to the target only if they are at least partly publicly funded, because it is not possible to hold non-government providers to account.

There is no single source of information on scholarship numbers, let alone on recipients' nationality or fields of study. Information collected for this report from 54 government scholarship programmes indicates that some 22,500 scholarships were offered in 2015, corresponding to 1% of the 2.5 million mobile students from developing countries.

Aid data can give partial information on scholarship programmes. In 2014, US$2.8 billion in aid was allocated to scholarships and imputed student costs. But only US$386 million of that was directed to least developed countries and small island developing states.

CHAPTER 18

TARGET 4.B

Scholarships

By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

GLOBAL INDICATOR 4.B.1 – *Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships, by sector and type of study*

THEMATIC INDICATOR 35 – *Number of higher education scholarships awarded, by beneficiary country*

Number of scholarships 320
Aid data on scholarships 324

Scholarship programmes are a means of providing higher education opportunities for suitably prepared youth and adults from developing countries who would otherwise not be able to afford them. Target 4.b reflects one of the commitments of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, which pledged to '[c]ontinue providing, and encourage, as appropriate, higher education institutes to allocate, places and scholarships for students and trainees from least developed countries, in particular in the fields of science, technology, business management and economics' (United Nations, 2011).

As the 2015 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* noted, the formulation of target 4.b came as a surprise. Because it targets specific countries, it does not appear consistent with a universal agenda. While it nominally aspires to reduce inequality in access between countries, it could instead exacerbate it because beneficiaries tend to have advantaged backgrounds and easier access to information about scholarship programmes. In addition, there is some evidence that a considerable share of scholarship recipients do not return to their countries after ending their studies (Hein and Plesch, 2009). This would suggest that scholarships tend to support the higher education institutions of developed countries instead of benefiting developing countries. This chapter reviews available sources of information and finds several obstacles to achieving this target.

NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS

CHALLENGES IN DEFINING SCHOLARSHIPS

A close analysis of target 4.b raises many questions and finds its formulation to be lacking in several respects.[1] The target refers to scholarships being 'available' rather than 'awarded'. An agency in a developed country may advertise a scholarship to everyone in the world but award it to a student from a developed country, or target a scholarship to candidates from developing countries but not award it. Target 4.b should therefore be interpreted to mean that scholarships are available to students from developing countries, these scholarships are awarded, and the offers are accepted.

> "The target should be interpreted to mean the number of scholarships 'awarded', rather than 'available'"

The target states that scholarships must be 'available to developing countries'. This wording suggests that they do not originate in developing countries and thus would exclude cases where developing countries fund scholarships out of their own resources for their citizens to study abroad. That in turn raises questions beyond the traditional concept of aid flows from one country to another. For example, should the government of Indonesia or Tajikistan or Zimbabwe expand the number of scholarships for its citizens to study abroad or instead invest these resources in its own universities?

Even if we limit attention to scholarships made 'available to developing countries' from external sources, should all scholarship programmes based in developed countries be counted equally? Government and public higher education institutions are not the only providers; corporations, foundations, non-government organisations, philanthropists and other individuals also donate scholarship funds.

For example in 2013, the MasterCard Foundation announced a US$500 million programme of scholarship support for students from sub-Saharan Africa. Other private corporations run their own scholarship programmes. The Tullow Group Scholarship Scheme

funds a programme managed by the British Council that makes scholarships available in selected sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries where Tullow Oil operates. The Graça Machel SASOL Scholarships are available to women from Mozambique. Yet, making non-state scholarship providers accountable for achievement of the target does not appear to make much sense. These are not public funds and there is no obligation to make, let alone to 'substantially expand', such contributions.

Note that even government scholarship programmes can have a mix of funding sources. For example, the two main UK government scholarship programmes that are open to students from developing countries are the Chevening Scholarships, funded through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Commonwealth Scholarships, funded mostly through the Department for International Development. Both actively solicit co-funding from private and philanthropic interests.

The target also states that scholarships must be tenable 'in developed countries and other developing countries'. 'Other' is the keyword here. The target refers to scholarships for students who cross a border to study at a higher education institution in a country other than their own. Just as the target does not mean scholars who are supported by their own government to study abroad, it would also exclude programmes that sponsor nationals of developing countries to study in their own country, such as USAID scholarships in Pakistan. Thus the Fulbright programme, which offers scholarships for post-graduate study in the United States, would qualify under this target, while a larger programme that in 2015 offered 3,000 university scholarships for study in Pakistan, half to women, would not.

Even if non-government scholarship programmes funded by developed countries were to be counted for this target, issues would remain unresolved. The MasterCard Foundation scholarships are applicable at a range of schools and universities, in developed and developing countries, including a recipient's home country. Under this programme, a Ghanaian student could study in Ghana, Nigeria or the United States. In the second and third cases, these scholarships would qualify under target 4.b, because the recipients are studying 'in developed countries' (United States) or 'other developing countries' (Nigeria). But the student studying in Ghana would not qualify.

It is also unclear whether the target includes scholarships for study by distance learning, which is increasingly popular. 'Split site' arrangements allow developing country students to be registered at a home university but have their research supervised by staff at a university in a developed country. How would these scholarships be considered?

> "The target does not refer to the completion of a degree, or whether students return to their home countries"

Scholarships must be 'for enrolment in higher education'. However, enrolment is not equivalent to graduation. Although many scholarship programmes track success rates as far as graduation, few go beyond that. The number of scholarships awarded does not indicate the completion of a degree, or whether students return to their home countries.

A related question is whether a scholarship should have particular characteristics in terms of duration and size. For comparability purposes, scholarships would also have to be specified in terms of year-equivalents to ensure that short-term placements are not counted as equal to longer ones, and to prevent incentives against scholarships for longer programmes. In addition, the amount awarded may cover full or partial tuition as well as living expenses. It is not clear how such options would count in terms of their contribution towards the target.

Finally, methods of support besides scholarships do not count toward the target, even though they may serve the same objective. For example, the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, a consortium of funding bodies from the United States, dedicated US$440 million towards higher education initiatives in nine African countries between 2000 and 2010 (PHEA, 2010). While it did not provide scholarships directly to individuals, it did include grants, usually to universities, through which scholarships were awarded. But as a subsidiary part of the programme, these scholarships may not have been reported as such, and would have been difficult to track.

Therefore, it is recommended that scholarships be counted as eligible under target 4.b to the extent that they are taken up by (not just made available to) students from developing countries (available to 'students', not just 'countries'). The scholarships

should refer to study at higher education institutions in countries other than the students' home country, including those by distance learning. They should require no further contribution from the student to meet study, travel and living costs. Finally, they should be, at least partly, publicly funded and accounted for as a scholarship in the public accounts of the donor countries (including scholarships co-funded by private interests).

This will exclude many scholarships, especially from private and philanthropic sources, since they are under no obligation to sponsor scholarships in the first place. It is still necessary to monitor these scholarships since their availability can influence the policies and actions of donor countries, which might spend less on scholarships in response.

It is further recommended that a set of indicators include the number of scholarships awarded; the number of scholarship years awarded; the number of scholarship recipients who complete their studies; and the number of scholarship recipients who return to their country. All indicators would be disaggregated by country origin of beneficiary, sex, field of study, level of study, mode of study (e.g. on site vs distance) and country of study.

DATA CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

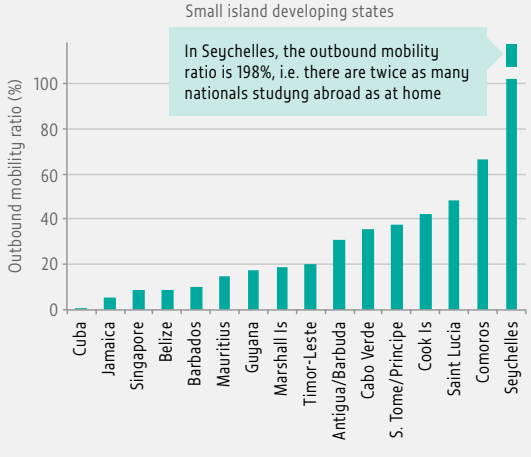
Even this more precise definition of scholarships presents a major challenge because providers have not designed monitoring and reporting systems to respond to such a global target. Hardly any studies have tried to assess scholarship trends. The few that have tried to look at scholarships across countries have stumbled; there are insufficient measures to evaluate policies and programmes (CSC, 2014). The absence of common or shared standards for publicly reporting scholarship programme data limits the chances of obtaining consistent and reliable data on levels of government funding and on numbers of applicants and recipients (Perna et al., 2014).

What is known is the size of the total target population for scholarship programmes, which is the number of internationally mobile students in higher education. In 2013, out of a global population of 199 million students in post-secondary institutions, 3.5 million were studying outside their country, of which 2.5 million were from developing countries. With respect to the country groups identified in the target, there were 235,000 students from least developed countries, 271,000 from sub-Saharan Africa and 106,000 from small island developing states. Among the 90 countries belonging to these three groups (some belong to two or even all three of them), there were 451,000 mobile students.

The outbound mobility ratio, i.e. the number of students from a country studying abroad, expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in that country, was 1.8% for developing countries. However, in some countries, notably among small island developing states, the ratio is considerably higher. For example, in Saint Lucia, there are 5 nationals studying abroad for every 10 students in the country. In Seychelles, there are twice as many tertiary students abroad than at home (**Figure 18.1**).

Establishing a baseline against which to measure progress towards target 4.b is challenging due to the limited data on recipients' characteristics. Many programmes are reluctant to share detailed information. Funders might consider recipient data confidential and proprietary, just as how some higher education institutions do not disclose how admission decisions are made. Also, disclosing recipient data might reveal that some programmes are not meeting their declared targets

FIGURE 18.1:
Many students from small island developing states are studying abroad
Outbound mobility ratio, selected countries, 2013 or most recent year



Source: UIS database.

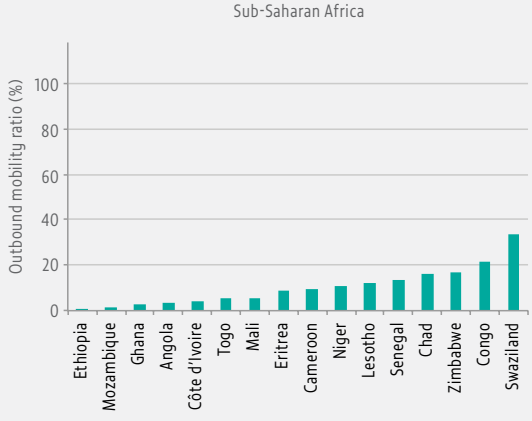
> Around 22,500 scholarships were offered in 2015, corresponding to 1% of the number of internationally mobile students from developing countries

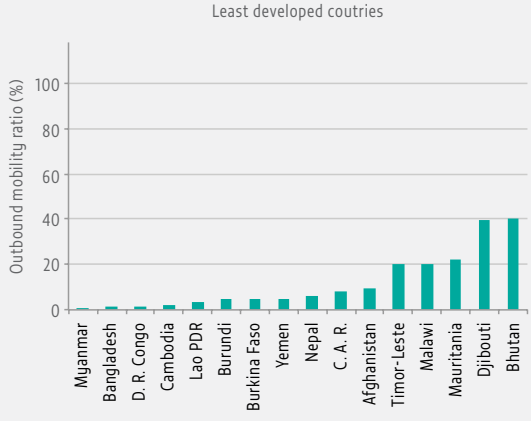
for some populations. Many large programmes do not assign quotas by country so this information is not even monitored. The absence of data is not limited to the nationality of scholarship recipients but extends to all other characteristics of interest listed in the target, such as destination countries and fields of study ('information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes').

Information collected for this report from 54 government scholarship programmes, of which 9 were based in developing countries, indicates that some 22,500 scholarships were offered in 2014/15, corresponding to 1% of the number of mobile students from developing countries (IIE, 2016a). While this is likely to be an underestimate, it is the best baseline available.

Scholarship programmes need to more openly share information that can lead to better understanding of how they contribute to the target 4.b. Programmes should be encouraged to collect and report disaggregated data on intended recipients, actual recipients and their country of origin. To move forward, three options can be considered.

First, governments of developing countries could monitor and report the number of their tertiary-level students receiving scholarships from domestic or external sources. This approach would miss individuals not enrolled in their home country who receive scholarships to pursue full degrees overseas.

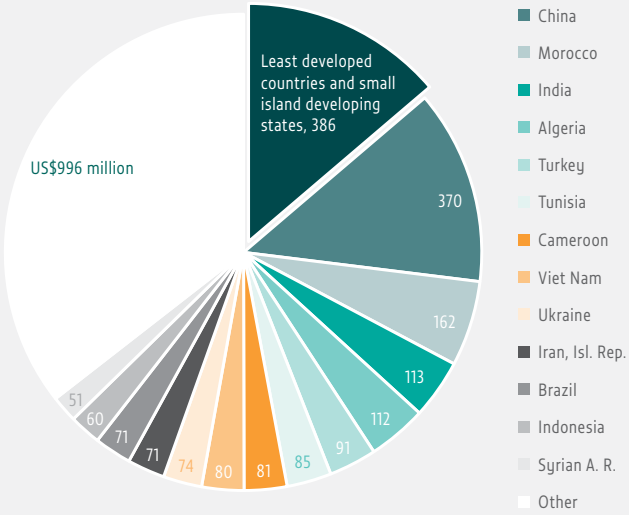




Second, higher education institutions could be engaged by their supervising authority to gather and report data on foreign students as to whether they use scholarship funds. For example, in the United States, the Department of Education Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System could require all accredited institutions to report the number of students from other countries pursuing studies on scholarship.

Third, an independent, non-government entity could be appointed to incorporate scholarship information into existing student mobility data collection efforts, especially since many scholarship recipients are already captured in such data. For example, the Institute of International Education operates Project Atlas, bringing together 25 national-level mobility data collection agencies from around the world that annually share data on the number of foreign students they receive and the number of their domestic students that study overseas. Project Atlas includes all major host countries of globally mobile students, including Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States (IIE, 2016b).

FIGURE 18.2:
Half of all aid for scholarships and imputed student costs is concentrated in 13 middle income countries
Distribution of scholarships and imputed student costs by recipient country, 2014



Source: GEM Report team analysis (2016) using OECD DAC data.

AID DATA ON SCHOLARSHIPS

An alternative way to get information on scholarship programmes is through examining aid to education. Much debate has occurred as to whether scholarships should be counted as official development assistance. The definition of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of 'core' aid, otherwise referred to as country programmable aid, excludes scholarships.

Data from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) provide some evidence on aid from OECD DAC member states that is directed at scholarships and imputed student costs. The latter are the costs incurred for students from developing countries studying at higher education institutions of host countries. However, OECD DAC member states vary a lot in how they report this expenditure.

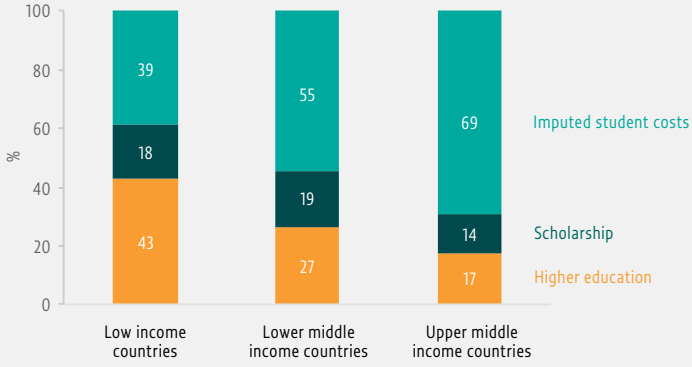
For France and Germany, scholarships and imputed student costs (i.e. indirect costs of tuition in donor countries) account for more than half of their total direct aid to education. These two donors provide more aid as scholarships and imputed student costs than all donors together do for basic education in low income countries.

By contrast, the United Kingdom and the United States are major providers of scholarships but only a very small proportion of these are registered as aid. An aid-based measure of scholarships does not therefore provide a comprehensive picture of expenditure on scholarships and is not appropriate as a global indicator.

Nevertheless, this indicator is still informative. In 2014, an average of US$2.8 billion of aid was allocated to scholarships and imputed student costs. Most of this funding goes to middle income countries (81%). China is the single largest recipient (13%) and its share is almost equal to that received by all least developed countries and small island developing states together. Scholarships and imputed student costs for Algeria, China, India, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey in 2014 came almost to the equivalent of the total amount of direct aid to basic education in low income countries that year (**Figure 18.2**). At the same time, China provides thousands of scholarships every year, notably through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (Reilly, 2015).

About 70% of aid to higher education in 2013/14 was disbursed for scholarships and imputed student costs rather than strengthening higher education institutions in developing countries. The share varied from 57% in low income countries to 83% in upper middle income countries (**Figure 18.3**).

FIGURE 18.3:
Most aid to higher education is directed to scholarships and imputed student costs
Distribution of aid to post-secondary education, by type of use and country income group, 2013/14



Source: GEM Report team analysis (2016) using OECD DAC data.

ENDNOTES

1. This section draws on Balfour (2016).