

# The Nation

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## 10pc global primary education funds go waste

ISLAMABAD - Ten per cent of global spending on primary education is being lost on poor quality education worldwide that is failing to ensure that children learn and a global learning crisis is costing governments \$129 billion a year.

This situation leaves one in four young people in poor countries unable to read a single sentence, affecting one third of young women in South and West Asia, reveals the 11th Education for All Global Monitoring Report.



In South and West Asia, where about 33 in 100 children of primary school age are learning the basics in reading, the share ranges from about 90 per cent in the Islamic Republic of Iran to less than 30 per cent in Pakistan. Pakistan and India are two out of only four countries outside of sub-Saharan Africa where fewer than half of children are learning the basics, whether they've been to school or not. The regional launch of the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4 is going to be held on Wednesday (January 29) by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in Islamabad. The report shows that a lack of attention to education quality and a failure to reach the marginalised have contributed to a learning crisis that needs urgent attention. It calculates that the cost of 250 million children around the world not learning the basics translates into a loss of an estimated \$129 billion. In total, 37 countries are losing at least half the amount they spend on primary education because children are not learning.

By contrast, the report shows that ensuring an equal, quality education for all can generate huge economic rewards, increasing a country's gross domestic product per capita by 23 per cent over 40 years. If Pakistan were to halve inequality in access to education to the level of Viet Nam, it would increase its economic growth by 1.7 percentage points, for example.

On current trends, the report projects that it will take until 2072 for all the poorest young women in developing countries to be literate. The disadvantaged - girls and those in poverty - are being left behind: In Pakistan, rich boys and girls are expected to complete primary school by 2020, but on recent trends poor boys will reach this fundamental target only in the late 2050s and poor girls just before the end of the century. However, with the right policies in place, fast progress is possible: In Nepal, the literacy rate of the poorest young women tripled from 18 per cent in 2001 to 54 per cent in 2011. In order to improve the quality of education, between 2011 and 2015, South and West Asia need to

recruit an additional one million additional teachers per year to reach a ratio of 32 pupils per teacher in lower secondary education. Of the 10 countries needing the most additional primary teachers, all but one are in sub-Saharan Africa, the exception being Pakistan. The report predicts that the country will not even be able to fill the gap until after 2030 if its past trends in recruiting teachers continue. However, teachers also need training. In one third of countries analysed by the report, less than three-quarters of existing primary school teachers are trained to national standards. In other circumstances, teachers are not receiving the right kind of training. In Pakistan, teacher trainees only spend 10 per cent of their course time on practical teaching experience.

The study also highlights the need to address gender-based violence in schools, a major barrier to quality and equality in education. It underscores the importance of curriculum and assessment strategies to promote inclusion and improve learning.

Analysis of secondary school English-language textbooks published by the Punjab textbook board in Pakistan, for example, found that women and girls were seldom represented, or were represented in a discriminatory way. In 20 out of 22 lessons in one English textbook, women were not mentioned at all. It recommends that new goals after 2015 must ensure that every child is in school and learning the basics. Children do not only have the right to be in school, but also to learn while there, and to emerge with the skills they need to find secure, well-paid work. National education plans must include an explicit commitment to reaching the marginalised.

This year's report 'Teaching and learning: Achieving quality for all' warns that without attracting and adequately training enough teachers the learning crisis will last for several generations and hit the disadvantaged hardest. The report concludes that good teachers are the key to improvement and calls on governments to provide the best in the profession to those who need them most.

**Source:** <http://www.nation.com.pk/islamabad/28-Jan-2014/10pc-global-primary-education-funds-go-waste>

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## **EFA global monitoring report**

Fourteen years ago, education ministers from 164 countries, representatives of the civil society organizations and of leading international organizations including UN agencies and World Bank met in Dakar Senegal and set six goals for Education For All making a collective commitment to rapidly expand education for children, youth and adults by the year 2015.

Every year an independent team produces a Global Monitoring Report that aims to inform and influence governments, international organizations and civil societies to sustain commitments to achieve the EFA Goals. The Report is published by UNESCO. Each report focuses on a specific theme. The theme for the year 2008 report was: "Education For All by 2015. Will We Make It"

In the Foreword to that Report, the UNESCO Director General, wrote: "the time is of the essence for the 72 million children out of school, for the one in five adults without basic literacy skills and for the many pupils who leave school without acquiring essential skills and knowledge". He concluded with the remark that "We Cannot Afford To Fail".

With two years left to achieve EFA goals where does the world stand today and how close are various countries to the realization of these goals?

The six goals are: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children; Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality; Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes; Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015; Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015; Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all.

The highlights of the GMR 2013-2014 are as follows: Despite improvements, in 2011, around half of young children had access to pre-primary education; Universal primary education likely to be missed by a wide margin. The number of children out of school was 57 million in 2011, half of whom lived in conflict-affected countries. The richest boys will achieve universal primary completion in 2012, but the poorest girls will not catch up until 2086; In 2011, 69 million adolescents were out of school, with little improvement in this number since 2004; In 2011, there were 774 million illiterate adults, a decline of just 1% since 2000. Almost two-thirds of illiterate adults are women; Gender disparities remain in many countries. Even though gender parity was supposed to be achieved by 2005, in 2011 only 60% of countries had achieved this goal at the primary level and 38% at the secondary level. Besides elaborate statistical tables, the Report has 7 chapters and a Development Index. According to this Index, 45 countries in Europe and North America had achieved all the goals or were close to. While 36 countries in the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean were at a mid-distance to the goals. Pakistan falls in the category which is described as "Very Far from the Targets". Talking specifically of Adult Literacy, the Report records the Pakistan rate as 55% in the year 2011 (Pakistan's current claim is around 58%). It will, according to GMR, reach 60% only by the year 2015. It was committed to achieve 86% literacy rate. Almost 60 million Pakistanis today are utterly illiterate. China which more or less had the same literacy rate as Pakistan in the early 50s, has achieved 95% literacy.

Some of the other interesting findings and observations may also be mentioned: On current trends, the Report projects that it will take until 2072 for all the poorest young women in developing countries to be literate. However, with the right policies in place, fast progress is possible; The cost of 250 million children around the world not learning the basics translates into a loss of an estimated \$129 billion. In total, 37 countries are losing at least half the amount they spend on primary education because children are not learning. By contrast, the Report shows that ensuring an equal, quality education for all can increase a country's gross domestic product per capita by 23 % over 40 years. If Pakistan were to halve inequality in access to education to the level of Viet Nam, it would enhance its economic growth by 1.7 percentage points.

The Report further highlights the need to address violence in schools, a major barrier to quality in education; It underscores the importance of the curriculum and assessment strategies to promote inclusion and improve learning.

The theme of the Report 2013-2014 is Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality For All. Rightly in the Foreword to the Report, the present Director General made the telling observations that

“an Education system is as good as its teachers... And access is not the only crisis—poor quality is holding back learning even for those who make it to school...One third of primary school children are not learning the basics”.

The Report provides commendable guidelines to unlock teachers’ potential to solve the learning crisis are: its four-part strategy is (a) attract the best teachers. (b) improve teacher education. (c) get teachers where they are most needed. (d) and provide incentives to retain best teachers. In the Punjab province, brave efforts have been made to increase enrollment at the primary level and to introduce reforms in school education. Problems of poor teaching and high dropout rates however, persist. Public private partnership has yielded good results. The quality of teaching, however, remains unsatisfactory. Conditions in the other provinces especially in Sindh and Balochistan are poor. Part of the deficiency has been met by private schools.

As for adult literacy, governments at the centre and the provinces lack the political will. Even Punjab which has a full-fledged literacy department has a woefully inadequate literacy programme. This deficiency was pointed out from the floor at the Islamabad GMR launching meeting. The Federal Minister for Education Mr. Baleegh-ur-Rehman admitted the lack of requisite programmes and informed that a Prime Minister’s initiative for the rapid spread of literacy is on the anvil and a country-wide scheme would be started in the near future. One hopes that the announcement doesn’t remain a mere rhetoric and there would soon be an adequate effort to achieve EFA targets. Some of the speeches delivered at the launching ceremony provided much food for thought. The one delivered by Dr Kim, Director UNESCO Regional Office at Bangkok, was in particular most valuable. Dr Kozue Kay Nagata UNESCO Director in Pakistan and Dr Baela Raza Jamil the able moderator of the meeting, deserve congratulations for a successful launch of the Global Report.

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