

## **Regional fact sheet: Arab States**

There are stark variations between countries in the Arab States. Whereas enrolment has increased over the last decade, the region as a whole still lags behind other regions in terms of distance from the EFA goals.

### **EFA progress and challenges**

- Child mortality rates in the Arab States have improved in the last decade, with under-5 mortality rates now at 54 per 1,000 births (54‰). However, while rates in Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are at or below 10 ‰, in Djibouti, Iraq and Sudan it is over 100 ‰.
- Moderate and severe under-weight rates, and indicators of under-five malnutrition in the Arab States were 17%, below the developing countries (26%) and world averages (25%). However, in Djibouti, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen between 29% and 46% of children under age five are affected, and between one-third and one-half of children suffer from moderate and severe stunting.
- Enrolment in pre-primary schools in the Arab States increased by 26% since 1999 to 3 million in 2006. However, the regional pre-primary gross enrolment ratio was only 18% - one of the lowest coverage rates in the world.
- The average net enrolment ratio (NER) in primary education continued to expand reaching 84% in 2006. Djibouti, Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen have all registered strong progress, with over 20% increases in NER. However, primary NER dropped notably Oman (decline of 8%) and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories (decline of 22%) since 1999.
- There were 5.7 million out of school children in 2006, 2 million less than in 1999. Algeria, Morocco and Yemen made strong progress. Almost a quarter of out-of-school-children are concentrated Iraq and Yemen.
- Girls still account for the majority of 'missing' school children. In 2006, 61% of out-of-school children in the region were girls. In Egypt, over 95% of the children not in primary school were girls.
- The median transition rate from primary to secondary was above 90% in 2005 for the Arab States. Secondary net enrolment ratios have grown since Dakar for the region as a whole, averaging 59% in 2006 compared to 52% in 1999.
- Over 7 million students in the Arab States were enrolled in tertiary education in 2006 – 36% more than in 1999. Even so, with a GER at 22% in 2006, participation in tertiary education in the region remained low, with great variation among countries.
- An estimated 58 million adults in the region are considered illiterate, two-thirds in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Sudan. Between 1985–1994 and 2000–2006, the average adult literacy rate increased from 58% to 72%. The rise was more

pronounced among women, climbing from 46% to just over 61%. Despite this, rates in the region remained below the developing country average (79%).

- The region as a whole has made progress towards gender parity in primary and secondary education. However, in 2006, only three countries had achieved gender parity at both education levels: Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.
- Low learning levels are a concern in the region. A substantial proportion of students participating scored at or below the lowest level in the PISA 2006 science ranking (44% in Jordan, 79% in Qatar and 63% in Tunisia), and less than 1% reached the two highest proficiency levels.
- Teaching staff in primary education for the whole region grew by about 18% since 1999 to 1.8 million in 2006. Djibouti and Mauritania both increased the number of primary school teachers and improved pupil-teacher ratios during this period despite increases in the numbers of students enrolled.
- According to the EFA Development Index (EDI) for the school year ending in 2006, - of the 15 Arab states covered out of the 20, two (Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates), were very close to achieving the four quantifiable EFA goals included in the index. Most of the countries included in the sample were in an intermediate position, and four countries – Djibouti, Iraq, Mauritania and Yemen – were furthest from achieving the EFA goals.

### **National education finance**

- Half of the 10 countries with data spent less than 4.6% of GNP on education in 2006, with large variation within the region (minimum of 1.6% in the United Arab Emirates and maximum of 7.7% in Tunisia).
- Compared to other regions, the Arab States allocate a greater proportion of total public expenditure to education: more than half of the countries with data available allocated over 20% of public expenditure to education in 2006.

### **International aid**

- Total official development assistance (ODA) commitments towards the Arab States rose from US\$7 billion in 1999-2000 to US\$30 billion in 2005, dropping to US\$17 billion in 2006. Much of the growth and latest drop was driven by debt relief –particularly directed to Iraq.
- Total aid to education for the region has also increased since 1999. However, the share of aid for education of total ODA fell from 16% in 1999-2000 to 6% in 2005-2006, as most aid was targeted towards other sectors.
- Aid to basic education in the region grew at a faster rate than total aid to education between 1999-2000 and 2005-2006. The share of aid to basic education in total aid to education went from 29% in 1999-2000 to 34% in 2005-2006.
- The Dubai Cares foundation was launched in 2007 and has raised nearly US\$1 billion from individuals and businesses in Dubai and entered a partnership with UNICEF to educate 1 million children, with programmes in Djibouti and Sudan.