

Regional overview: Arab States



The Arab States¹ have made less progress since the Education for All goals were adopted in 2000 than that made in South and West Asia or sub-Saharan Africa. There are strong disparities between countries of the region, and significant gender gaps persist in several of them. Furthermore, human development is under threat from the global economic downturn. Protecting vulnerable populations and assuring forward momentum are now urgent priorities for governments and aid donors alike, including emerging donors from the Arab States region.

The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010* details how marginalization deprives millions of children, in rich and poor countries, of education and life opportunities. They are victims of poverty, geographic isolation, conflict and discrimination based on ethnicity, language, disability and ill health. Different layers of disadvantage often combine to perpetuate a cycle of exclusion. The Report identifies the root causes of marginalization, within education and beyond, and analyses the ways in which governments and other actors are addressing them. It shows how proactive policies can make a difference, especially if directed at making education more accessible, affordable and inclusive, thus securing the right of all children to obtain a quality education.

On the road to Education for All: progress and challenges

The six Education for All (EFA) goals adopted in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar remain the benchmark for assessing progress on the international commitment to expand learning opportunities for children, youth and adults by 2015. In 2000, most education indicators were lower in many of the Arab States than in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean or East Asia and the Pacific. Since then, they have been progressing slowly, while major progress was being made in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, there are major disparities between the poorest countries in the region (including Djibouti, Mauritania, the Sudan and Yemen) and the richer countries, even though several of the latter have education indicators far worse than their per capita income levels would suggest. Primary education coverage has been expanding, but early childhood care and education, youth and adult learning needs, and education quality have received insufficient attention. Countries also need to address internal disparities to improve equity in access and participation.

Early childhood care and education

Early childhood care and education can create the foundations for a life of expanded opportunity. Strong and growing evidence finds that high-quality care in the early years can be a springboard for success in primary school, offsetting social, economic and language-based disadvantage, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Yet every year millions of children in the Arab States enter school with learning impairments stemming from malnutrition, ill health, poverty and lack of access to pre-primary education.

- Children who suffer *nutritional deprivation in utero* or *malnutrition* during the early years of life are at risk of developmental delays that impede later learning. They tend to score worse on tests of cognitive function and development. The Young Lives Survey, which tracks children through their early years in four developing countries,

1. This is according to the Education for All regional classification. See Table 2 for countries in the region and subregions.

suggests that by age 7 or 8, the malnutrition penalty is equivalent to the loss of a full term of schooling. Malnutrition is also related to late entry in school and the risk of dropping out before completing a full primary cycle.

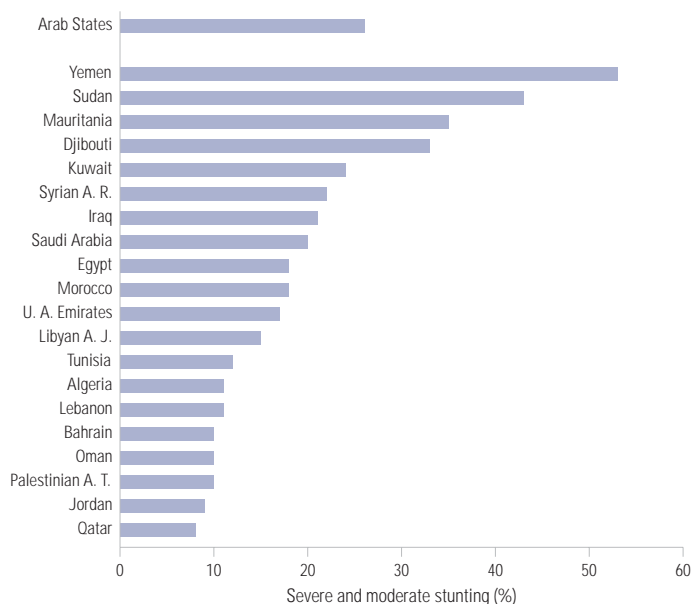
- Progress towards the target of halving malnutrition under the Millennium Development Goals has been painfully slow. Childhood *stunting* and *low birth weight* are indicators of the long-term health impact of malnutrition. In the Arab States, 26% of children under age 5 suffer from severe or moderate stunting, and there are major disparities within the region. Four of the forty-nine countries worldwide where stunting prevalence rates are 30% or more are Arab States: Djibouti (33%), Mauritania (35%), the Sudan (43%) and Yemen (53%). Other countries, including Jordan and Qatar, have low rates, on a par with those of Central and Eastern Europe (Figure 1). Recent international estimates suggest that about 19 million infants are delivered with low birth weight globally. This is a concern in some Arab States, particularly the Sudan and Yemen, where about one-third of children are underweight at birth. In the same countries, more than 40% of all children under age 5 are underweight for their age, pointing to far deeper nutritional deficits.
- Child mortality* rates help gauge children's well-being. While mortality rates are falling worldwide, the world is off track to meet the Millennium Development Goal of a two-thirds reduction from 1990 levels by 2015. In the Arab States, on average, 54 of every 1,000 children will die before reaching age 5. In Djibouti, Iraq, Mauritania and the Sudan, the rate

is close to or over 100‰. Meanwhile, several countries in the region have reached child mortality rates similar to the 21‰ average for Central and Eastern Europe (Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia at 22‰) or even close to the 7‰ average for North America and Western Europe (9‰ in the United Arab Emirates and 10‰ in Qatar and Kuwait).

- Maternal health* is intricately related to children's health. Mothers who are malnourished and suffering from micronutrient deficiencies face higher risk during pregnancy and childbirth, and are more likely to give birth to underweight babies. The failure of health systems to provide effective antenatal support, safe delivery and post-natal care also contributes to mortality, low birth weights and child illness. Being poor or belonging to particular indigenous or ethnic groups increases the disadvantage for expectant mothers. In some cases, it is because facilities are too far from their homes. In others, facilities are accessible but unaffordable – a problem that has held back efforts to expand coverage in Egypt. Successful policies to improve maternal and child health include scaling up maternal and child care services, achieving results through international aid partnerships, removing cost barriers to vital maternal and child health services, and assuring access to education.
- Enrolment in *pre-primary education* in the Arab States has increased by 26% since 1999, with 3.1 million children enrolled in 2007. However, pre-primary coverage remains far lower than average income might seem to indicate: out of nineteen countries in the region with data for 2007, fourteen had gross enrolment ratios (GERs) below 50%. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have less coverage than some far poorer countries, including Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania. Indeed, since 1999 pre-primary enrolment has increased in sub-Saharan Africa at three times the rate of the Arab States. The latter region, moreover, remains the only one with significant gender disparity at the early childhood level: just nine girls are enrolled for every ten boys.
- Two of the most pronounced *barriers to early childhood programmes* are household poverty and low parental education, regardless of age, gender or place of residence. For example, children in Egypt's poorest 20% of households are twenty-eight times less likely to participate in early childhood programmes than children in the wealthiest 20% of households. Lack of access also can be due to distance from facilities and the cost of programmes. Public investment should be geared towards narrowing disparities, targeting marginalized groups and providing services that are of good quality and accessible to the poor.

Figure 1: High levels of child stunting are holding back progress in education in several Arab States

Severe and moderate stunting among children under 5, 2000-2007¹



1. Data are for the most recent year available during the period specified.

Source: Table 2 below.

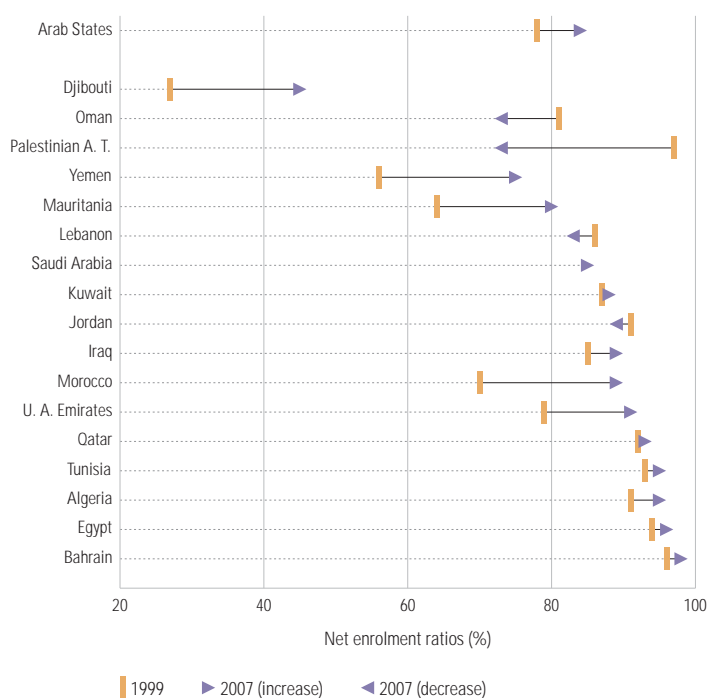
Universal primary education

Progress towards universal primary enrolment has been slower in the Arab States, since the World Education Forum in Dakar, than in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. It has also been unevenly distributed across countries. Being born a girl still carries a significant education disadvantage in many countries of the region. Geographic isolation, extreme poverty, social exclusion, disability and conflict also take their toll. Getting all children into and through primary education requires a far stronger focus on the marginalized. There is a risk that the global financial crisis might reverse positive trends.

- The region has made significant progress since 1999 in reducing its *out-of-school population*, with a decrease of 28%, or 2.2 million, to 5.8 million in 2007. This represents 8% of the global total. Half of these children, however, are expected never to enrol.
- The countries in the region with more than 1 million out-of-school children in 1999, Morocco and Yemen, had achieved respective declines of 67% and 36% by 2007 and 2005. Yet Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Yemen still have more than 200,000 out-of-school children each, accounting for 44% of the regional total. Other countries, including Jordan, Lebanon and Oman, registered increases. The Palestinian Autonomous Territories are going through a major education crisis, with more than 100,000 out-of-school children in 2007, up from 4,000 in 1999. Addressing this crisis is a major EFA challenge.
- Total enrolment in the region was 40.5 million in 2007, up by 5.1 million since 1999.
- Between 1999 and 2007, the average *net enrolment ratio* (NER) increased from 78% to 84%. Country NERs range from 45% in Djibouti to 98% in Bahrain (Figure 2). Countries with the lowest ratios in 1999 made dramatic progress, though they remain far from achieving universal primary education. However, many countries with relatively high NERs in 1999 have hardly progressed since then.
- Some countries are *making no progress* towards universal primary education while others are registering reversals. The Sudan, with a gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 66% in 2007, is clearly off track. The education crisis in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories is reflected in a collapse of the NER from 97% to 73% between 1999 and 2007 due to the combined effects of civil conflict, military incursions and restrictions on the movement of goods and people.
- The expansion of primary education has gone hand in hand with slow progress towards *gender parity*.² The gender parity index (GPI) of the regional GER was 0.90 in 2007,

Figure 2: Progress towards universal primary education has been uneven

Change in net enrolment ratios in primary education, selected countries, 1999 and 2007



Note: No data are available for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.
Source: Table 2 below.

up from 0.87 in 1999. Nine of the twenty Arab States have achieved gender parity in primary education (see Table 2). In countries that had low enrolment levels in 1999, including Djibouti, Morocco and Yemen, moving towards gender parity from a low starting point has helped generate large increases in primary enrolment.

- Gender, income and location interact with other *factors of disadvantage*, such as language, ethnicity and disability, to create multiple barriers to school entry. In Yemen, nearly 80% of out-of-school girls are unlikely ever to enrol, compared with 36% of boys.
- Sustained progress towards gender parity requires *changing attitudes towards girls and household labour practices*, and maintaining girls in school once they reach puberty. In Yemen, poverty drives both boys and girls into employment, but male child labourers are much more likely than female child labourers to also attend school. The disparity reflects longer work hours among girls, a division of labour that leaves girls with greater responsibility for household labour and a greater weight attached to boys' education.
- Children's journey through primary school is often marked by *late entry, dropout and grade repetition*. Less than 60% of children entered school at the official starting age in eight of the fifteen Arab States with data in 2007. And countries that have expanded primary education coverage dramatically

2. Gender parity is considered to be reached when the GPI is between 0.97 and 1.03.

in recent years are not yet able to ensure that all the additional pupils complete the primary education cycle. Survival to the last grade has declined in Mauritania (54% in 2006, down from 61% in 1999), Yemen (59%, down from 80%) and the Sudan (62%, down from 77%). In Mauritania and Yemen, 7% to 15% of pupils drop out in each primary grade. In other countries, grade repetition is a serious issue: 10% to 12% of all primary school pupils were repeating a grade in 2007 in Algeria, Djibouti and Morocco.

- *Cohort tracking* can provide a more integrated perspective on the distance to universal primary education than gross intake rates and NERs alone. Using Algeria and Morocco as examples, Figure 3 shows the proportion of children entering primary school at the official age and tracks their progress to completion. The Algerian school system takes in 85% of a cohort at the official age and brings 81% to primary school completion; i.e. 69% of a cohort has a chance to complete primary education on time. The Moroccan school system has expanded more recently and suffers from high levels of dropout: only 50% of a cohort is expected to complete primary education on time.
- The Arab States had 4 million *out-of-school adolescents* in 2007, equivalent to 18% of the lower secondary school age group; 59% were girls. Meanwhile, 18% of lower secondary

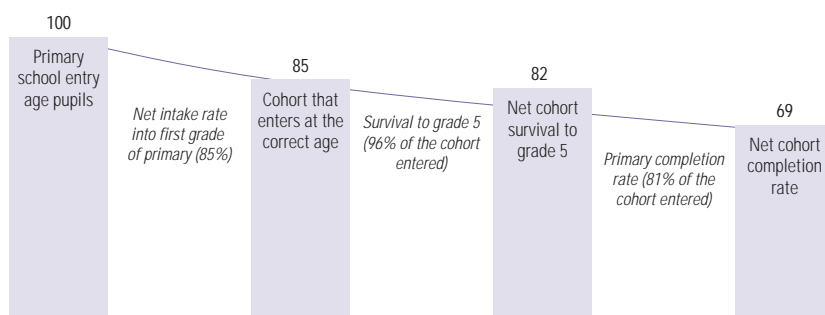
school age adolescents were still enrolled at the primary school level. Cost, distance to school, labour market demands and – especially for girls – social, cultural and economic barriers limit smooth transitions from primary to lower secondary. In Mauritania, the average journey time to the closest secondary school is eighty minutes in rural areas. This concern is now at the centre of the Education for All agenda in many countries: universal *basic* education is an increasingly prominent policy goal.

Youth and adult skills: expanding opportunities in the new global economy

The priority for improving youth education and employment prospects is to increase enrolment, retention and progression through basic education into secondary school. However, technical and vocational education programmes can strengthen the transition from school to employment, offer second chances and help combat marginalization. Vocational education is offered through a bewildering array of institutional arrangements, public and private providers and financing systems. While some countries supplement general education in schools with vocational options from companies or training institutes, others offer distinctive vocational options in secondary school. Governments have to strike a delicate balance between general and vocational education.

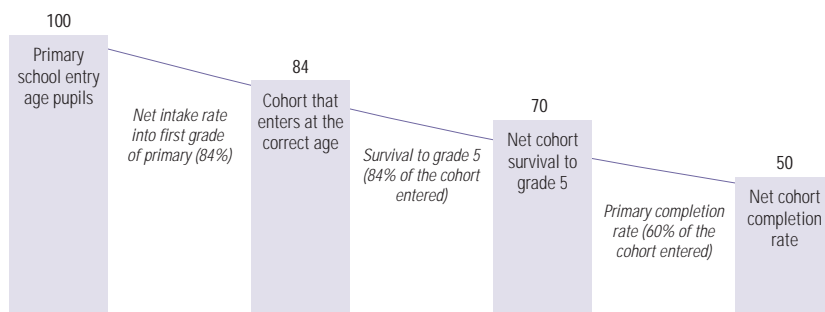
Figure 3: Children who start primary school have uneven chances of completing the last grade

Net cohort completion rates: the example of Algeria



In Algeria, the net intake rate into first grade was 85% in 2006. The survival rate to grade 5 was 96% and the primary completion rate 81%. These observed rates make it possible to estimate the prospects of a cohort of pupils aged 6 (the primary school starting age) completing the six-year cycle. If repetition and dropout rates remain unchanged, of 100 children aged 6, 85 will enter the first grade of primary school at the correct age. Of these, 82 will survive until grade 5, and 69 will graduate from the final grade.

Net cohort completion rates: the example of Morocco



In Morocco, the net intake rate into first grade was 84% in 2006. The survival rate to grade 5 was 84% and the primary completion rate 60%. These observed rates make it possible to estimate the prospects of a cohort of pupils aged 6 (the primary school starting age) completing the six-year cycle. If repetition and dropout rates remain unchanged, of 100 children aged 6, 84 will enter the first grade of primary school at the correct age. Of these, 70 will survive until grade 5, and 50 will graduate from the final grade.

The latter is often considered a safety net for failing students. Improving its quality and relevance is the most effective antidote to that perception.

- The regional secondary GER was 65% in 2007. Country GERs ranged from less than 25% in Mauritania to 103% in Qatar. The share of *technical and vocational education* in secondary enrolment in the Arab States was low, ranging from 0.7% in Yemen to 20.6% in Bahrain. The share was above 10% in only three of the fourteen countries with data, and less than 5% in seven. National skill development policies are likely to succeed only if they dramatically increase the flow of students into secondary schools generally.
- Girls are being left behind in general secondary and even more so in vocational education. Between 1999 and 2007, the region's average GPI in secondary education hardly increased, from 0.89 to 0.92, and girls accounted for 43% of technical and vocational enrolment in 2007. Public policy interventions need to strengthen opportunities for young girls to make the transition from primary school.
- Vocational education broadly aims to equip young people and adults with the skills and knowledge they need to cross the *bridge from school to work*. The economic crisis has made that crossing even more hazardous. The Arab States have some of the world's highest youth unemployment rates. For instance, in Egypt, youth account for more than 60% of the unemployed. Slow economic growth, rigid labour markets and gender discrimination have all stymied job creation. Many youth face protracted delays in securing their first jobs: in much of the region, the average duration of unemployment for first-time job seekers is measured in years rather than months.
- Gender discrimination, in terms of both job segmentation and wages, is deeply entrenched in the region's labour markets. In Egypt, fewer than one-quarter of women aged 15 to 29 are economically active – one-third the male rate. The transition from school to work is also more difficult for girls, with fewer than 25% of young women finding work within five years. Employer discrimination, early marriage and claims on the labour of women at home all reinforce gender disadvantage in labour markets.
- Governments in the Arab States region have identified *vocational education* as a priority. However, in several countries education systems are part of the employment problem. Courses are geared towards rote learning for university entrance exams that are seen as a route to public sector employment. Millions of youth leave school without employable skills and millions more emerge from university lacking the capabilities needed to compete for entry into private sector employment. Most parents and students in the region see vocational education as unattractive because it receives meagre budget resources, is often delivered by badly trained teachers lacking in motivation, bears little

relation to the skills employers seek and produces certificates that are not subject to uniform standards. Part of the problem in many countries is that the private sector has a limited voice in setting priorities and standards. As a result, the skills delivered through vocational programmes are often of little relevance. In addition, governance typically falls to a range of ministries and government agencies, so it is often fragmented and poorly coordinated. There are some notable exceptions. In Egypt, innovative partnerships are bringing together governments, business and donors. And Morocco has adopted far-reaching governance reforms aimed at improving quality, relevance and equity.

Youth and adult literacy

Illiteracy in youth and adulthood is the price people and countries are paying for past failures of education systems. When people emerge from school lacking basic reading, writing and numeracy skills and obtain no other education, they face a lifetime of disadvantage. At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, governments pledged to achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015. The pledge was ambitious and the target achievable, but it will be missed by a large margin in the region. Nonetheless, several countries have demonstrated that targeted policies can effectively promote adult literacy.

- An estimated 29% of the adult population in the Arab States, or 58 million people, lack the *basic literacy and numeracy* skills needed in everyday life. Egypt is among the top ten countries in the world for numbers of illiterate adults at 17 million, or a third of its adult population. Algeria, Morocco, the Sudan and Yemen each have 5 million to 10 million adult illiterates. Adult literacy rates are below 60% in Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan and Yemen, but much higher (close to or above 90%) in most Gulf countries as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.
- The regional adult literacy rate climbed by thirteen percentage points between 1985–1994 and 2000–2007, reaching 71%. Several countries achieved major advances. Algeria's adult literacy rate increased from 50% to 75%, Egypt's from 44% to 66% and Yemen's from 37% to 59%. However, population growth meant the *number of illiterate adults* increased by nearly 3 million in the region, including almost 400,000 in Yemen.
- Gender disparities contribute to the high adult illiteracy rates, with women accounting for 65% of the region's adult illiterate population. In Algeria and Yemen, the illiteracy rates for females are more than twice those for men. Morocco has made rapid progress towards improved literacy with every school generation, but it has been less successful in closing the gender gap. Gender disparities are magnified by wider structures of disadvantage and marginalization.

- Improvement in access to education across generations is one of the motors driving increased literacy levels in the region. The *youth literacy rate* in 2000–2007 was fifteen percentage points higher than the average for all adults. It rose above 95% in eleven of the nineteen countries with data and is below 80% only in Mauritania, Morocco and the Sudan.
- Nevertheless, the Arab States will not reach the literacy target set for 2015. Projections indicate that the adult illiteracy rate will have fallen by 34% instead of the 50% goal. Despite the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012), literacy continues to receive insufficient attention and financial commitment and is often not incorporated into wider poverty reduction strategies.

The quality of education

Success in achieving Education for All hinges not just on delivering more years in school, but also on ensuring that children acquire the necessary skills to shape their future life chances. Poor-quality education is jeopardizing the future of millions of young people, many of whom face the prospect of lifelong illiteracy.

- *International assessments* measure disparities in student learning achievements among countries. Thirteen of the twenty Arab States participated in the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) testing eighth grade students. They tend to have achievement levels below those of other countries with similar income levels. In Qatar and Saudi Arabia, both high-income countries, three-quarters of students register below the lowest score threshold in mathematics. In the middle-income countries of Algeria, Egypt and Morocco, more than half of students scored below the threshold. These results point to serious underlying policy problems and help explain the widely observed failure of Arab states to translate investment in education into improved skills, employment creation and economic growth.
- Once girls are in school, they tend to perform as well as, or better than, their male classmates. In most of the thirteen Arab States that participated in TIMSS, girls outperformed boys in mathematics. A similar number of countries recorded a female advantage in science, with larger gender gaps in many cases. In Qatar, girls' test scores were 13% higher than boys' in mathematics and 25% higher in science.
- In many developing countries, differences in performance across schools are linked to the teaching environment, often marked by large variations in class size, availability of books and teaching materials, teacher quality and school building standards. *Home language and family composition* also affect student performance. Disparities in learning are particularly wide in the Arab States. In Yemen, the difference between the best and worst performers is 368 scale points, or 165% of the mean score of 224.
- One of the most important requirements for sustained progress towards better quality in education is an improved learning environment. A poor school environment with badly ventilated classrooms, leaking roofs, inadequate sanitation or lack of materials represents a significant barrier to effective learning. It is essential to improve the learning process and the interaction between children and teachers. Time spent on effective learning is what matters for achievement.
- Teachers are the single most important education resource. Increasing the *recruitment of primary school teachers* has gone hand in hand with higher enrolment in primary education since 1999. Although countries set their own targets for pupil/teacher ratios, the most widely used international ceiling in primary education is 40:1. In the Arab States region, the number of primary school teachers increased by 26% to reach about 2 million in 2007. Pupil/teacher ratios in primary education were below 40:1 in all fifteen Arab States with data, except Mauritania with 43:1, down from 47:1 in 1999.
- In a few countries of the region, *shortages of trained teachers* pose a major barrier, at all education levels, to achieving Education for All. In 2007, only 13% of primary school teachers in Lebanon were trained while in the Sudan, the figure was 60%.
- An additional 1.9 million primary school teachers have to be recruited globally to reach universal primary education by 2015. The Arab States account for around 15% of the additional teachers required. The effort needed to close these gaps varies by country. In Djibouti and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, it will be necessary to step up the pace of recruitment and budget for new posts.

Recruitment is just one part of a far wider set of issues that governments have to address. Attracting and *retaining well-qualified candidates* and improving teacher morale are increasingly difficult. Balancing teacher salaries with budgetary constraints increases the risk that less qualified teachers might be recruited.

The EFA Development Index

The EFA Development Index (EDI) looks beyond individual goals to provide a composite measure of progress, encompassing access, equity and quality. The index includes only the four most easily quantifiable goals, attaching equal weight to each: universal primary education (goal 2), adult literacy (first part of goal 4), gender parity and equality (goal 5), and quality (goal 6).³ The EDI value for a given country is the arithmetic mean of the four proxy indicators. It falls between 0 and 1, with 1 representing full achievement of Education for All. For the school year ending in 2007, EDI values are calculated for fourteen of the Arab States. Table 1 situates these countries in relation to full EFA achievement (an EDI value of 0.97 to 1.00).

- No country has achieved the four most easily quantifiable EFA goals, but three are close to doing so. Six countries rank in an intermediate position, with EDI values ranging from 0.80 to 0.94, and five are far from achieving EFA, with EDI below 0.80.
- Low adult literacy rates are the main reason some Arab States are not close to EFA, reflecting past failures of their school systems. However, in Oman and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, it is the recent *decline in enrolment* that lowers the EDI, while in Iraq the gender gap also plays a major part. The five countries furthest from EFA perform poorly on all four indicators.
- For the period from 1999 to 2007, changes in the EDI can be calculated for five Arab States. The index increased in all five; for instance, the EDI for Yemen increased by 11% as a result of progress towards universal primary education, adult literacy and gender parity, despite a strong decrease in school quality.

Table 1: Few Arab States are close to having achieved EFA

Distribution of countries by EDI score and distance to overall EFA achievement, 2007

EFA achieved (EDI between 0.97 and 1.00)	Close to EFA (EDI between 0.95 and 0.96)
None (0)	Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates (3)
Intermediate position (EDI between 0.80 and 0.94)	Far from EFA (EDI below 0.80)
Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Qatar (6)	Djibouti, Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco, Yemen (5)

Source: Table 2 below.

Marginalization in education

Governments across the world constantly reaffirm their commitment to equal opportunity in education for all of their citizens, and international human rights conventions establish an obligation for them to act on that commitment. Yet most governments are systematically failing to address the extreme and persistent education disadvantages that leave large sections of their population marginalized. These disadvantages are rooted in deeply ingrained social, economic and political processes and unequal power relationships – and they are sustained by political indifference. They are also often reinforced by practices within the classroom. The failure to place inclusive education at the centre of the Education for All agenda is holding back progress towards the goals adopted at Dakar.

Measuring marginalization – a new data tool

Measuring marginalization in education is inherently difficult. There are no established cross-country benchmarks comparable to those used for assessing extreme income poverty, and national data are often not detailed enough to enable marginalized groups to be identified. The 2010 Report includes a new tool, available online, that provides a window on the scale of marginalization within countries and on the social composition of the marginalized. Called the Deprivation and Marginalization in Education (DME) data set,⁴ it also identifies groups facing particularly extreme restrictions on educational opportunity (Box 1). The data set focuses on three core areas:

- *Education poverty*: young adults aged 17 to 22 who have fewer than four years of education and are unlikely to have mastered basic literacy or numeracy skills.
- *Extreme education poverty*: young adults with fewer than two years of education, who are likely to face extreme disadvantages in many areas of their lives.
- *The bottom 20%*: those with the fewest years of education in a given society.

Figure 4 shows that levels of absolute deprivation in education remain higher in many Arab States than their per capita income would suggest. With double the average income of Lesotho, Morocco has twice the population share with fewer than four years of education. At the same average income level as Egypt, Jordan has an incidence of education poverty seven times lower. Indeed, while Egypt averages more years of education than Kenya (8.9 vs 7.5) it has a larger share of 17- to 22-year-olds with fewer than four years of education (15% vs 12%).

3. Reliable and comparable data relating to goal 1 (early childhood care and education) are not available for most countries, and progress on goal 3 (learning needs of youth and adults) is still not easy to measure or monitor. For further explanation of the EDI methodology, see the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*.

4. Available at <http://www.unesco.org/en/efareport/dme>.

Box 1: Measuring marginalization in education in Egypt

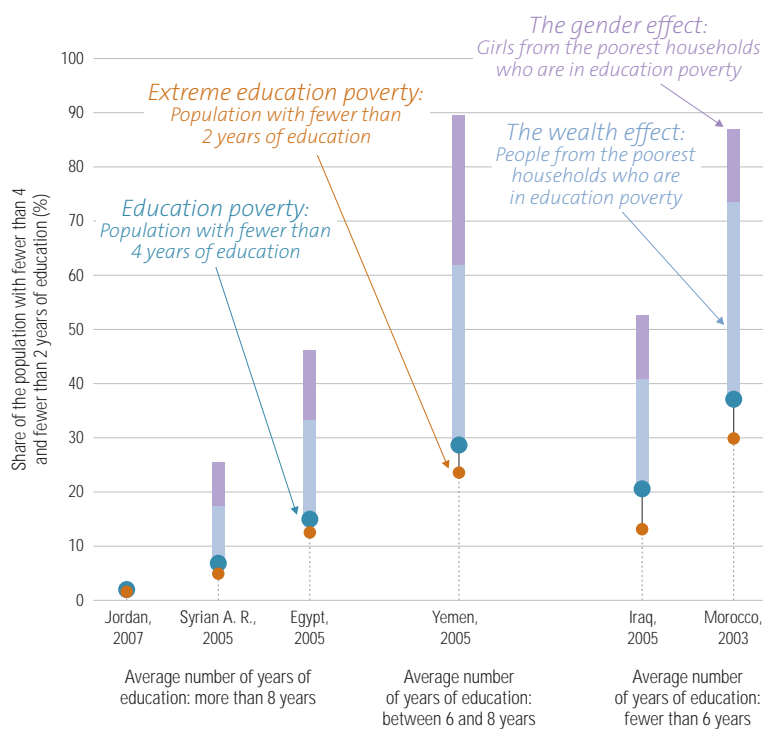
The DME data set can illustrate how mutually reinforcing effects work to create extreme educational disadvantage. In the case of Egypt, young adults aged 17 to 22 spend about nine years in school, on average. Gender disparities play an important role in explaining the relatively high level of education poverty in the country. Young women are twice as likely as young men to have fewer than four years of education – four times as likely if they are poor women. The incidence of deprivation among poor women in Egypt is higher than in some other countries, such as Honduras, Uganda and Zambia, at far lower levels of average income. Indeed, income differences and the rural-urban divide compound gender disparities. While rich urban boys and girls both average just over ten years of education, poor rural males average fewer than eight years, and females fewer than five. The rural part of Upper Egypt is an area of particularly deep disadvantage. Over 40% of the population lives in poverty and poor rural females average just over four years of schooling.

Factors leading to marginalization do not operate in isolation: wealth and gender intersect with language, ethnicity, region and rural-urban differences to create mutually reinforcing disadvantages.

- The *poor* face systematic disadvantage. For instance, in Yemen the incidence of four-year education deprivation among the poor is double the national average.
- In some Arab States, children belonging to *linguistic minorities* are not taught in their mother tongue, contributing to educational disparity.
- Cross-country analysis reveals that in some cases, *identifiable social or livelihood groups* face almost universal disadvantage.
- Educational marginalization is also high in *conflict-affected areas*.

Figure 4: Measuring education poverty across Arab States

% of national population, poorest households and girls in poorest households aged 17 to 22 with fewer than four years and fewer than two years of education, selected countries, most recent year



Source: UNESCO-DME (2009).

Time spent in school is just one dimension of marginalization. There are also marked gaps in learning achievement linked to socio-economic status. Having a home language different from the official language of instruction is also commonly associated with lower test scores.

Getting left behind

Marginalization in education is the product of a mixture of inherited disadvantage, deeply ingrained social processes, unfair economic arrangements and bad policies. These processes are examined with respect to the five groups most severely affected by marginalization.

- Being born into *poverty* is one of the strongest factors leading to marginalization in education. Household surveys consistently point to parental inability to afford education as a major factor behind non-attendance. In countries that have abolished formal school fees, the cost of uniforms, transport, books and supplies can create barriers to school entry and completion. *Economic shocks, droughts or health problems* can force poor households into coping strategies that damage children's education, especially that of girls. *Child labour* is another corollary of poverty that hurts education. While some children combine work with schooling, this often has adverse consequences for learning.
- *Group-based identities*, such as those related to race, ethnicity or language, are among the deepest fault lines in education. One reason children from disadvantaged ethnic groups perform poorly in school is that they are often taught in a language they struggle to understand. Failure to provide home language instruction has often been part of a wider process of cultural subordination and social discrimination, reinforced by an irrelevant curriculum insensitive to cultural diversity.

- Disadvantages linked to poverty and ethnicity are often reflected in *location and livelihoods*. Slums are focal points for educational deprivation, partly because many governments fail to recognize the entitlements of slum dwellers to basic services. In rural areas of low population density, long and sometimes dangerous journeys to school are an important part of marginalization, particularly for girls. Education systems also are unresponsive to pastoralist livelihoods and their inherent mobility.
- For those living in *conflict-affected countries*, attacks on schools and forced migration are detrimental to enrolment. Struggling to achieve universal primary education for their own children, these countries are ill equipped to provide education to large, vulnerable and extremely poor refugee populations, often speaking different languages. At the end of 2007, child soldiers were directly involved in armed confrontations in seventeen countries worldwide, including the Sudan. Other children experience trauma as a result of being part of a civilian population caught in violent conflict. The process of reconstructing education in Gaza will require not only repairs to physical infrastructure but also measures to support traumatized children. Indeed, owing to the scale of violence experienced by civilian populations in 2008 and 2009, many children have returned to school suffering from anxiety, the emotional shock of losing parents or siblings, and the memory of acts of extreme violence. The consequences for education are likely to be far reaching and long lasting.
- *Children with disabilities* suffer from social attitudes that stigmatize, restrict opportunity and lower self-esteem. These attitudes are often reinforced by neglect in the classroom, insufficient physical access, shortages of trained teachers and limited provision of teaching aids.
- *HIV and AIDS* compound wider problems associated with poverty and social discrimination, such as increased economic pressure due to ill-health of family members and orphanhood. Orphans who lose both parents or whose mothers have died are often less likely to stay in school than those whose parents or mother are alive.

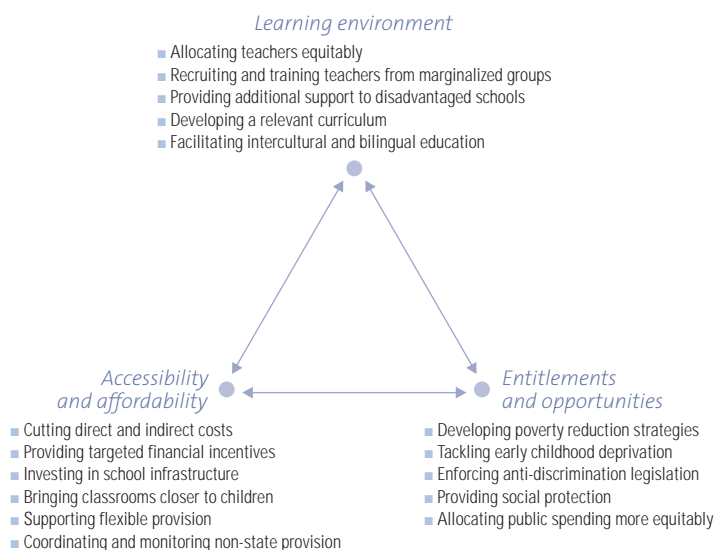
Levelling the playing field

There is no single formula for overcoming marginalization in education. Policies need to address underlying causes, such as social discrimination and stigmatization, as well as challenges specific to particular marginalized groups. The inequalities that the marginalized face are persistent and resistant to change, yet progress is possible with sustained political commitment to social justice, equal opportunity and basic rights. Three broad sets of policies can make a difference. They can be thought of as three points in an inclusive education triangle (Figure 5).

Accessibility and affordability

- Removing school fees is necessary to reach the poorest but is not enough on its own. Governments also need to lower indirect costs associated with uniforms, textbooks and informal fees. Financial stipend programmes for identifiably marginalized groups can lower household costs and provide incentives for education.
- Building schools closer to marginalized communities is also vital, especially for gender parity. School construction programmes should prioritize remote rural areas, urban slums and conflict-affected areas, and take into account the needs of learners with disabilities.
- More flexible approaches to provision could bring education within reach of some of the world’s most marginalized children. Such approaches include mobile schools for pastoralists, satellite schools, itinerant teachers and multigrade teaching for remote areas, and specialized training for teachers of children with disabilities.

Figure 5: The Inclusive Education Triangle



- Accelerated learning programmes can help provide a second chance to children and adolescents, provided government and employers recognize such programmes as legitimate for school and work. Unfortunately, the scale of such teaching is not widely recognized.

The learning environment

- Programmes that draw well-qualified teachers to schools facing the greatest deprivation can make a difference for marginalized children's learning. These policies need to be supported by teacher-training programmes that equip them with the skills and sensitivity to teach children from diverse backgrounds. Targeting financial and pedagogical support to schools in the most disadvantaged regions or those with large numbers of marginalized children also can make a difference.
- Intercultural and bilingual education is critical for providing ethnic and linguistic minority children with good quality schooling – and it can help overcome social stigmatization.
- Ensuring that children with disabilities enjoy opportunities for learning in an inclusive environment requires changes in attitudes, backed by investments in teacher training, learning equipment and data collection.

Entitlements and opportunities

- Legal provisions can play a role in overcoming discrimination, and some marginalized groups have successfully challenged practices and policies that resulted in educational marginalization and institutionalized segregation. Legal provisions are likely to prove most effective when backed by political mobilization on the part of the marginalized.
- Social protection can mitigate the vulnerability that comes with poverty and associated forms of disadvantage and can improve enrolment and attendance among poor and other marginalized groups. Conditional and unconditional transfers of cash and food can build the resilience of poor and vulnerable households so that they can manage risk without compromising the long-term welfare of their children.
- Breaking down disadvantage in education requires simultaneous implementation of public policies across a broad front, with education interventions integrated into wider strategies for poverty reduction and social inclusion.

Financing education

The economic downturn has begun to affect education systems in the Arab States. There is a real danger that the budgetary pressures and rising poverty caused by the global financial crisis will stall or even reverse progress in education. Moreover, while overall aid is rising, several major donors are falling far short of their pledges. A concerted effort on the part of donors and recipient countries is critical in the current economic climate.

National financing

The region's progress towards achieving the EFA goals has been hampered by relatively slow growth and low shares of national income allocated to education. Higher estimates of the financing gap for achieving EFA are also cause for concern (Box 2).

- The share of GNP devoted to education ranged from 1.6% in the United Arab Emirates to 7.8% in Djibouti in 2007. The share was little changed from 1999 in most of the seven countries with data available for both years, except Lebanon, where it increased from 2.0% to 2.7%.
- In 2007, the share of education in *government budgets* ranged from 9.6% in Lebanon to 31.1% in Oman, where it had increased by ten percentage points since 1999. Mauritania devoted only 2.8% of its GNP and 10.1% of its government budget to education in 2006; in the latter case, 20% is commonly used as the benchmark for minimally adequate funding in low-income countries.

Box 2: Determining the cost of bridging the financing gap

The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010* reviewed estimates of the EFA financing gap in a study assessing the costs associated with achieving key education goals. Of the forty-six countries included in the study, three are in the Arab States region: Mauritania, the Sudan and Yemen. The estimated gap covers basic education (literacy, pre-primary and primary education) as well as a provision for reaching the most marginalized sections of society.

- The global EFA financing gap is around US\$16 billion for basic education, or 1.5% of the collective GDP of the forty-six countries.
- Globally, reaching the marginalized requires additional finance: extending primary school opportunities to social groups facing extreme and persistent deprivation will cost US\$3.7 billion.
- Low-income countries affected by conflict account for 41% of the global financing gap. In southern Sudan (which has a separate education system and can be considered low income even though the Sudan as a whole is a lower middle income country), the collapse of public financing for education has

- The share of primary education in public current expenditure on education varies according to the degree of education development. Among the six countries (of twenty) with data, it is lowest in Kuwait (21.3%) and highest in Mauritania (62.0%).

International aid

- International aid is a vital part of the Education for All compact. Averaged over 2006 and 2007, total aid to education in the Arab States amounted to US\$1.7 billion, up from US\$1.2 billion annually over 1999 and 2000. However, while education accounted for 18% of total aid flows to the region in 1999 and 2000, the share was only 9% in 2006 and 2007. Aid to basic education has increased by 54% since the beginning of the decade.
- Several Arab States are 'emerging donors', including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia spent US\$2.1 billion on aid in 2007 and is the largest emerging donor. In September 2008, the country joined the launch of Education for All: Class of 2015, a new global initiative. It pledged US\$500 million in concessional loan financing for basic education – its first such undertaking and one pointing to a greater share for basic education in its overall lending.
- Countries affected by conflict pose some of the greatest challenges for aid partnerships, and support for such countries remains uneven. In many conflict-affected countries, expenditure on security operations and emergency assistance dominates donor support, with long-term development in general – and education in particular – taking a back seat.

- Strong efforts on the part of donor and recipient countries alike are needed if the delivery of aid is to be improved in accordance with the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*. Improved aid predictability and, when feasible, greater use of recipient government management systems are particularly crucial. At present, the quality of a country's public financial management system is a weak guide to whether donors use it. In addition, the international multilateral framework for cooperation in education needs to be strengthened through fundamental reform of the EFA Fast Track Initiative (Box 3).

Box 3: The Fast Track Initiative

The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is an important multilateral framework for delivering aid to education in thirty-six countries, including three Arab States: Djibouti, Mauritania and Yemen. However, it has fallen far short of expectations due to limited disbursement, lack of transparency in decision-making and governance problems.

The FTI's Catalytic Fund has suffered from low resource mobilization, poor disbursement rates and a narrow donor base. Several countries whose FTI plans were endorsed in 2002-2004 have yet to receive their full allocation. After four years, Yemen had received less than 60% of its Catalytic Fund allocations. Among countries allocated grants since 2007, Mauritania was still waiting to receive its first disbursement at the beginning of 2009.

The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010* calls for urgent, comprehensive reform of the FTI. Following the example of global health funds, a reformed FTI could be used to harness more innovative sources of financing for education, including via private foundations and companies.

shifted the burden to households, which must cover a third of overall costs. Reducing the burden on households is a priority for improving access. Conflict has led to the development of separate political administrations and parallel education systems in the north and south. Financing for these systems varies. The best estimates indicate that the north devotes 13% of government revenue to education, compared with 6% in southern Sudan, leading to large differences in spending per pupil. Primary school pupil/teacher ratios are 33:1 in the north and 51:1 in the south.

- Developing countries could close part of the financing gap themselves by according greater financial priority to basic education in national financing and budget allocation. Their governments need to increase public spending by 2.5% of GDP, on average, to meet EFA goals.
- Even with these efforts, poorer countries cannot meet the costs of achieving the goals without the donor community. Globally, aid levels for basic education need to increase sixfold, from US\$2.7 billion to around US\$16 billion.

Table 2: Arab States, selected education indicators

Country or territory	Total population (000)	Compulsory education (age group)	EFA Development Index (EDI)	Adult literacy rate (15 and over)				Early childhood care and education			
				1985–1994 ¹		2000–2007 ¹		Child survival and well-being		Pre-primary education	
				Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Under-5 mortality rate (%)	Moderate and severe stunting (%)	GER	
										2005–2010	2000–2007 ¹	1999	2007
Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	Total (%)						
Arab States											
Algeria	33 858	6-16	0.890	50	0.57	75	0.79	33	11	3	30
Bahrain	753	6-14	0.961	84	0.87	89	0.96	14	10	36	52
Djibouti ⁴	833	6-15	0.709	...	...	...	...	126	33	0.4	3
Egypt	75 498	6-14	...	44	0.55	66	0.77	34	18	11	17
Iraq	28 993	6-11	0.796	...	...	74	0.76	105	21	5	6
Jordan	5 924	6-16	0.946	...	...	91	0.91	22	9	29	32
Kuwait	2 851	6-14	0.965	74	0.88	94	0.98	10	24	78	77
Lebanon	4 099	6-15	0.898	...	...	90	0.92	26	11	61	67
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	6 160	6-15	...	76	0.71	87	0.83	20	15	5	9
Mauritania ⁴	3 124	6-16	0.717	...	...	56	0.76	92	35	...	2
Morocco	31 224	6-15	0.770	42	0.52	56	0.63	36	18	62	60
Oman	2 595	...	0.879	...	...	84	0.87	14	10	6	31
Palestinian A. T.	4 017	6-15	0.914	...	...	94	0.93	20	10	39	30
Qatar	841	6-17	0.941	76	0.94	93	0.96	10	8	25	47
Saudi Arabia	24 735	6-11	...	71	0.72	85	0.89	22	20	...	11
Sudan	38 560	6-13	...	...	...	61	0.73	105	43	19	23
Syrian Arab Republic	19 929	6-14	...	...	...	83	0.85	18	22	8	10
Tunisia	10 327	6-16	...	...	...	78	0.80	22	12	14	...
United Arab Emirates	4 380	6-11	0.966	71	0.95	90	1.02	9	17	64	85
Yemen ⁴	22 389	6-14	0.648	37	0.30	59	0.53	79	53	0.7	0.9
	Sum			Weighted average				Weighted average		Weighted average	
Arab States	321 092	...	...	58	0.66	71	0.77	54	26	15	19
Developing countries	5 358 052	...	...	68	0.77	80	0.86	81	30	27	36
World	6 656 326	...	...	76	0.85	84	0.90	74	28	33	41

Primary education											Country or territory
NER total (%)		GPI of GER (F/M)		Out-of-school children ² (000)	Survival rate to last grade total (%)		% of trained teachers	Pupil/teacher ratio ³			
1999	2007	1999	2007		1999	2006		2007	1999	2007	
Arab States											
91	95	0.91	0.94	149	91	92	99	28	24	Algeria	
96	98	1.01	1.00	0.4	92	99	...	...	...	Bahrain
27	45	0.71	0.88	56	...	...	80	40	34	Djibouti ⁴
94	96	0.91	0.95	232	99	97	...	23	27	Egypt	
85	89	0.82	0.83	508	49	<u>70</u>	...	25	21	Iraq	
91	89	1.00	1.02	60	97	99	...	...	...	Jordan
87	88	1.01	0.98	13	94	100	100	13	10	Kuwait	
86	83	0.95	0.97	74	91	89	13	14	14	Lebanon	
...	...	0.98	0.95	...	...	...	...	...	...	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
64	80	0.99	1.06	89	61	54	100	47	43	Mauritania ⁴	
70	89	0.81	0.90	395	75	78	100	28	27	Morocco	
81	73	0.97	1.01	87	92	98	100	25	13	Oman	
97	73	1.01	1.00	108	99	99	100	38	30	Palestinian A. T.	
92	93	0.96	0.99	1.2	...	<i>89</i>	69	13	11	Qatar	
...	85	...	0.96	497	...	...	91	...	11	Saudi Arabia
...	...	0.85	0.86	...	77	62	59	...	37	Sudan	
92	...	0.92	0.96	...	87	95	...	25	...	Syrian Arab Republic	
93	95	0.95	0.97	35	87	94	...	24	18	Tunisia	
79	91	0.97	0.99	5	90	100	100	16	17	United Arab Emirates	
56	75	0.56	0.74	906	80	59	...	22	...	Yemen ⁴	
Weighted average		Weighted average		Sum	Median		Weighted average				
78	84	0.87	0.90	5 752	90	94	100	23	21	Arab States	
80	86	0.91	0.95	68 638	...	81	85	27	27	Developing countries	
82	87	0.92	0.96	71 791	90	89	...	25	25	World	

Notes:

Data underlined are for 2004.

Data in italics are for 2005.

Data in bold italics are for 2006.

Data in bold are for 2008 or 2007

for survival rate to last grade.

The averages are derived from both published data and broad estimates for countries for which no recent data or reliable publishable data are available.

¹ Data are for the most recent year available during the period specified.² Data reflect the actual number of children not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific enrolment ratios of primary school age children, which measure the proportion of those who are enrolled in either primary or secondary school (primary adjusted NER).³ Based on headcounts of pupils and teachers.⁴ Fast Track Initiative (FTI); countries with endorsed sector plans.

Sources: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, statistical tables; UNESCO Institute for Statistics; OECD-DAC online CRS database.

Table 2 (continued)

Country or territory	Secondary education								Tertiary education	
	GER in lower secondary		GER in upper secondary		GER in total secondary				GER	
	2007		2007		1999		2007		2007	
	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)
Arab States										
Algeria	108	0.95	58	1.36	...	...	83	1.08	24	1.40
Bahrain	104	1.00	100	1.08	95	1.08	102	1.04	32	2.46
Djibouti ⁴	37	0.72	19	0.63	14	0.72	29	0.70	3	0.69
Egypt	...	...	...	...	82	0.92	...	...	35	...
Iraq	58	0.64	32	0.70	34	0.63	45	0.66	16	0.59
Jordan	96	1.02	76	1.06	89	1.02	89	1.03	40	1.10
Kuwait	96	0.98	83	1.07	98	1.02	91	1.02	18	2.32
Lebanon	85	1.09	75	1.13	74	1.09	80	1.10	54	1.24
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	116	0.99	77	1.41	...	...	94	1.17	...	...
Mauritania ⁴	26	0.85	24	0.93	19	0.77	25	0.89	4	...
Morocco	74	0.84	38	0.90	37	0.79	56	0.86	11	0.89
Oman	94	0.96	86	0.97	75	1.00	90	0.96	25	1.18
Palestinian A. T.	98	1.04	75	1.18	80	1.04	92	1.06	46	1.22
Qatar	106	0.98	101	0.98	87	1.11	103	0.98	16	2.87
Saudi Arabia	96	...	92	...	...	...	94	...	30	1.46
Sudan	45	0.89	25	0.98	26	...	33	0.93	...	...
Syrian Arab Republic	95	0.96	34	1.02	40	0.91	72	0.97	...	...
Tunisia	113	1.00	71	...	72	1.02	88	...	31	1.51
United Arab Emirates	101	0.98	81	1.11	76	1.06	92	1.03	23	2.32
Yemen ⁴	51	0.52	40	0.46	41	0.37	46	0.49	9	0.37
	Weighted average				Weighted average				Weighted average	
Arab States	76	0.89	52	0.97	60	0.89	65	0.92	22	1.05
Developing countries	75	0.94	48	0.94	52	0.89	61	0.94	18	0.96
World	78	0.95	54	0.95	60	0.92	66	0.95	26	1.08

Education finance				Country or territory
Total public expenditure on education as % of GNP		Total aid to basic education (constant 2007 US\$ million)	Total aid to basic education per primary school age child (constant 2007 US\$)	
1999	2007	2006–2007 annual average	2006–2007 annual average	
Arab States				
...	...	11	3	Algeria
...	...	0	0	Bahrain
7.5	7.8	14	115	Djibouti ⁴
...	3.7	154	16	Egypt
...	...	43	9	Iraq
5.0	...	75	89	Jordan
...	3.3	...	...	Kuwait
2.0	2.7	10	22	Lebanon
...	...	0.4	1	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
2.8	2.8	26	57	Mauritania ⁴
5.5	5.6	41	11	Morocco
4.2	4.2	0.3	1	Oman
...	...	38	81	Palestinian A. T.
...	...	...	...	Qatar
7.0	<u>6.7</u>	2	1	Saudi Arabia
...	...	74	12	Sudan
...	...	5	3	Syrian Arab Republic
7.2	7.5	6	6	Tunisia
...	<u>1.6</u>	...	...	United Arab Emirates
...	...	47	12	Yemen ⁴
Median		Sum	Weighted average	
...	4.0	551	14	Arab States
4.5	4.5	4 046	7	Developing countries
4.6	4.9	4 874	8	World

Notes:

Data underlined are for 2004.

Data in italics are for 2005.

Data in bold italics are for 2006.

Data in bold are for 2008 or 2007 for survival rate to last grade.

The averages are derived from both published data and broad estimates for countries for which no recent data or reliable publishable data are available.

¹. Data are for the most recent year available during the period specified.². Data reflect the actual number of children not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific enrolment ratios of primary school age children, which measure the proportion of those who are enrolled in either primary or secondary school (primary adjusted NER).³. Based on headcounts of pupils and teachers.⁴. Fast Track Initiative (FTI): countries with endorsed sector plans.

Sources: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, statistical tables; UNESCO Institute for Statistics; OECD-DAC online CRS database.

Regional Overview: Arab States



e-mail: efareport@unesco.org

Tel.: +33 1 45 68 10 36

Fax: +33 1 45 68 56 41

www.efareport.unesco.org