



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Education for All

Arab States

Education for All 2015 Regional Review



EDUCATION FOR ALL
REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORT
OF THE 2015 NATIONAL REVIEWS
IN THE ARAB STATES REGION

FULL VERSION

UNESCO REGIONAL BUREAU FOR EDUCATION
IN THE ARAB STATES - BEIRUT

APRIL 2015

INTRODUCTION

At the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, more than 160 Member States and the international community committed to attaining quality education for all by 2015 through achievement of the Six Education for All (EFA) goals. With the target year just around the corner and ongoing dialogue on the future education agenda, it is time for all countries and the Arab region as a whole to reflect on their progress towards the EFA goals and targets and start thinking about where to, beyond 2015.

To this end, Member States in the Arab region conducted national reviews of EFA in 2014 to assess progress made, highlight issues and challenges encountered and propose a way forward to inform the future education agenda beyond 2015, as a follow-up to the Global Education Meeting held in Muscat in May 2014 and in preparation for the Arab States Regional Conference on Education Post-2015 that took place in January 2015.

There is much story to tell of countries' journey towards attaining quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2015. National reports were a result of a long and rigorous process of data collection, verification, analysis and documentation. Ministers of Education lead highly inclusive and participatory national processes in producing the comprehensive and detailed country reports that address all 6 EFA goals, discusses country challenges, successes and strategies and that make recommendations on the way forward.

Based on the analyses of National Review reports and of complementary data from UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), the Regional Synthesis Report attempts to reflect on the region's performance since 2000 and illustrate Member States' efforts through documentation of good practices and lessons learned included in the National Review reports. The draft Regional version of the Regional Report was presented at aforementioned Regional Conference on Education Post-2015 held in January 2015 during which discussions were held both in plenary and breakout sessions in order to solicit further reflections on the region's EFA performance and contribute to shaping the future education agenda from regional and national perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNESCO would wish to acknowledge the Arab Member States, particularly His/Her Excellencies Ministers of Education for their commitment and lead role in advancing on the EFA agenda at national level and making commendable progress towards attaining quality education and lifelong learning for all by the target year of 2015. Also UNESCO would like to express appreciation to the National EFA Coordinators and National Commissions for UNESCO for their continued efforts. Furthermore, special acknowledgement should be made to International Organizations, regional organizations, donors, civil society organizations and the private sector for the excellent partnerships throughout the EFA journey since 2000.

In finalizing this Report, UNESCO wishes to thank Iraq, Syria and Qatar for providing substantive comments for further improvement.

Lastly but not the least, UNESCO would like to sincerely thank Dr Tayseer Al Noaimi and Ms Nou Abu-Ragheb for their contributions made to the drafting of the Regional Report.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEA	Adult Education Agency (Egypt)
ANER	Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate
APTP	Arab Program on Teacher Policy and Professional Development
ALECSO	Arab League Education, Cultural and Social Organization
ARAIEQ	Arab Regional Agenda for Improving Education Quality
CBO	Community Based Organization
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education for All
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ERfKE	Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy Project (Jordan)
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global EFA Meeting
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GNP	Gross National Product
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAMP	Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Program
LDC	Least Developed Country
LMS	Learning Management System
LMTF	Learning Matrix Task Force
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGI	Millennium Development Goals Index
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCR	Pupil Classroom Ratio
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment

PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
SBM	School-Based Management (systems)
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal primary education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the year 2015 approaching, and with it the deadline to the Education for All goals, it is timely for all countries and regions to reflect on their progress towards the EFA goals and targets and start thinking about the post 2015 agenda. The best way to set a future agenda is to assess past performance and consider the available policy options.

The Arab region is doing just that; in follow-up to the Muscat meeting in May 2014 and in preparation for the Arab Ministerial meeting that took place in January 2015. This report attempts to reflect on the region's performance based on several sources but primarily on the national country reports submitted to UNESCO in August 2014 using recent data and reflecting on the reported strategies and best practices included in the country reports. It will be finalized based on the discussions of the upcoming Ministerial meeting pertaining to the successes; challenges and lessons learned that will shape the recommendations for the 2030 agenda.

National reports were a result of a long and rigorous process of data collection, verification, analysis and documentation. Most countries had their Ministries of Education lead the highly inclusive and participatory effort in producing the comprehensive and detailed country reports that addresses all 6 EFA goals and indicators and discusses country challenges, successes and strategies. Most country reports were completed and submitted to UNESCO Summer of 2014, and this report heavily relies on all the data and analysis the reports offer.

It is essential to begin by providing the regional development context and specifically considering the education sector within the larger development. This background helps the reader keep everything in perspective and all data contextualized to better understand the performance of the region and individual countries towards EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The description of the context will identify development trends, emerging issues and prospects based on the analysis of the situation in terms of MDGS and Human Development.

This report also hopes to emphasize the importance of looking at individual countries, their specific set of strengths and challenges and also the circumstances in which they are operating. While it is crucial to have a number of universal higher level results and indicators that all countries are to aspire to reach, having one modality of measurement could be setting many for failure. At this juncture, it is crucial for the world to be looking at the core issues that have surfaced in almost all countries; such as uneven quality and inequality, and start pushing the agenda to recognize that "each goal must be clear and measurable, with the aim of ensuring that no one is left behind" (UNESCO, 2013/14). The 2013/14 Global Monitoring Report emphasizes how quality education is a 'right' and that principle should be the guiding one when setting the post 2015 goals and targets.

Furthermore, there will be a rundown of the performance of the region against the six EFA goals provided. When considering the six goals, the report will be highlighting the main

achievements, key issues and challenges and good practices while giving prominent country specific examples for each sub-section. This exercise is to help the region with its reflection on the past 15 years and accurate identification of the needs to be primarily focused on in the next 15 years. While homogeneity is not a characteristic of the region, this honest and transparent compilation of what worked and what did not work would be of immense benefit; this would lead to setting a more achievable agenda for 2030.

The report will proceed to investigate design and implementation strategies that have been formulated and used in different countries as part of their plan to achieving the different EFA goals. There will be mention and description of those that were reported on in the country national reports as being particularly successful and effective, while also touching on the main challenges and issues in implementing an effective strategy that works.

The last section, and the most important, will identify the major trends and emerging issues based on analysis of all the compiled data. Those trends will consider not only the challenges but surely also lessons learned and finally what remains to be done. Key recommendations will be devised to be considered and thought about by all Arab States for the post 2015 agenda and will ultimately contribute to the worldwide discussion on the 2030 agenda at the 2015 World Education Forum in Incheon.

All Arab States have to be commended for their serious and significant efforts towards achieving the EFA goals. Despite the heterogeneity in progress achieved and results reached and sustained, all countries have shown a certain level of commitment to the EFA agenda and has considered all available resources to try and achieve better and more equal education for its young citizens. Throughout the report, certain themes will be highlighted that would explain certain trends in countries' achievement, or lack thereof, such as social and economic instability. These themes are important to underscore for the powerful and inevitable impact they have on any country's development, in all sectors including education.

Aside from the specific contexts of the countries in the Region, the region in general terms have made the most noticeable progress in EFA goals 2, 4 and 5; in primary enrolment rates, literacy and in gender parity and equality. Many obstacles persist in achieving better and faster progress in increasing access to pre-primary education and improving the general quality of education in the Arab States.

Despite the many commendable efforts in the Arab States towards Goal 1, expanding Early Childhood Care and Education, this goal ***is the goal that gained the least momentum and achieved the least progress in the Arab Region***; access and therefore enrolment rates remain low across the region. The reason for this is at both the supply and demand sides; governments have not yet made ECCE a compulsory stage of education and therefore are allocating less funds and attention to ECE. On the other hand, parents' awareness is still limited in regard to the benefits and importance of ECCE for their children and many still choose not to enroll them.

The second Goal, although the Arab countries have not yet achieved universal primary education where they are at an average of 87% Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) in 2011, a 10 percentage point increase since 1999- it is still considered a very impressive increase given the high population growth in the region. It is worth noting that most countries in the Region, regardless of the imperfect average, have now very high ANER and are considered have achieved (or close) this goal, but the average is brought down by certain countries that have been struggling such as Mauritania and Yemen.

Goal 3 has been a more challenging one to monitor and report against its indicators because it not only includes secondary school enrolment- which is relatively straight forward- but it also considers vocational and technical training and retraining for adults. Countries were not provided with clear indicators or targets and that vagueness led to inconsistent and at times unclear reporting by countries in their national reports. In general though, genuine efforts are exerted but no strong lifelong learning strategies are being devised or implemented.

As for Goal 4, that focuses on improving adult literacy levels, the Region has shown very good progress since the inception of the EFA goals on the year 2000 where it has increased by 22 percentage points reaching 77% in 2011. Arab countries have shown more interest in providing adults with literacy programs that accommodate their general lifestyle such as having a day job. This has led the Region to be among those with fewest illiterate adults across other regions in the world.

Goal 5 that aims at reaching gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and gender equality by 2015 is one that the Arab region has achieved more noticeable progress compared to other goals, specifically in regard to parity. Although most Arab countries have achieved gender parity in primary education, more serious disparities still exist in secondary education and that will need more focused efforts post 2015 to achieve.

Finally, Goal 6, similar to all other regions and countries worldwide, the Arab Region is struggling with the education quality issue. While there remain challenges with access, they are easier to identify and the solutions are simpler- as opposed to with quality where there are so many different factors that contribute to a high or low quality education system. With this goal, the indicators are relatively straightforward and can be reported against, which the country reports have, but whether or not they are a strong indication to quality education is an important question.

The above shows that there are goals that have witnessed good progress and others that have not yet gotten close to being "achieved". This reemphasizes the importance of this exercise and validates how timely and crucial it is for the region in order to honestly consider the progress achieved and the real needs in the countries individual contexts to ultimately be able to provide better access to quality education. It is a time to look at the deficits, show serious intention to recognizing the root causes and begin engineering the solutions.

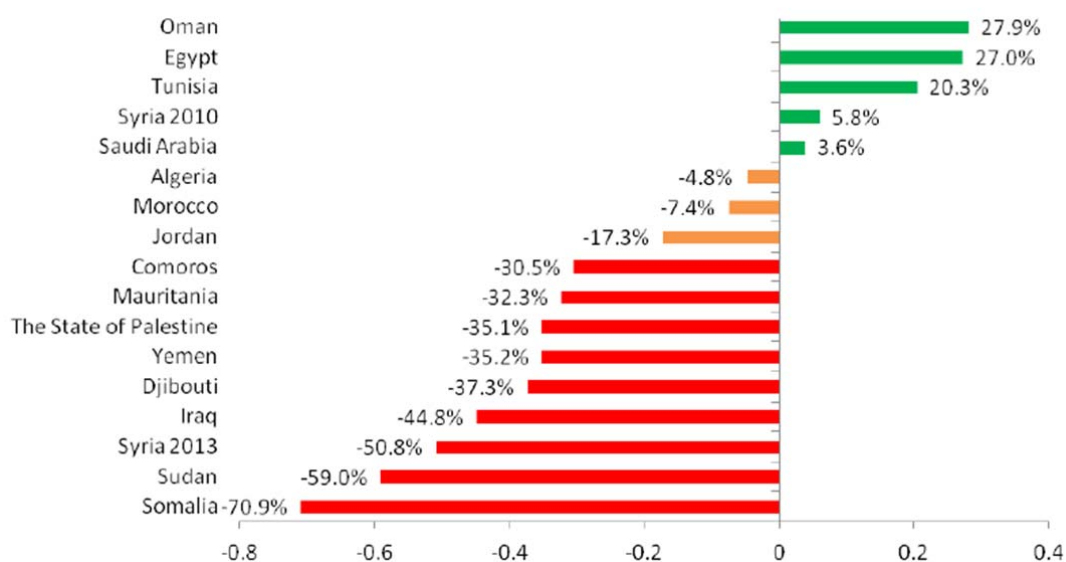
SECTION 1: OVERALL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

1.1 OVERALL CONTEXT

Assessing any country or region progress in education cannot be conducted in isolation of the overall context and situation, or without considering the political, social and economic climate. Education apparatuses are part of a larger eco-system where it and its parts have direct and indirect effects on each other. The link between each element of the system is so strong that very often the cause and effect are not easily identified or differentiated; that is particularly true when the education sector is the core of the discussion.

Despite all the challenges in the education sector and limited progress towards universal quality education, the Arab World has done best in education when compared with other sectors. Unfortunately, on all development indicators as measured against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), except for education access indicators, the Arab Region lags behind. The below graph shows the MDG Achievement Index achieved by the Arab States- it is clear that all Arab countries, except Oman, Egypt, Tunisia, Syria (in 2010) and Saudi Arabia, have indices in the minus which indicates little and slow progress on most of the MDG goals and indicators.

Figure 1: MDGs Achievement Index (MDGI) for Arab Countries



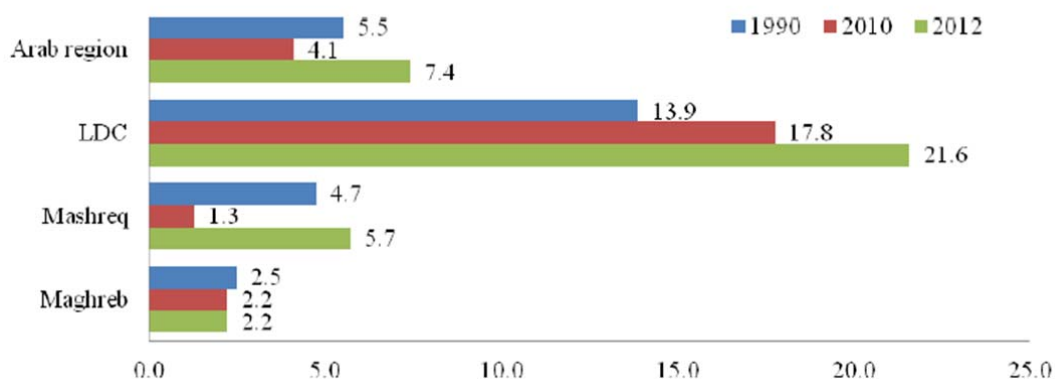
Source: UN and LAS (2013)

Poverty

In fact, the Arab Region is the only developing region that has been showing increase in poverty and hunger since 1990 according to the UNDP 2014 report. Extreme poverty has increased and the rate of reducing undernourishment is below the target by 20% still (UNDP, 2014). It is worth noting that great disparities exist among the Arab States; obviously

countries such as Yemen and Sudan are suffering greatly, while the GCC countries have established more stable economies. The below table demonstrates extreme poverty that is particularly evident in the Least Developing Countries (LDC) and the other sub-regions. The categorization is as follows: Least Developing Countries (LDC) include Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen. Mashreq includes Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Maghreb includes Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Figure 2: Incidence of extreme poverty, based on the international poverty line at US\$1.25 a day



Source: Data for 1990 and 2000 are based on World Bank 2013. Data for 2012 are ESCWA estimates.

Conflict and Instability

The Arab region witnessed little stability and many very major events. Those events, in most cases, led to systemic and more persistent vulnerability of several Arab states, their structures and people. The assessment of progress, in education and other sectors, and the setting of the post 2015 agenda need to be done using that lens; several Arab states are now in such dire situations that any recommendations need to aim at building their ability to handle the shocks, manage their losses and build their resilience. In that respect, the recommendations could use the policies that the Human Development Report 2014 outlined for reducing vulnerability which are; (1) embracing universalism, (2) putting people first, (3) committing to collective action, and (4) coordinating between states and social institutions (UNDP, 2014).

Box 1: Syria: Tragedy for children's education

The conflict in Syria, now entering its fourth year, has become a tragedy for a generation of children whose chances of a quality education – or any education at all – have disappeared. An estimated 5.5 million children are now affected by the crisis – they have been displaced within their own country, become refugees in neighbouring countries, become trapped in besieged areas, or their schools have stopped functioning. Children displaced within Syria now number almost 3 million, and 1.2 million are child refugees (UNICEF. *Under siege: the*

devastating impact on children of three years of conflict in Syria. March 2014).

As the pre-conflict data in this report make clear, Syria met a number of EFA goals, with virtually 100% primary school enrolment and gender parity at that level. Other indicators were moving in a positive direction. Now an estimated 3 million children are no longer in school – 20% of schools have been destroyed, damaged, turned into shelters or taken over by armed groups or forces.

International agencies such as UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF are working to provide education for refugee children in neighboring countries, but the challenge is changing and growing month by month.

With the increasing number of Syrian refugees in Iraq, urgent challenges arise on many levels. Around 227,000 Syrians (57.60 per cent urban-based refugees, 42.40 per cent camp-based refugees) have entered Iraq since the beginning of the turmoil, with 97 per cent concentrated in the three Northern governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. In order to ensure refugees' right to education and to respond to the risk of youth falling into violence as a result of rampant unemployment and a lack of future opportunities, UNESCO has taken the lead on literacy and life skills, secondary, vocational education and training and INEE training.

UNICEF has also engaged with Syrian refugees in neighboring countries:

Aid organisations plan to help the government to provide education for nearly 435,000 school-age children in Lebanon – more than the number of Lebanese children currently enrolled in public schools. In Jordan, should the influx of refugees continue, education partners will need to educate one Syrian child for every five Jordanian children. And in Turkey, if current trends continue, the number of refugee schoolchildren could reach over 500,000. (Source: UNICEF *ibid.*).

As the months become years, many children and young people are seeing their hopes of a brighter future turn into fears of losing all opportunity to develop their potential. The impact on Syria's education system and its pursuit of EFA goals will be severe and prolonged.

Access to Water

In addition to hunger and undernourishment, access to water has been a major challenge of many of the countries in the region. Access to water, and energy, is extremely important to the development of a people and a country that the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals are likely to include indicators and targets in that regard. The inter-linkages cannot be ignored and strategic responses will have benefits on many development aspects of a country; that is the argument that the UN's 2014 World Water Development Report makes and advocates.

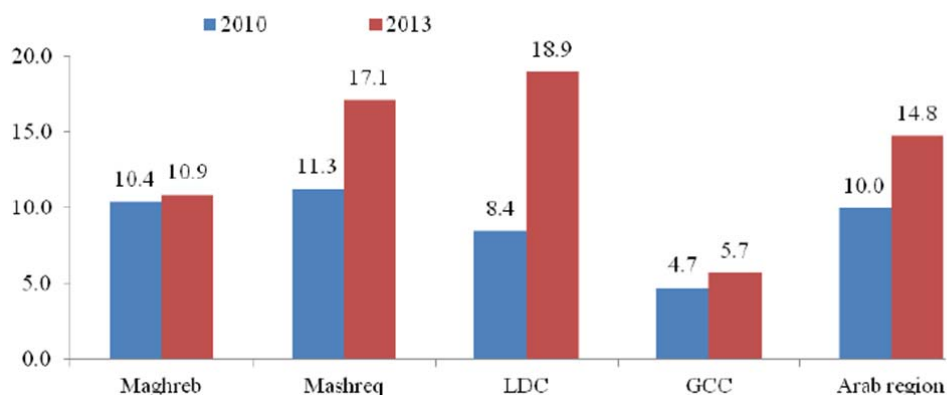
Fiscal and Economic Context

What makes the picture grimmer is the daunting fiscal and economic situation in the Arab countries. In general, economic growth has decreased and countries' debt has increased. This situation undoubtedly has consequences on rates of employment- since the economy is unable to absorb the youth entering the labor market- where it has soared to 15% in 2013. Unemployment among youth (ages 19-24) is highest where in most Arab States it is above

20% except in Kuwait, Qatar and UAE. In some cases it goes well above 20% such as in Palestine where it reached 39% in 2010 (UNDP, 2014). Economic insecurity leads to issues and concerns at multiple levels such as limited social protection and satisfaction and could ultimately lead to political instability. That we have seen happen in several countries such as Tunisia that started the Arab Spring and Syria which is still suffering from serious internal conflict.

The following figure shows the total unemployment in the different sub-regions in the Arab World in 2010 and 2013. As demonstrated, unemployment has unfortunately increased in the last several years and it is of course most alarming in the LDC.

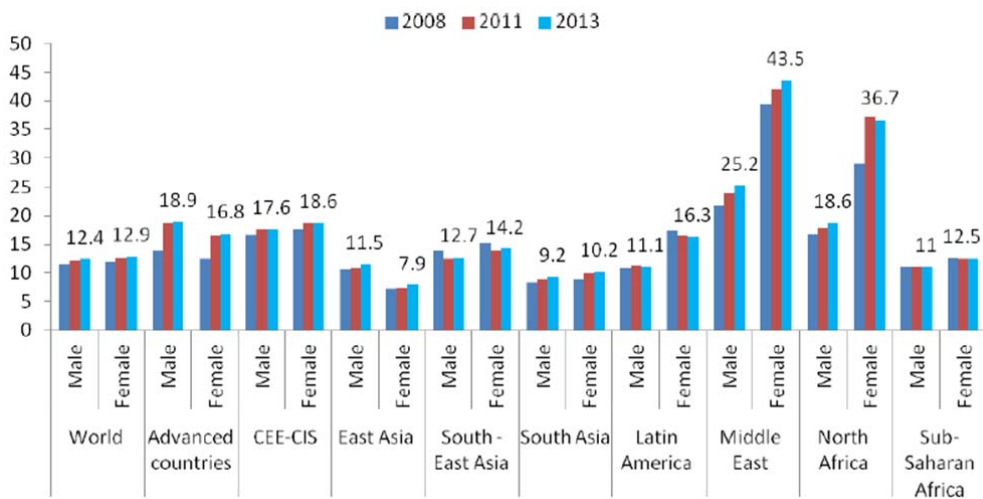
Figure 3: Total unemployment rates (%)



Source: UN and LAS (2013)

A consistent trend is found for youth unemployment. The following graph shows the unemployment rates among the youth segment in all regions of the world; it is most concerning to see how the Middle East and North Africa have the highest rates for all years; 2008, 2011 and 2013, and that has also consistently increased over the years at least in the Middle East Region. This represents a huge issue since most Arab countries have the youth bulge when it could be a great opportunity for development, it could also mean a great hindrance when youth are not represented with the right opportunities and access to good education and employment.

Figure 4: Youth unemployment



Source: ILO 2013a.

Apart from unemployment, the issue of a growing informal economy is also a serious issue. The percentage of the informal economy in most Arab States accounts to almost 35-50% of all non-agriculture employment. This is, in comparison incredibly high, the OECD countries for example the informal economy accounts for about 18% of total employment (ESCWA, 2012). This is cause for concern when one is cognizant of the state of the informal economies and the conditions and wages that the informal sector offers. This limited social protection is an issue and a challenge especially that it effects the weakest and most marginalized populations of any society; women, youth and the disabled.

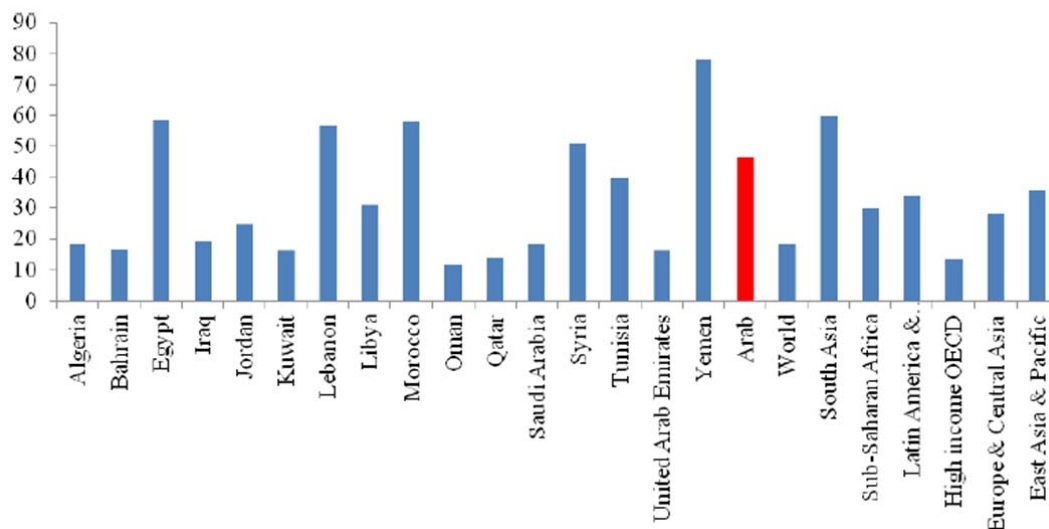
This is not surprising; when reviewing the labor market policies and employment services that are prominent in the Arab world, one can immediately see how limited they are, both in quality and coverage. There are not many institutionalized training programs for example, very limited micro, small and medium enterprise programs, and inadequate funding and infrastructure for whatever exists. These policies need to be reviewed in a holistic multi-sectoral manner to consider new more effective policies and enforce the ones that exist but are not properly implemented.

Health Sector

In regard to the health sector, despite the commendable achievements witnessed in the Arab World, significant challenges persist; these challenges cause insufficient access to quality health care services. Very often health systems in Arab countries are inefficient bureaucracies with limited capacity and limited reach. Like the education sector, the health sector is underfunded where apart from Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, the average expenditure percentage of the GDP on health is well below the averages of other regions and is at 4.8% only (UNDP, 2014). When examining the out-of-pocket spending on health, the Report identifies a trend of the poorer the country, the higher the out-of-pocket expending. In terms of quality, it seems that most countries have curative rather than

preventive systems and that makes it altogether a more expensive issue on individuals as well as on states. The following graph clearly shows how the Arab world is second in the world to having the highest percentages of out-of-pocket expenditures on health.

Figure 5: Out-of-Pocket health expenditures (% of total)



Source: World Bank 2013

Poverty, health and education are so strongly interlinked; when examining health systems in the Arab world a clear trend was identified which is- “Arab children in families with higher income levels or who have mothers with higher education levels enjoy health care and health levels that are three to four times better than the level of children in low-income families with less-educated mothers.” (ESCWA, 2012). This inequity is particularly strong in the following countries: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

Governance

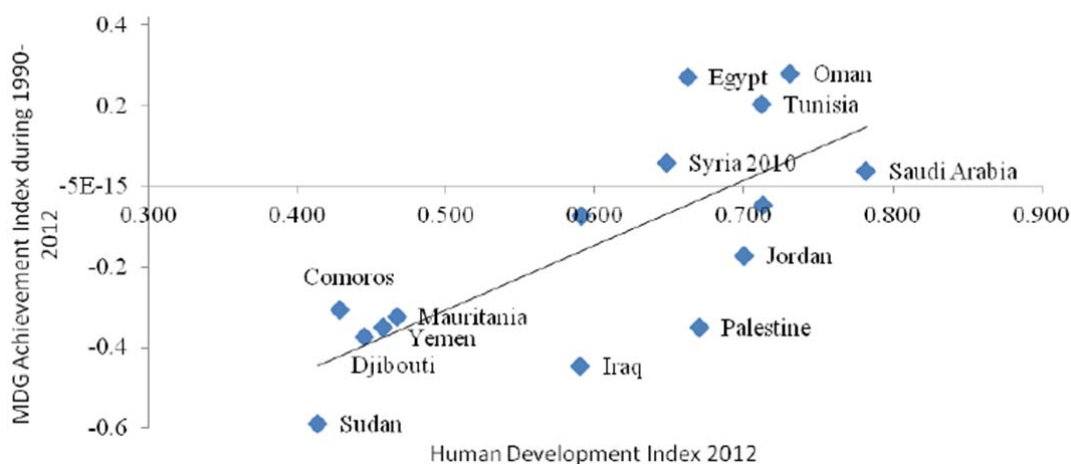
Ineffective governance undoubtedly contributed to the slow, and in some cases complete lack of, progress. In fact, the decrease in economic growth and increase in unemployment and poverty is primarily a result of inept governance in the Arab States and ineffective social policies (UNDP, 2014). Unfortunately, and as the UNDP report notes, the Arab region lags behind all other regions in the world in most governance indicators. In the cases where there is economic growth, bad governance has shown to lead to inequality in the benefits of any growth for the citizens which trickles down to uneven benefits in most other development areas. The Arab uprisings were for that very good reason.

Human Development Index

The above only gives a general idea of the context, however, the heterogeneity in progress and development situation is very sharp in the Arab Region. This is reflected not only in the countries progress towards the EFA and MDGs but also in their Human Development Index (shown in the following graph). The association between the goals and the HDI is of course

apparent; “achieving the MDGs is related with improving people’s quality of lives and human development” which is measured by the HDI. For example, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Egypt and Tunisia have the highest HDI scores and are the countries that have made the most progress towards the MDGs. Jordan, Morocco and Algeria lie slightly below the average but are making good progress and are better off in terms of their HDI (UNDP, 2014). Unless countries like Sudan and Yemen shape up and make tremendous progress in the next few years towards the targets, the region will continue to lag behind compared to others on many of the indicators. The region’s future performance is significantly reliant on the performance of those currently low performing ones.

Figure 6: Association between MDGI and HDI



2014 ESCWA Report estimates based on UN and LAS 2013 and UNDP 2012

And the only way for any country to shape up and advance to achieving all development goals is to invest in education. Governments, in the Arab region and elsewhere, need to recognize the power of education and the benefit of investing heavily in educating their people. This is basically the message of the GMR 2013/14 report; “educate mothers, and you empower women and save children’s lives. Educate communities, and you transform societies and grow economies.”

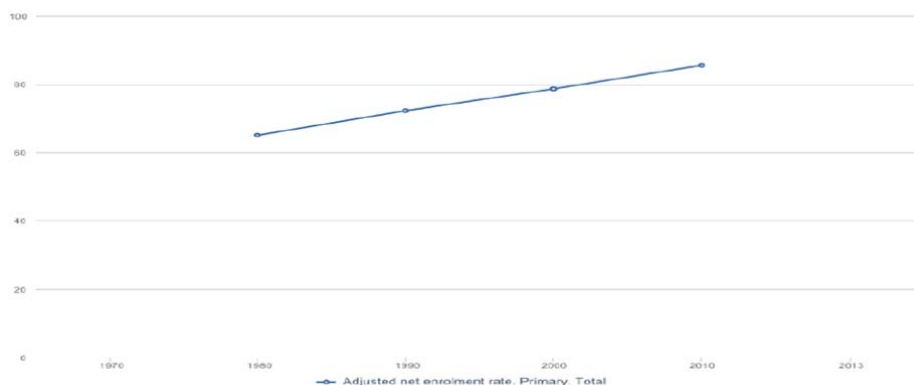
The issue is also reliant upon finding innovative solutions; it had been found that more steady and accelerated progress was made in the Arab region in the first few years of the EFA but has leveled off significantly in the more recent years. This requires thinking of new approaches and strategies that would pick up the pace again and also allow governments cater for the marginalized populations and eliminate inequality.

1.2 EDUCATION CONTEXT

Historically, and particularly in the past 40 years, the Arab World has achieved commendable progress in their education; particularly in enrolment (as shown in the following graph),

gender parity (in terms of access) and literacy. However, this progress cannot be looked at without considering the very low starting point from when they began. As Figure 7 shows, the average in 1970's was slightly over 60% and in the past 40 years it had gone up to become over 90%.

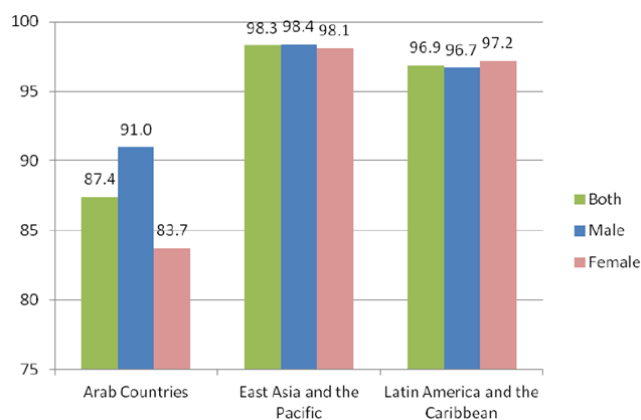
Figure 7: Total Primary ANER in the Arab World (1970-2010)



Source: World Bank 2014

The averages are still below many other regions, even with those very comparable to the Arab Region such as Latin America; a good example is the youth literacy rates where the Middle East and North Africa still suffer in this century from the lowest averages to comparable regions (Figure 8 shows youth literacy rates by region).

Figure 8: Youth Literacy by Region



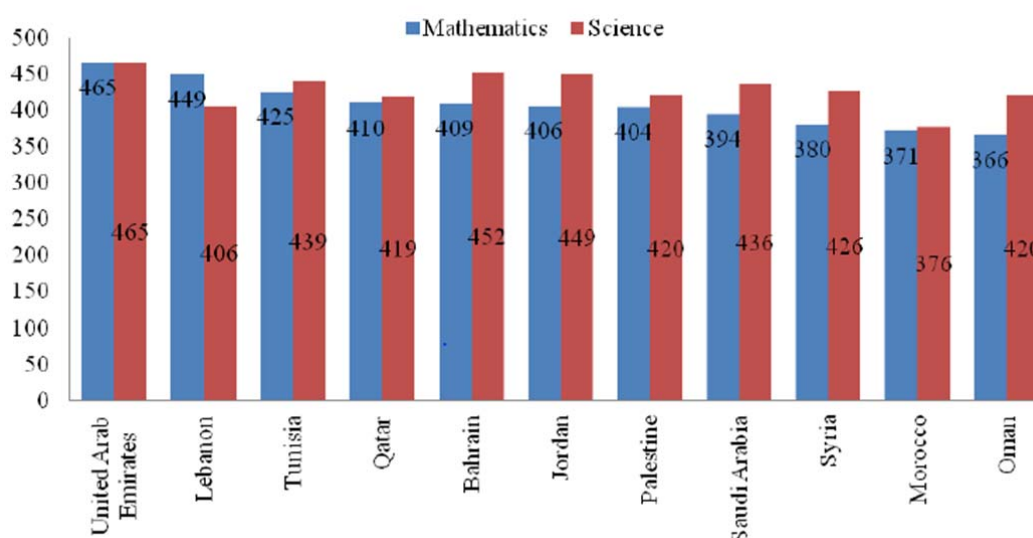
Source: UIS (2010b)

Even those countries that have achieved significant and commendable progress towards many of the EFA goals, uneven quality of education and learning persists. This inconsistency of progress in access indicators versus quality indicators is very visible in many, if not all, Arab countries. The issue of quality is a serious one that is validated by comparing the region's performance on international tests and comparing it with the international

standards. Quality also varies within each country between the rich and the poor, urban and rural and core and marginalized populations. If education is to be treated as a ‘right’ to every child, these inequalities need to be treated and their treatment is not solely in the education system but is very much embedded within the political, social and economic dynamics of any given country.

As an example, the performance of Arab countries on TIMSS 2011 is shown below in the graph in both science and mathematics. One can see that none of the participating Arab countries have scored at or higher than the average international achievement level which is set at 500 in neither subject. More examples on performance on international tests are provided in Section 3 of the report.

Figure 9: TIMSS results in Mathematics and Science, 2011



Source: Mullis et al. 2012. Martin et al. 2012.

The quality factor also impact the level of “life capabilities” that people are able to achieve, and the earlier systems invest in building life capabilities the better. So countries that invest significantly in early childhood development tend to have better returns on their investment, both socially and economically and in terms of life capabilities; which when higher, the resilience is higher as well and less the vulnerability. Unfortunately, in many Arab countries, life capabilities are insufficient, and this issue is of course exacerbated when speaking of certain marginalized groups.

One group of marginalized is the “displaced” populations which have increased exponentially in some Arab countries since the Arab Spring, even when host countries provide them with access to services, such as education, the quality is not up to par where teachers are less than qualified enough to cater for their specific educational needs or address their psychosocial issues. The lack of qualifications makes it also difficult for children with disabilities or special needs receive education of similar or even comparable quality as

the mainstream. The region hosted 4.7 million Palestinian refugees, 2 million Iraqi refugees and more than 2 million Syrian refugees, primarily in Jordan and Lebanon, while many other countries have several million that are internally displaced.

Another is the disabled, where they have been poorly represented and served by almost all public service sectors. In the education sector, often schools are inaccessible and educators are under-qualified and so disabled children and those with special needs end up isolated in separate centers or kept at home. This issue has not been given the needed consideration or resources for countries to start to seriously think about viable solutions and options; it is an issue that unfortunately keeps being pushed down the priority list.

Girls and women are also considered among those “marginalized” where, specifically in the Arab World, the historical traditional and conservative mentality set them steps behind their male counterpart. It took more time for societies to appreciate the value of girls’ education and understand the necessity of having an educated and productive female population, than it did for boys. Although recently many countries have been putting in place policies and strategies to ensure equality, there is still significant catching up to do.

We find that those marginalized groups make up the larger percentage of the drop-out students or out-of-school children and youth- they drop out due to specific needs of theirs that remained unmet due to the incompetence of the system. In many cases the system “pushes” certain students out by not providing the quality education and the healthy learning environment. This issue is reinforced when “pull” factors exist where young people need to earn money and economic opportunities are available that would help those youth contribute to their household. Unfortunately, the quality of education sometimes makes the opportunity cost of being enrolled in school too high- especially when many of the unemployed in the region are degree holders.

To make sure inequality is eliminated by 2030, specific monitoring and assessment measures need to be put in place to evaluate progress against specific targets set for individual population groups. As it stands now, all populations are working towards the same goals and are measured against the same targets; example is with gender equality where only 24 of 53 countries have in their reports indicators and targets for gender equality. To discover inequality, sub-populations need to be considered when setting any agenda and plan- that should be at the forefront of the discussion for the post 2015 agenda.

Investment in education also cannot stop at providing children with access to an education facility or system but “all children must have teachers who are trained, motivated and enjoy teaching, who can identify and support weak learners, and who are backed by well-managed education systems.” (UNESCO, 2013/14). Ministries of Education must seriously be looking at implementing strategies that proved effective such as attracting the best teachers and providing the right incentive to retaining them. Most Arab states have weak or no teacher licensing and certification programs, teachers are hired on the basis of having a Bachelor degree and have little or insufficient training prior or even after being assigned as a teacher. This shift in teacher policy will require significant financial and human resource allocations,

but certainly has to be done to elevate the profession and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Just how far are the Arab States from investing “sufficiently” in the education system is an important question. Arab States on average in 2010 allocated 5.5% of their GNP to education (UNESCO, 2013/14). If the universal financing gap is expected to rise to \$38 billion, it would be worthwhile disaggregating the data for the Arab States and finding how far off are they from the needed level. One of the considerations, as the GMR 2013/14 suggests, is to have indicators and targets for financing levels toward education- that will possibly guarantee higher investment in education- and that minimum of 6% of the GNP to education.

What makes the issue of funding more severe is the decreasing aid funding, especially in low income countries. Worldwide, “total aid to all levels of education declined by 7% between 2010 and 2011” as reported in the EFA GMR 2013/14 report- these were by donor countries such as UK, USA and Canada. Other donors such as IMF and World Bank have actually increased their spending on education but significantly reduced it in low income countries. This issue needs to also make it to the core of discussions and agenda setting for post 2015. Donors and aid agencies need to be included in the discussions as their commitment is key since many countries around the world cannot bridge the financing gap on their own.

In addition to more investment in education, countries should think and rethink of social policies that focus on investing in people through providing them with access to affordable quality services. Synergies between all elements of a social structure need to be made; meaningful connection should be clear between education, workforce development and even peace and stability.

Furthermore, considerable attention needs to be diverted towards local capacity building and institutional strengthening where ministries of education can gradually become the leaders of their own reform processes and agendas, where funding is efficiently allocated and spent, and where performance of their education system is improved. This requires enabling local ministries and their staff to not only implement projects and initiatives but also perform sound strategic planning and effective monitoring and evaluation that leads to informed decision making and corrective action. Without achieving this stronger capacity and institutionalization in reform, there will never be genuine ownership and consequently sustainability of any investment and effort; this has been a major issue in many Arab countries where many efforts stop as soon as donor funding ceases.

This finally leads us to the importance of setting future agendas with a sector wide perspective, addressing all its elements and addressing all groups it should be serving. Looking at education in its traditional sense no longer cuts it and treating sectors in silos cannot continue to happen; the inter-linkages are too obvious and powerful to ignore and so integration in assessment, analysis and agenda setting is crucial. Without that integrated approach, no country would be able to achieve much and reach higher levels of development in order to provide better lives to its citizens.

1.3 CONCLUSION

The challenges facing the Arab world are various and cut across multiple levels; while the solutions are not simple, there are promising opportunities. The Sharm El Sheikh Ministerial meeting is just one of those opportunities where member states can seriously and honestly reflect on their EFA and general development journey, learn from their and others' experiences and work diligently on finding the suitable and appropriate solutions. The biggest opportunity though is the will of the people, the powerful will to remain highly educated and lead self-sufficient and decent lives.

The above shows that there cannot be a single trend identified for all countries in the Arab Region since the disparities are huge. Dividing the countries into categories is more efficient to looking at what countries are still lagging significantly behind where the 2015 EFA and MDG goals are still relevant for the 2030 agenda and target setting. While 5 countries (which are probably now down to 4 since Syria have regressed since 2010) have achieved positive MDGI, most have negative MDGI and those require significant support to get them to achieve momentum in the 2015 goals to graduate to more ambitious ones for 2030.

The support to be provided needs to be based on an analysis of the reasons why countries are still lagging behind, and those vary. For some countries it is an issue of financing and gaps in funds, others had strategies that were ineffective or non-sustainable, and obviously some suffered significantly from instability due to internal revolutions or external wars. The specific circumstances and situations need to be fully understood so that the solutions are suitable and appropriate.

In general terms, one can safely say that all countries in the region can improve certain elements of their systems, education and other sectors, in terms of elevating the local ownership of reform and development agenda, strengthening the monitoring and evaluation systems, adopting the lead role in setting the national plans that guarantee higher sustainability and ensuring higher accountability of the local systems to their performance.

SECTION 2: EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN YEAR 2000: OVERVIEW OF BASELINES AND EFA PLANNING IN ARAB STATES IN RESPONSE TO DAKAR DECLARATION

2.1 Overview of landscape in year 2000

Almost all of what has been achieved in the EFA education development agenda by the end of the twentieth century remains below the expectations. Poverty is still widespread and, where it exists, educational opportunities decrease and so does the quality of health care. In addition, there is a spread of other issues like unemployment, violence, conflicts and huge displacement of people. In some countries, the suffering is greater than in others; in rural areas more than in urban ones; in geographically remote areas and among marginalized minorities including women.

Although the gap between males and females is narrowing in terms of participation rates, it is widening when it comes to quality measures where females are outperforming males.

Although most of Arab states have a pre-primary education system, and despite the modest progress achieved during the nineties, Early Childhood Education still does not receive the required attention. GER in pre-primary varied considerably from almost less than 1% in one State to 82.5% in Kuwait. The ratio was less than 13 per cent in ten states, between 13 and 50 per cent in six states, and more than 70 per cent in only two states (Lebanon 71 per cent and Kuwait 82.5per cent). This shows that Arab States, rich and poor countries alike, do not devote the required attention to ECCD. It seems that, for the Arab States, education at this stage is primarily a family matter.

The most important achievements in the Arab States in the Nineties were related to enrolment in primary education. Most of the Arab States either maintained or improved their enrolment ratio in the first grade (6-7 years old). The countries which showed low GER at this level (82 per cent and bellowing late 1990s) are Sudan, Mauritania and Yemen. Where enrolment ratios were high, the gender gap was smaller (1 to 4 percentage points), and where they were low it increased (10 percentage points). Yet, when looking at the net enrolment ratio (NER) at the first grade the picture is different: nine countries show a NER of 82 per cent and below. In terms of GER in primary education, the Arab States have demonstrated significant progress where only three countries had a GER less than 70%, versus thirteen countries with GER of 90 per cent and above (and where gender parity index was 0.9 and above). Two countries have shown a very high rate of progress between the early and late 1990s: the Sudan and Mauritania. Disparities between rural and urban areas were still high and female participation in primary education was always less than that of males (the parity index is equal to 1.0 and above in one country). In addition, the problem of enrolment appears more striking when looking at the NER.

In spite of real improvement in the 1990s, there are still six countries which have a NER of less than 80 per cent, and where the gap between boys and girls widens in this regard: the parity index is equal to or less than 0.9 in six countries. Illiteracy rates were high; the number of illiterates in the Arab States was estimated around 68 million (of which 63 per cent are

women) of which 70 per cent in five countries: Egypt, the Sudan, Algeria, Morocco and Yemen. Generally speaking, illiteracy is closely related to population size, high population growth rates, and poverty.

It was also clear that illiteracy is more in countries with low Gender Parity Index. The Gin these five was less than 70%. This indicates that illiteracy in the Arab Region is caused not only by poverty, but also by inefficient education policies regarding provision of female education.

Quality education at the turn of the century was still a privilege for a few. Students performance (mainly Grade 4) on monitoring learning achievement tests were far below acceptable standards; only 12 per cent, 10 per cent and 25 per cent met learning standards in Arabic, mathematics and life skills respectively. On average, the achievement of girls was better than that of boys. Achievement among pupils in urban schools was higher than in rural schools.

As for teachers, their qualifications need improvement. Although many Arab States reported that their teachers met qualification standards (BA or BSC), most of Arab teachers, lacked appropriate pedagogical preparation and professional development opportunities. Many issues were evident around working conditions, wages, effective policies for recruitment of competent teachers, clarity of career path and an overall efficient teachers policy frameworks.

Internal efficiency indices at the time showed low internal efficiency rates in many Arab States as measured by repetition rates and dropout rates despite an increase in survival rates up to grade 5.

Although, financial resources available for education in Arab States at that time have been increased, returns on investment measured by coverage in enrollment, equity and quality however were not much evident and or at least to say not sustainable for many reasons including inefficient governance structures, inefficient budgeting procedures and tools, lack of accountability systems , oversupply of teaching and non-teaching staff and lack of a coherent monitoring and evaluation systems based on credible and complete data.

In summary, at the turn of the new millennium, millions of Arab school-age students and adults were deprived of education and millions were getting education of poor quality. The Arab Regional Report 2000 stated that” despite the political will, and although education stands high on rhetorical agendas of governments, commitments made at Jomtien 1990 by Arab States remain highly visible but significantly unmet”.

2.2 Response to the Dakar Framework for Action

When the six EFA goals were launched in 2000, the socio-economic and education development of countries in the Arab States were more homogenous and not much dispersed. EFA goals and targets were perceived to be highly relevant to address education issues for all Arab States. By and large, EFA has been relevant to all countries in the Arab

region, having provided a useful framework for national education development strategies. All national EFA review reports give evidence that almost all elements of the EFA framework were incorporated into their national education development plans. EFA framework is the commonly accepted framework for national dialogue between governments and international development agencies, and between governments and civil society organizations. The EFA goals were launched at a time when noticeable progress was made in primary enrolment and completion rates, female education and secondary education. The relevance of EFA and the commitment and partnerships of and between governments, civil society organizations, international development agencies, communities and private stakeholders have played a significant role in building regional consensus and ownership of EFA framework regionally and nationally. This was evident by creation of EFA networks in the region, active consultations led by UNESCO Regional Office and its partners, technical support provided and engagement in developing EFA national plans early on. Despite the fact that all Arab States were responsive by developing their EFA national plans early enough(All finalized their plans by 2003) coupled with high political support, these plans varied in terms of its credibility, technical quality, and secured financial resources. Various reviews of these plans along with the mid-term review indicated that the national plans with varying degree suffer from serious flows and issues which, among other factors, might explain why progress by year 2015 has been modest and fall short from set targets. These plans suffered from:

- Insufficient situational analysis to education within a wider socio-economic perspective at national levels
- Limited prioritization were made
- Implementation schedules were flexible with no milestones and not based on careful prioritization
- Issues around national capacities in planning for EFA implementation, monitoring and evaluation and linkages to policy-making
- Decreased political support and national participation in EFA planning, coordination and monitoring and evaluation
- Insufficient financial resources for many of the programs under EFA national plans

2.3 Major National Policy Drivers for EFA

By year 2000, Countries across the region have showed strong commitment to achieve universal primary education and to make it free and compulsory, increase enrolment rates in secondary education, improve education quality and improve literacy. A summary of major EFA policy drivers reflected in EFA national plans in the Arab region developed in response to Dakar Declaration are as follows:

Wider Access to Education including Pre- School Education

In recognition of the importance of ECCE, countries of the Arab States both developed and strengthened their national ECCE policies while improving child survival and nutrition, and health. Significant work in this area at least at policy levels were achieved in the region. In

addition, almost all Arab States have revised their education policy frameworks to ensure free and compulsory primary education for all.

Quality of Education

Quality of education got significant focus and attention under EFA and other education development plans in the region. Almost all countries have initiated policies and programmes to improve the quality of their education systems, especially through a focus on learning outcomes. Within this quality framework, all countries introduced new curriculum, improved teacher qualifications, improved learning environments and initiated flagship projects on integration of ICT in education.

System Efficiency

To support the delivery of quality education, many countries also reformed their management and governance of education systems and schools; despite the decreasing levels of funding in most countries in the region to the education sector. Many countries engaged in developing Education Management Information System EMIS to support policy-making and better management of schools and the entire system.

Continue Eradicating illiteracy

With illiteracy rates in the region still prevails high, eradication of illiteracy especially for females was one of the priorities Arab States has adopted. National plans for EFA highlighted measures to improve access to education for all, ensure that students acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills before dropping out of schools and expanded non-formal education programs for adults including provision of incentives to adults enrolling in non-formal education.

Teachers Qualifications

All EFA national plans have stressed the importance of improving teachers' education and in-service programs. Many Arab States have also revised qualifications requirements for newly appointed teachers to a minimum of a B.A/B.SC degree.

SECTION 3: EFA PROGRESS, KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

GOAL 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

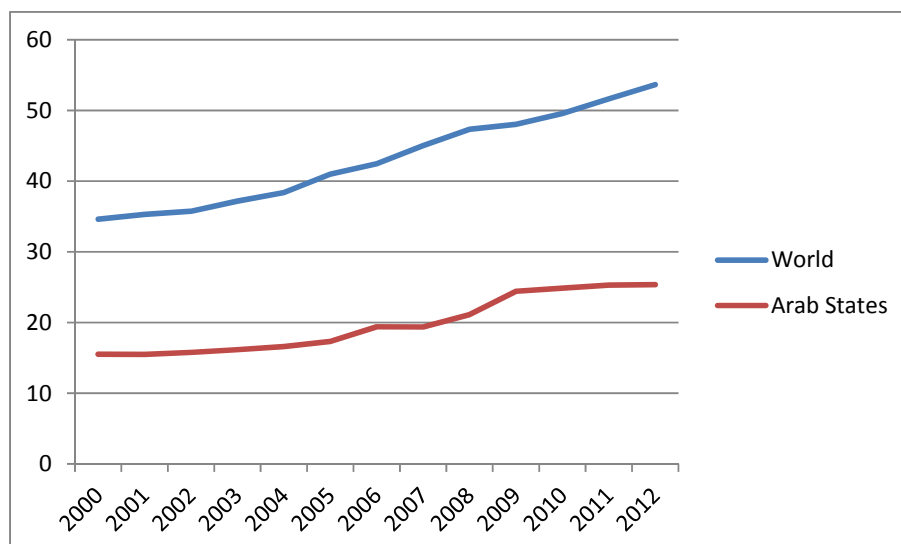
Summary of progress made at the regional level

Despite the many commendable efforts made in the Arab States to expanding Early Childhood Education, this goal is the one that gained the least momentum and achieved the least progress in the Arab Region; access and therefore enrolment rates remain low across the region. The reason for this is at both the supply and demand sides; governments have not yet made ECCE a compulsory level of education and therefore are allocating less funds and attention to ECCE. On the other hand, parents' awareness is still limited in regard to the benefits and importance of ECCE for their children and many still choose not to enroll them.

While progress in expanding ECCE was slower than other goals, some countries have achieved great improvement in the increase of the number of Kindergartens (4-5 years old), the number of enrolled children and the percentage of 1st Graders that have had ECCE experience. On the other hand, in some other countries, strategies to expanding ECCE were not developed until very recently, and the expenditure and advocacy levels remain insufficient. Based on the submitted country reports, only four countries (three are GCC countries in addition to Algeria) have achieved pre-primary enrolment higher than 70% in 2012/2013; Qatar, Algeria, UAE and Kuwait achieved 72.8%, 75%, 79.4% and 82.5% respectively, while Yemen is still at 1%, Syria is down to 5% and KSA at 13% in 2012/2013.

Since 2000, the world average enrolment increased from 34.6% to 45% in 2007 and 53.6% in 2012 showing an increase of 19 percentage points over 12 years. The Arab world in comparison has only increased their average of pre-primary enrolment rates by 9.8 percentage points in the same period of time: 15.5% in 2000, 19.3% in 2007 and 25.3% in 2012.

Figure 10 Gross Enrolment Ratio, Pre-Primary, Both Sexes (%)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

As demonstrated in the above graph, only a quarter of Arab children are attending pre-primary education and are going on to Grade 1 with some pre-primary school experience. Only a percentage of that quarter would have had quality early childhood education that sufficiently prepared them for formal school and built their readiness to learn. This is worrying considering what research has proved in terms of the social and economic returns of investment in ECCE. It would be worthwhile conducting a cost benefit analysis in expanding ECCE, at least kindergarten, in the Arab Region and making it compulsory for all. Investing more resources in the foundation stage of education and providing good quality service to young children would lead to better prepared learners with a more positive attitude towards learning.

Having said that, much research has been conducted in OECD countries and very little analysis can be found on the direct impact of ECCE in the Arab Region or other comparable regions in the world. The conclusion is likely to be the same, which is that ECCE is extremely important and has significant contributions to any given society provided that they are quality programs. Nevertheless, it is important to conduct similar research in the region and understand the general trends and also any variations that may exist between countries.

Another important indicator to look at is the qualifications of teachers that are hired to teach in kindergarten. Many societies have for long considered ECCE or any pre-primary education as “baby sitting”, although it requires very strong skills to facilitate the learning of 4 and 5 year olds. Only recently have Arab countries been requiring higher qualifications for the teachers for kindergarten. Although having a higher degree does not necessarily mean higher competencies, it is an important advancement and indicator. In Jordan for example, as at 2014, 90% of kindergarten teachers hold a Bachelor’s degree in education, a significant increase from only 20% in 1999/2000.

Box 2: Palestine: Introducing Early Childhood Development classrooms

Since 2012, Palestine has been implementing an Education for All Package with the support of the UN Education Group. The EFA Package focuses on inclusive and child-friendly education and early childhood development and aims at strengthening the capacities of the Ministry and education personnel to promote quality education for all children, regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, backgrounds and circumstances. This Package, implemented in pilot schools in all districts of the West Bank and Gaza, responds to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's goals to increase access and retention of school-aged children in the education system and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

About 70 per cent of Palestinian children do not have access to kindergarten services, and so a majority of children will therefore start school without having been to a kindergarten first. Many Palestinian children, especially the most vulnerable, are being denied the foundation in life and learning that ECD provides. Virtually all kindergartens are privately owned and operated, although most kindergartens are licensed and monitored by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Until 2013, Early Childhood Development was not part of the formal education system in Palestine.

A major achievement through the EFA Package has been the opening of Grade 0 classrooms (one year of pre-school before Grade 1) for the first time in Palestinian public schools. In 2013, 30 ECD classrooms opened in the West Bank and 14 in Gaza, an important step in making ECD part of the formal education system. ECD teaching and learning materials were provided, aiming to improve the development and learning of more than 1000 children (50 % girls) in inclusive and child-friendly environments. Newly nominated Grade 0 teachers were trained in all these pilot schools, as well as all Grade 1 teachers to ensure linkages regarding the transition to primary education.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education also finalized the first National ECD Strategy through a highly inclusive process including representatives from the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs, district offices, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and academic institutions.

Another major step for Palestine has been the inclusion, for the first time, of ECD as a separate programme in the new Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP 2014/2019). Based on the successful pilot of the Grade 0 classrooms in all districts, the objective is now to gradually open more ECD classrooms over the next years. Capacity development component will also benefit private kindergartens as per the national ECD strategy; a priority for education quality being the preparation of well-trained caregivers and teachers.

Through the EFA Package for Palestine, solid foundations have been built to expand Early Childhood Development as part of the formal education system, contributing highly to progress towards education for all by addressing needs of children at early stage.

Box 3: Algeria: More Children are Enrolled in Primary Education

Preparatory education (for children aged 5) is not compulsory in the Algerian educational system. However, Algeria witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of children enrolled in preparatory education in all sectors. Figures doubled from 48773 in 2002 (12.18%) to 89265 in 2005 (26.46%), and witnessed a quantum leap in 2014 with 461393 children (58.46%). This quantum leap could be attributed to the law amendments introduced after 2003 enabling the private sector to establish officially recognized

educational institutions that provide preparatory education services in early childhood. This measure helped expand the preparatory education services and divided the financial burden among all sectors. Moreover, preparatory education in public schools affiliated with the Ministry of Education improved remarkably as a result of a better exploitation of structures and frameworks where the exceeding number of teachers and classrooms was used to start new departments for preparatory education.

Box 4: Oman: Promoting an integrated approach to Early Childhood Development

Oman has shown the most progress with regards to ECCE where there was an Early Childhood Development strategy developed and led by the Ministry of Social Development. This strategy includes a comprehensive health program designed by the Ministry of Health to provide prenatal services and immunization. The efforts are also shared with the private sector in the provision of nurseries and kindergartens; serving children even younger than 4 years of age. Nurseries increased from 31 nurseries in 2001 to 105 in 2013. Enrolment in kindergartens increased significantly between 2000 and 2012, from only 6.5% to 41.6%- 60% of which served by the private sector. The percentage of teachers with Bachelor degrees in education is now at an impressive rate of 84% when it was less than 40% back in 2000.

Key issues and challenges

One of the biggest challenges for low enrolment rates and slow progress as highlighted in several country reports is the insufficient awareness of societies in general, and parents in specific, of the importance and benefits of ECCE. Another reason for lower demand for ECCE is the low levels of women's economic participation in the Arab world and the high reliance on family members to provide the care for children. Until women's economic participation increases, thus requiring childcare services, there will not be high demand for such services as kindergarten or pre-school- specifically when one is not cognizant of their benefits. A third factor is the cost of ECCE versus the low public funding of this level of education, especially when it is not considered part of compulsory education.

Arab states need to consider serious efforts to raise awareness of their people and heighten their understanding of why they should be enrolling their children in ECCE. Once a parent sees the difference in his/ her child as a result of attending pre-primary schooling, they will never go back to having them start at Grade 1. Governments should also be willing to consider non-conventional approaches to providing ECCE, alternative to the conventional kindergarten structure, such as home or community based centers.

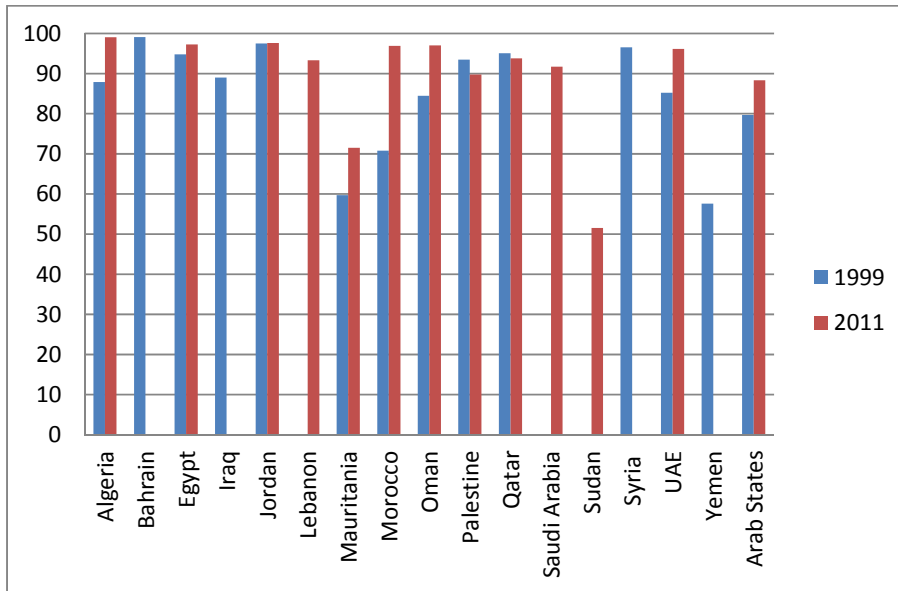
GOAL 2: UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Summary of progress made at the regional level

The Arab countries have not yet achieved universal primary education where they are at an average of 88.32% Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) in 2011, approximately 10 percentage point increase since 1999, which is an impressive increase given the high population growth in the region. Due to the unavailability of data for most countries for 2012, the following figure shows the ANER of Arab States with available data for years 1999 and 2011. It can be noted from the graph that while most countries have nearly achieved universal primary education with rates ranging between 91.72 in Saudi Arabia and Algeria at 99.08 in 2012, Mauritania (with its 71.51%) and Sudan (51.55%) require further efforts to expand access.

Figure 11: Primary Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) in the Arab States 1999-2011

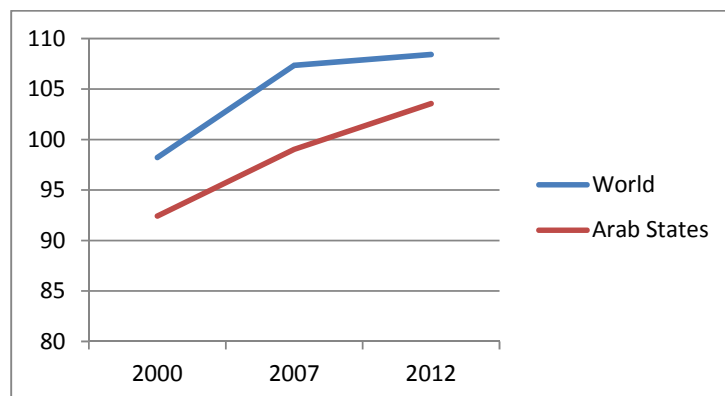


Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, January 2015; Qatar Ministry of Development and Planning for the 2011 data

In terms of Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in primary education, one can see from the following graph that the Arab Region has significantly expanded access and have recorded GER of 103.5% in 2012, up from 92.4% back in 2000, which is an 11-percentage point. The advancement in the region is comparable to that of the world where the world average is 108.4% in 2012, up from 98.2% in 2000. It is obvious from the graph how the world witnessed much steeper increase between 2000 and 2007 but then it reached plateau afterwards, when the Arab Region did not have so steep an increase but gradual one over the 12-year period. This trend is due to the various education policies that were implemented and strongly enforced in order to reach more children and have them enrolled in school. At the same time, countries started collecting more accurate demographic data to verify the gaps in enrolment, monitor access to and participation of out of school children

and underage/overage children and enforce compulsory education by penalizing parents who keep their children at home.

Figure 12: Gross Enrolment Ratio, Primary, Both Sexes (%)

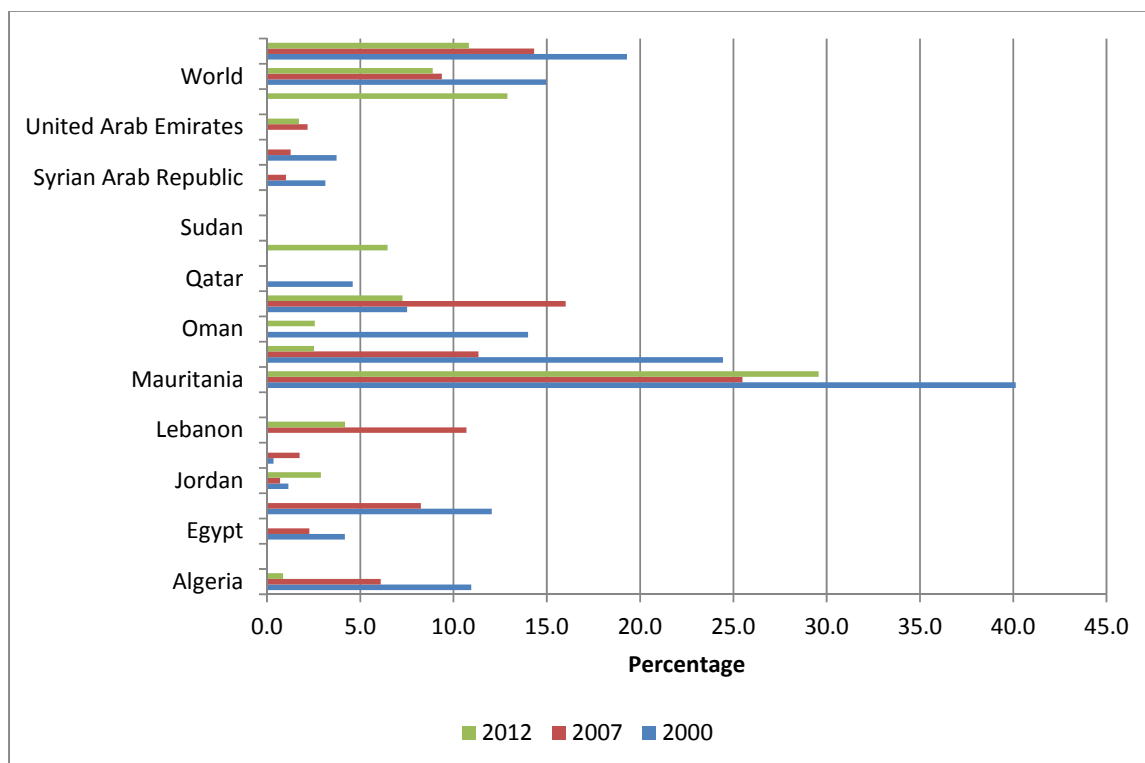


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

It should be highlighted though that while the GER is an indicator to demonstrate the extent of system expansion, it also point outs that an education system has under/overage children if the percentage is over 100 and shows that an system must improve in order to enroll children at the right age. Obstacles to enrolment, such as fees, safety and other issues, need to be addressed to ultimately enroll children of the right age in any given stage of education.

Despite the gain in gross and net enrolment rates, around 5 million school aged children remain out of school in the region; girls make up 60% of this population. Therefore, it is also important to examine the rate of out-of-school children at the primary education level and see how well the Arab States are doing in terms of keeping children in school; enrolling them and also preventing them from dropping out. From the following table and graph one can see that the region has managed to decrease its rate from 19.3% in 2000 to 10.8% in 2012, similar to the downward trend that the world witnessed where the rate of out-of-school children has gone down from 14.9% in 2000 to 8.8% in 2012. Countries such as Yemen and Palestine are home to a significant percentage of out of school children at 12.8% and 7.3% respectively. These relatively high rates may be attributed to the unstable situation of the countries that prevent children from accessing and staying in school.

Figure 13: Rate of out-of-school children, Both Sexes (%)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

Box 5: Egypt and Libya: Supporting Quality Education through INEE Minimum Standards in Countries in Transition

The aim of the project was to build the capacity of the Egyptian and Libyan education professionals to apply the international standards elaborated by INEE (International Network for Education in Emergencies) to the crisis situations in each country, thus ensuring as far as possible that quality learning opportunities are maintained or restored for children affected by emergencies. In addition the project aimed to:

- Strengthen the capacity of the education system to prepare for, prevent and mitigate the impact of disaster, through the development of disaster risk reduction and prevention strategies.
- Ensure that Education in Emergency activities meet the challenge of ensuring quality education for all through the creation of national communities of practice that are well versed in the principles and application of the INEE Minimum Standards.

Over its 11-month duration, the project provided input and training for a total of 741 beneficiaries, through the following activities (participant numbers in brackets):

- Decision makers' workshop on "Quality Education Standards in Transitional Egypt and Libya" (18)
- Training of Trainers workshop – Egypt (28)
- Training of Trainers workshop - Libya (30)
- Six roll-out workshops for MoE officials from 8 governorates - Egypt (182)
- Three roll-out workshops for MoE officials from 3 governorates - Libya (72)
- Expert seminar on "Quality Education in Transitional Contexts: Bridging the Gap between Emergency and Development" (31)
- Workshop targeting school principles on a country-wide scale via video conference (304)
- Three training workshops in different governorates targeting MoE technical officials (53)

The success of the project was evident in two ways: an endorsement of its relevance for the countries involved, and their desire to scale up the approach in future:

"The interest and practical steps taken by both MoE's to mobilize a second phase of the project is the most explicit evidence of the project's success in gaining the buy-in of national authorities, catering to their current needs and priorities, and developing a successful pilot/ model that can be scaled up and replicated in both countries, as well as other countries affected by the Arab Spring." (Project Completion Report: 10)

In line with the possible application of the same approach in other countries of the region, representatives from Lebanon, Tunisia and Jordan took part in the Expert Seminar in November 2012.

Box 6: Morocco: Reaching unschooled children and dropouts

Morocco has made good progress towards universal primary education with a reported enrolment rate at the start of the 2013 school year of 99.6%. However, non-attendance and dropout mean that a proportion of children are not in school. Extrapolating from a

2012 study of four representative regions where the overall average of out-of-school children was 12.3% - roughly one child in eight – a national figure of approximately 500 000 out-of-school children is likely.

Since 1997 Morocco has addressed this problem through a range of initiatives aimed at either enabling children to re-enter the formal system or prepare for the world of work. The profile of the out-of-school population has changed over the last decade, with 73% now being age 12 or over, and the dropout challenge shifted from primary school to lower and higher secondary. In addition, over 75% of out-of-school children live in rural areas. Building on the achievements and experience of the last 15 years of programmes for out-of-school children and youth, the Department of Non-formal Education (DENF) developed a new strategy in 2013. The age range of DENF programmes will be extended from the end of compulsory schooling (age 15) to age 20. The strategy takes into consideration the aspirations of young people, and in particular the desire of many adolescents to prepare for the world of work rather than re-enter a formal system which was a less than satisfactory experience; it proposes three complementary objectives:

- Support schools so that they keep children in school at least for the years of compulsory schooling (up to 15 years).
- Facilitate school re-entry for out-of-school children who wish to go back into the formal system.
- Prepare children/adolescents who so wish to take up an apprenticeship or vocational training, and provide the 15+ with vocational preparation or training programmes.

Three distinct programmes will serve to implement these objectives:

- Support children at risk of dropout through personal follow-up and stimulus activities alongside schooling.
- School re-entry: an accelerated learning programme, to enable the learner to reach an age-appropriate level as quickly as possible in order to return to school.
- Vocational preparatory cycle: for age 12-15 who wish to choose this track, basic competencies oriented towards working life. For the 15+ age group, vocational training for work that is available to young people including generic professional competencies.

The strategy also plans for psycho-social support to give these vulnerable young people the support they need to succeed, as well as communication and mobilization activities to promote the value of education at local level and generate community support for schools and other learning avenues.

Box 7: Qatar: “Education for a New Era”

A good example is the Qatari “Education for a New Era” initiative that was started in 2004 and which focused on the school as the core unit of the education reform process by giving it the autonomy and the responsibility in improving its student learning and performance. Many decisions such as hiring, the selection of learning materials, and selection of the suitable pedagogy were decentralized. The schools were also permitted to involve parents in their management and administration which probably encouraged a lot of parent engagement and strengthened the connection between the school and the home.

Box 8: Jordan: Partnerships for Education

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education has been very active in establishing very strong partnerships with different stakeholder groups aiming to provide better learning environments (both physical and psychosocial) to the students and help in reducing the drop-out rate that is often due to violence, unsafe and unhealthy environments, and disengaging school cultures. The Ministry has had two main initiatives, one with UNICEF- the “Ma’an Campaign” and another with USAID- the Learning Environment: Technical Support Project; through which the Ministry focused on decreasing the incidence of violence (bullying among students and aggression by teachers and administrators), making the school a safe and healthy place, and increasing the engagement of the school community members.

Key issues and challenges

Conflict and instability will greatly impact enrolment rates in primary education in countries living in conflict and countries hosting refugees of in conflict countries. Countries such as Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen are suffering from declined enrolment rates for reasons such as lack of safety, loss of registration documentation, and poverty. Host countries will have increasing enrolment rates and increasing numbers of over age students, which of course have dire impact on the quality of education being delivered to both populations; host and refugee.

Another challenge that is less complex, but definitely more historic, is to eliminate the barriers that children with disabilities face to accessing education. The most serious barrier is the attitude of society that does not recognize the potential of people with disabilities and rarely understands the nature or characteristics of different disabilities. Other barriers include the lack of funds to have accessible buildings for example and limited qualification of personnel to properly meet the needs of disabled children.

The lack of comprehensive reporting on people with disabilities in the submitted country reports is telling of how underrepresented this population is in the education systems in the region. While some countries have provided special schools to children with disabilities, almost none had any data on inclusion into the formal education system. Kuwait was the country that had most comprehensive reporting on students with special needs or disabilities and data on those mainstreamed in the regular formal schools and others that are enrolled in the special schools run by the State. In the case of Kuwait, the number of students in special schools had declined due to them moving to either private special schools or moving to the public regular schools since the government implemented the inclusion policy.

EFA GOAL 3: MEETING THE LEARNING NEEDS OF THE YOUNG AND ADULTS

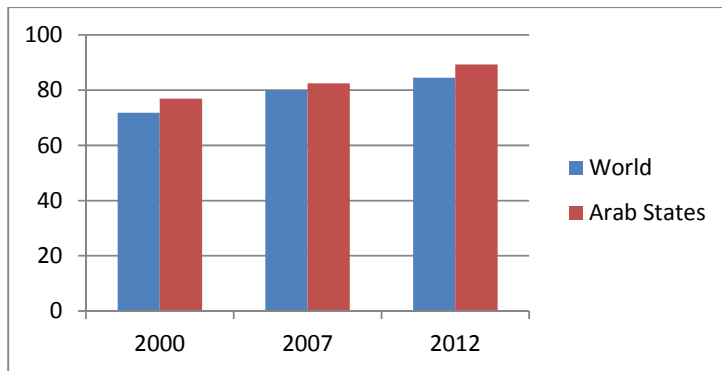
Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

Summary of progress made at the regional level

This goal has been a challenge to monitor and report against its indicators because it not only includes secondary school enrolment which is relatively straight forward but it also considers vocational and technical training and retraining for adults. Countries were not provided with clear indicators or targets, which led to inconsistent and at times unclear reporting by countries in their national reports.

For secondary school Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), there is available data for most Arab States and the comparison with the world can be made. The following graph demonstrates how the Arab Region's performance is comparable to that of the world and has achieved a higher rate overall. The world increased from 71.8% in 2000 to 84.5% in 2012, in the same time period the Arab States region has increased their average GER from 76.9% to 89.3% representing a 12.4 percentage point increase in the 12 years.

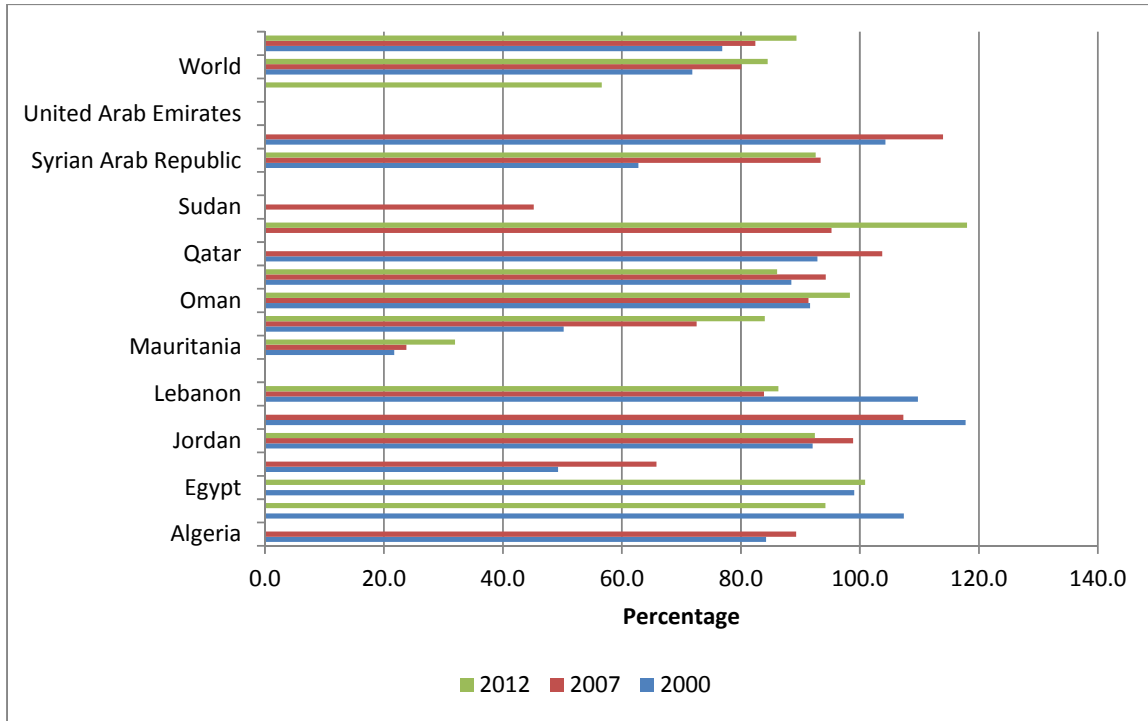
Figure 14: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Lower Secondary, Both Sexes (%)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

To compare between the Arab States GERs and the progress made between 2000 and 2012, the below figure shows that among those with available data, eight countries have GER higher than 90% in 2012, while Mauritania and Yemen have low GER at 31.9% and 56.6% respectively despite the commendable efforts made to improve over the 12 year period.

Figure 15: Gross Enrolment Ratio, Lower Secondary, Both Sexes (%)



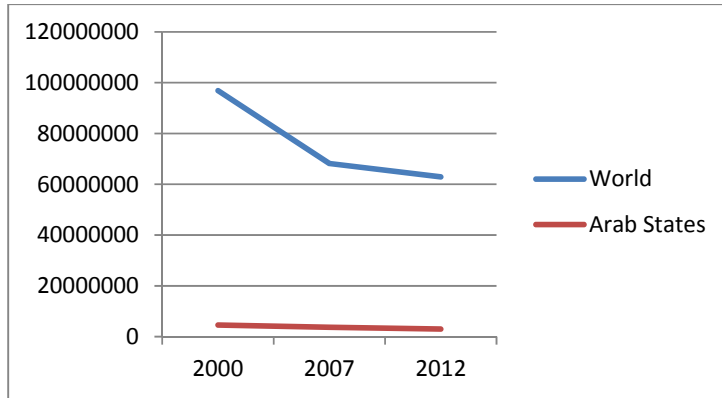
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

The numbers show that several countries have achieved impressive gains in their secondary school GER and those countries include: Morocco (from 50.2% in 2000 to 83.9% in 2012), and Oman (from 91.6% to 98.3% in the same years) which have increased by 25 percentage points or more. Although Syria falls in that category, the 2012 figures are from pre conflict and Syria’s 2013 country report data show a decline in the number of students from 430,702 students in 2011 to 322,726 students in 2013. Decrease has also been witnessed in Palestine from 88.5% in 2000 to 86.1% in 2012.

Several factors could be contributing to the modest enrolment in secondary school in several Arab States: a general factor to both sexes could be the fact that it is considered costly for many families living in poverty or modest economic situations. Other factors are more social and affect girls more than boys, and these include early marriage, distance to school from home, and unavailability of certain school facilities such as sanitary facilities.

As in primary education, it is relevant for lower secondary to also look at the rate of out-of-school youth. When compared to the world, the Arab Region’s rate is lower than that of the world and the improvement made especially between 2007 and 2012 is more significant than that of the world; the world’s decreased by 0.8 percentage points while the Arab States decreased by 3.4 percentage points which equates to the access of more than 700,000 youth to lower secondary school. The graph below shows the comparison between the different countries, the Arab Region in general and the world in three points in time: 2000, 2007 and 2012.

Figure 16: Number of Out-of-School Youth, Lower Secondary, Both Sexes



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

In terms of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the numbers have declined across the board from 14% in 1999 to only 9% in 2010. This is a serious issue that needs to be analyzed at the regional level since the vocational and technical sectors are directly linked with the labor market, thus employment. Unemployment is highest among university degree holders. This trend is alarming where serious reform should be developed and implemented in all countries that would aim at changing the attitudes and perception of vocational and technical education, increasing investment in this important sub-sector and improving the quality of education. In many cases a serious policy review is needed to ensure existence of an enabling policy framework and environment.

The country reports are very inconsistent in their reporting on TVET. Some countries provide numbers of students rather than percentages, while others provide detailed data on the different specialties. Due to data inconsistencies and periodicity of reporting, it is difficult to draw comparisons between countries or identify trends other than that there is a general decline in the enrolment of TVET.

Apart from schooling, it is vital to provide youth with access to non-formal education and a variety of activities that would help them acquire the necessary life skills, give them the opportunity to engage in sports, or work on youth led projects within a group of young people. Many school systems in the Arab world fail to provide youth with enough extracurricular activities, and the community also does not provide safe outlets for youth to gather and engage in fruitful activities that would build their personalities and keep them engaged in something that is healthy and productive. Governments in the Arab World need to focus on the youth segment of the population given the youth bulge and sensitivity of that period where a young person is easily swayed in different directions; to ensure it is a positive route they take, there must be some guidance and availability of opportunity.

In terms of Non formal education (NFE), there has been modest progress but no strongly enforced strategies exist to provide youth and adults with access to educational opportunities outside of the formal education system. The NFE programmes that have been implemented in the region vary in nature, duration and quality: a) literacy and post-literacy programmes, b) equivalency programmes, c) vocational training programmes, and d) life skills and livelihood development programmes.

Box 9: Upgrading TVET quality in Iraq

Building on interventions carried out during 2013, UNESCO continues to cooperate with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in both Central and Kurdistan Regions to incorporate international standards within the Technical and Vocational Educational System. Two pilot institutions are currently selected: the Technical University of Dohuk and The University of Basra. Internal and external evaluation is undertaken to move the two institutions into accreditation, a comprehensive guide of “Rules of Procedures” was produced, and the international credit system was introduced for future adoption.

Interventions aim at assisting the institutions to excel in all areas according to international standards, with special attention to evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance. Moreover, the current projects focus on revitalizing the role of women in higher education institutions to take up leadership responsibilities. In addition, this cooperation will result in setting up a framework for codes of conducts and academic integrity systems within all educational institutes, by means of tools such as an online tutorial, promotional materials and the establishment of academic integrity offices and clubs in pilot institutions.

In line with the thrust to improve quality, UNESCO is adopting a comprehensive and participatory approach with the four ministries in both Central and Kurdistan Regions to restore a quality technical and vocational system in all of Iraq.

Box 10: Supporting Equality and Justice in Tunisia

Considering the importance of youth, it was crucial for Arab governments to focus on such a sensitive age category that takes precedence especially that the youth might go adrift. Hence the importance of citizenship education and education for persons with special needs, in order to ensure that the youth are going down a positive path, which requires guidance on one hand and opportunities on the other.

Citizenship and human rights education are the main focus as they entrench the value of equality and reject all types of discrimination, especially gender based discrimination. Tunisia has undertaken positive steps which have taken a constructive turn after the revolution: 1) benefiting from public school curriculums that encourage citizenship and human rights especially in some courses such as civism and which helps develop citizenship related capacities such as public life involvement, developing critical thinking and the sense of victory in addition to human values such as tolerance, respecting others, rejecting fanaticism and violence; 2) benefiting from partnerships with some organizations and associations in order to train teachers of varied specialties and grades (teachers/supervisors) on human rights and citizenship. A guidebook on developing the culture of democracy among the youth in Tunisia was prepared and a special guidebook on the activities pertaining to training on citizenship and human rights was drafted as well to develop a sense of civil culture among students of secondary classes.

As for special education, Tunisia witnessed major improvements with the drafting of the school and education integration plan for students with disabilities by the Ministry of Social Affairs in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health as well as the relevant associations. The number of integrated students increased from 299 in academic year 2003-2004 to 2440 in academic year 2013-2014. The number of integrating

schools increased from 111 schools to 543 during the same period. As a result of the assessments, the Ministry of Education took some necessary measures such as focusing on the rights dimension so that the integration of children having special needs becomes an irrevocable right and amending the legislation so that every school becomes an integrating school starting academic year 2013-2014.

Box 11: United Arab Emirates: Prioritizing Youth

The country has provided a really good example of providing a comprehensive package to its young people, in addition to the formal and non-formal education- all due to the government putting youth as top priority when developing its development strategy and plan. In support of that, several entities were established and founded to address specific issues and areas of youth life. Some examples are- the Public Authority for Youth Welfare and Sports and it is responsible to providing young people with the physical and mental space to be creative, build their talents, participate in sport teams, and explore interests. Under this Public Authority, a large number of organizations function in specialized areas be it sports including scuba diving, theatre and culture, scouts, and science clubs. Another example is the Emirates Foundation for Youth Development which focuses more on providing youth with career counseling, employment services and programs for the disabled youth to help them become capable of being productive citizens.

Box 12: Syria: Forging partnerships for TVET to link training with the world of work

Valuable partnerships were built by the Syrian Ministry of Education with the private sector to improve vocational and technical education. In 2000, 5 Governorates were having the students attending vocational/ technical schools trained at the work place, rather than in isolated schools or labs. This model provided the students with richer learning experiences and the labor market with better trained employees- the private sector also, through their engagement, helped in building the skill of the students but also in providing secure opportunities to the youth before they even graduated or completed the program. This initiative came with a complete review of the curricula for 22 of the offered specializations which made it more current and valid. Syria, as result of their reform efforts in the vocational/ technical education, witnessed an significant increase in the number of students between 2008 and 2012, from 100,258 students to 128,675 students respectively. Unfortunately, the numbers plummeted in 2013 and the number of students sunk to 88,569 students- which is consistent with the trend of enrolment in all types of education and all stages due to the current events taking place in Syria.

Box 13: Qatar: Partnership in support of TVET

Partnerships were established between companies and government organizations to manage vocational schools, such as the school of Qatar for Industrial Technologies and in partnership with Qatar Petrol, and the school of Qatar for managerial and banking sciences in partnership with Qatar Central Bank

Key issues and challenges

Some of the issues facing the Arab World in reaching higher enrolment rates in secondary schools are, like mentioned above girl specific- but also more generally, the need for the youth to work. Many families do not value the investment in secondary education especially when calculating the opportunity cost to their young men, and sometimes women, not working and contributing to the household economy. This choice is supported when the quality of the public education provided is low and when people realize that degree holders are finding it difficult to find employment that could elevate their social and economic status.

In terms of Non-formal education (NFE), there has been modest progress due to predominant conventional strategies governing NFE programs in the region. The area of NFE requires further development. One of the difficulties is to do with the challenges of reaching and retaining the target group, another is due to inefficient monitoring systems, and finally the other is the insufficient experience and expertise in developing attractive and beneficial NFE programs. The area of NFE also needs consistent and reliable data to plan and monitor its development.

As many countries, such as Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, suffer from conflicts, the situation exacerbates poverty, insecurity and livelihoods of people. This in turn negatively impacts on the provision of education, particularly post-primary, that is secondary education and TVET in this goal. As such, the countries that have been in conflict or are conflict-prone are running the serious risk of losing a generation of educated youth with the right knowledge and skills who can contribute to peace, social cohesion and ultimately, sustainability.

GOAL 4: YOUTH AND ADULT LITERACY

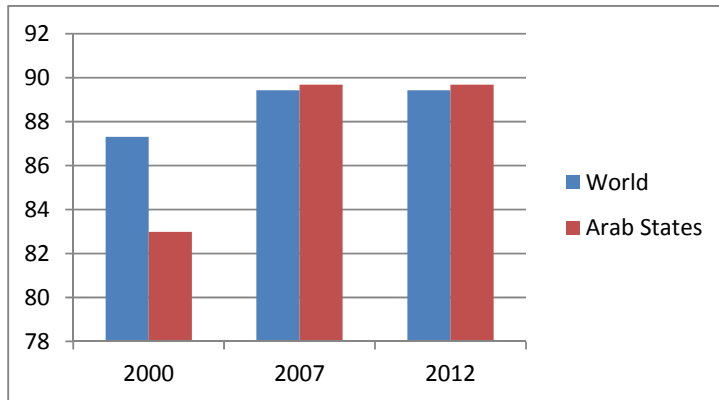
Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Summary of progress made at the regional level

The goal to improve adult literacy levels in the Arab Region has shown good progress since the year 2000 where it has increased by 22 percentage points reaching 77% in 2011. Arab countries have shown more interest in providing adults with literacy programs that accommodate their general lifestyle such as having a full-time employment during the day. This has led the Region to be among those with fewest illiterate adults across other regions in the world, as shown in the below graph.

Comparing the Arab Region to the rest of the world, one can see from the following graph that the Arab World has achieved very impressive increase in youth (between 15-24 years of age) literacy rates between 2000 and 2007 from 2007 onwards, the increase is minor which is of course understandable since the remaining percentage is usually the most difficult to reach and can be attributable to population growth.

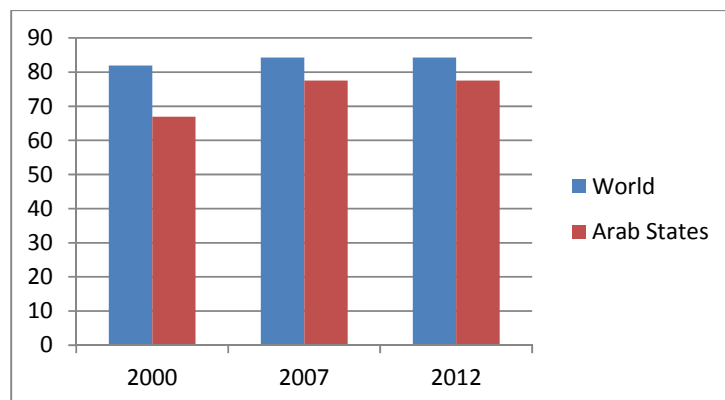
Figure 17: Youth Literacy Rates (15-24), Both Sexes, (%)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

As for adult literacy for all those over 15 years of age, the literacy rates have also increased but much more steadily with no steep gains since 2000. The following graph compares the region with the world for this category.

Figure 18: Adult Literacy (15+), Both Sexes, (%)



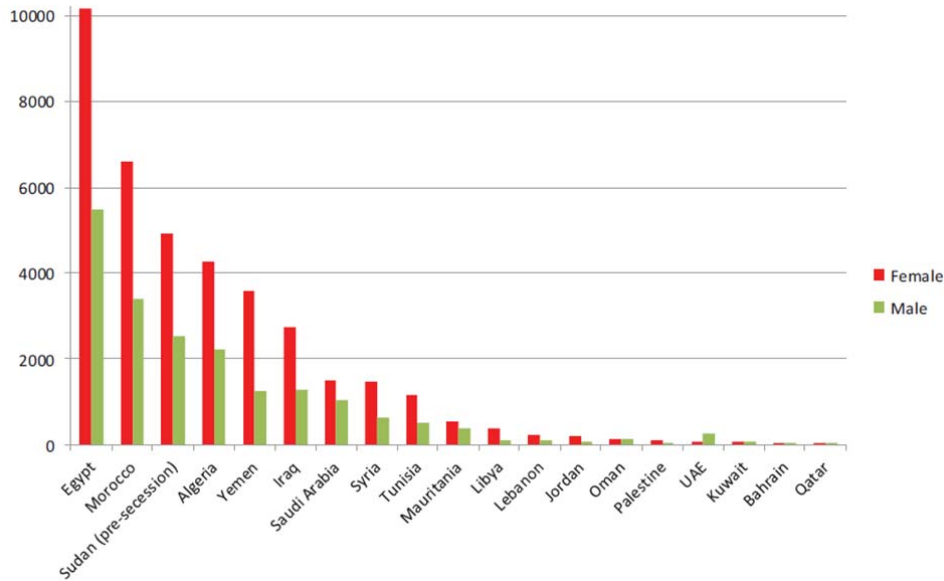
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

Adult Literacy rates includes adults over the age of 18 years over and is still a very dichotomous measure where people are categorized as either “literate” or “illiterate”, largely dependent on national census and based on self-declaration. Therefore, there is a limitation in terms of measuring its functionality as a skill for livelihood and employment.

Despite the increase in the percentage of adult literacy rates, the actual number of illiterate adults in the region has only decreased by about 4 million people; from approximately 51.6 million to 47.6 million- this is as a result of the high population growth. Also on the down side, the female adult literacy has been lagging behind where two thirds of the illiterate in the region are female; a trend that is consistent across all regions. The average male literacy between 2005 and 2011 is 85% when female literacy is still at 68%, which is a much lower average than that of the world’s weighted average, which is at 80% for females.

The trends are somewhat alarming where the projections for 2015 show that there will be some increase in the number of illiterate adults in several countries in the Arab World if certain factors continue to exist, such as population growth, inability of the education system to absorb all children, and the current instabilities that are causing many students lose out on years of schooling or dropping out prior to mastering the minimum learning competencies. Those countries that will likely witness an increase in illiterate adults are Iraq and Syria due to conflict and UAE due to low-skilled illiterate expatriate laborers and Mauritania. This calls for strategies that would provide adults with better opportunities to attend literacy programs leading to acquisition of literacy skills and its functional application.

Figure 19: Number of Non-Literate Adults in the Arab States 1999-2011 in Both sexes



Source: EFA Regional Report 2014 for the Arab States

Box 14 : Sudan: Capacity-building for literacy

Sudan is one of the countries in Arab States with lowest primary enrolment and adult literacy rates, with more than 10 million non-literate people, mostly women, and a school dropout rate that appears to be increasing. Progress in tackling the literacy challenge is constrained by a lack of trained literacy facilitators, irrelevant literacy contents, and outdated and traditional teaching and learning practices. In early 2013, a national seminar identified priorities for a one-year literacy initiative in cooperation with UNESCO:

- Revision and development of curricula content and the teacher training package;
- Training seminars and workshops as well as provision of equipment for the national Shandy Literacy Centre;
- Strengthening the skills of the workers of the Adult Education Authority to plan, implement and evaluate literacy programmes;
- Promoting South-South cooperation in literacy programmes;
- Developing relevant preventative measure to enhance retention and reduce dropout in early grades.

It is noteworthy that the project goals included measures to address school dropouts, thus tackling one source of the adult literacy challenge – the failure of the school system to retain pupils and impart sustainable literacy competencies.

Despite challenges of instability and floods, the project achieved the following results, through training workshops, development of literacy resources, and measures to promote an inclusive approach in schooling:

- Awareness raised and regional and international experience exchanged;
- Basic resources and training packs developed;
- Modernised literacy content and the training manual for literacy facilitators;

- Trained literacy trainers;
- Introduced educational innovations to reduce school dropout/increase retention.

Further reinforcement of capacity, through ongoing in-service training, will be necessary to sustain and expand the impact of the project.

Within the framework of the same project, UNESCO also convened the first conference in Sudan on education for children with disabilities (November, 2013).

Box 15 : Saudi Arabia: Improvement in Female Literacy Rates

Figures show an improvement in the adults literacy rates in KSA where figures reached 94% in 2013 which means that illiteracy constitutes nothing but 6% of the total population (aged 15 and more), whereas figures ranged between 21% and 17% respectively in 2000 and 2004.

Such an obvious increase in literacy rates shows the Kingdom's interest in fighting illiteracy as literacy programs are high on the Kingdom's educational agenda. Adults and especially women are encouraged to enroll in literacy schools. Among those non stereotyped programs and projects that fall outside the educational arena to support the formal literacy program, the following:

- 1) Formal literacy centers (the number of female students until 2012 reached 231770): it is a three year educational program where students are given a diploma that is equal to a primary education diploma and where English is a major course; upon graduation female graduates obtain a 1000 Riyal reward.
- 2) An illiteracy free society (a program benefiting 261977 female students until 2012): it's a one academic year educational program that is implemented wherever illiterate women are found: in urban and remote areas, in public and private sectors, in charity associations and in prisons. It grants a 1000 Riyal reward to every student upon graduation.

The educated neighborhood program (benefiting 32196 female students): it is a one academic year educational, cultural and training program titled "towards a productive family". It is entrusted with combating the alphabetic and civilization illiteracy of female students by providing them with scientific and cultural skills as well as manual and training skills. It is held in a neighborhood that is suffering from deteriorating living, economic and behavioral conditions. It is worth nothing that while female literacy rates in the Arab world fall below the world weighted average and reach 68%, female literacy rates in KSA reach 87%. The program is aimed at solving adult literacy problems especially among women by implementing annual summer campaigns aimed at combating illiteracy throughout the Kingdom using executive plans devised to this end.

Box 16: Bahrain: Putting in place legal mechanisms to promote universal adult literacy

Bahrain is a good example of country that instituted laws that address this goal and which makes reducing adult illiteracy and national objective and priority. In 2005, there was a law that was developed and implemented that does just that and also mandates the concerned government entity with efficient monitoring and reporting and provision of quality programs that are equivalent to elementary and secondary education. Another good practice was also waiving certain disadvantaged populations from paying the fees- that made certain people, especially women, encouraged to enroll and complete the programs.

Box 17: Capacity building for literacy and non formal primary education in Mauritania

With the support of UNESCO's CapEFA programme for Mauritania - Capacity building for literacy and non formal primary education in Mauritania-, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Original Education (in charge of literacy) and the Ministry of National Education (in charge of non-formal education) are working towards the development of sectoral strategies aiming at responding to the strategic orientations of the State in terms of fighting poverty and discrimination. These strategies will aim at fighting illiteracy and drop outs in order to respond to the real learning needs of the targeted population and to ensure their socio-economic inclusion. The plan also includes capacity building activities for different teams within the two ministries in the fields of community mobilization, partnership with civil society organizations, management of community learning centers and more importantly, the development of learning materials (beneficiaries manuals, teachers guides, tools for management, monitoring and evaluation). Literacy and non-formal primary education manuals are being produced through UNESCO technical assistance, which aims at providing the country with innovative, gender sensitive, material being able to respond to the real needs of the beneficiaries, in particular young girls and women.

Key issues and challenges

One of the key issues is the dichotomy of the measure, which does not necessarily give an accurate picture of the adult illiteracy situation since some of those counted towards the "literate" are neither necessarily accurate in terms of acquisition of a skill, nor functional when it comes to the application of the skill.

Jordan has taken that step and has implemented the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) which assesses literacy over a continuum and indicates a level at which a person is, rather quantitative rates. It is therefore advisable for countries to conduct the same or similar literacy assessment that would help provide an accurate and complete picture of adult literacy, which would help governments, plan and manage the area of adult literacy.

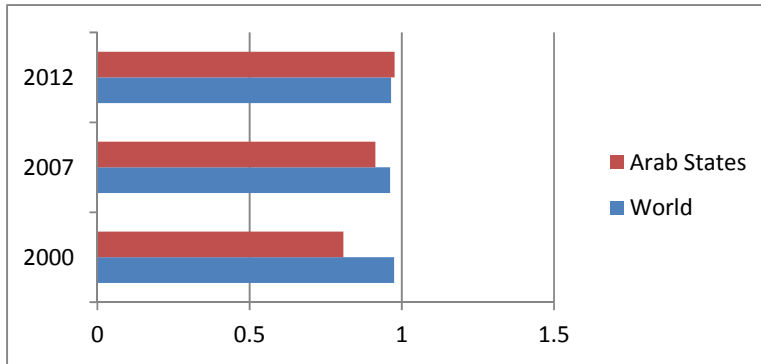
EFA Goal 5: Gender Equity and Equality in education:

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Summary of progress made at the regional level

This goal aims at reaching gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and gender equality by 2015. It is one that the Arab region has achieved more noticeable progress compared to other goals, specifically in regard to parity. Although most Arab countries have achieved gender parity in primary education, more serious disparities still exist in secondary education; this is clear by looking at the following graphs where the Gender Parity Index is demonstrated for the Gross Enrolment Rates for the Region and the world, one graph for each level of education: pre-primary, primary and lower secondary in order.

Figure 20: Gender Parity Index in GER: Pre-Primary Education

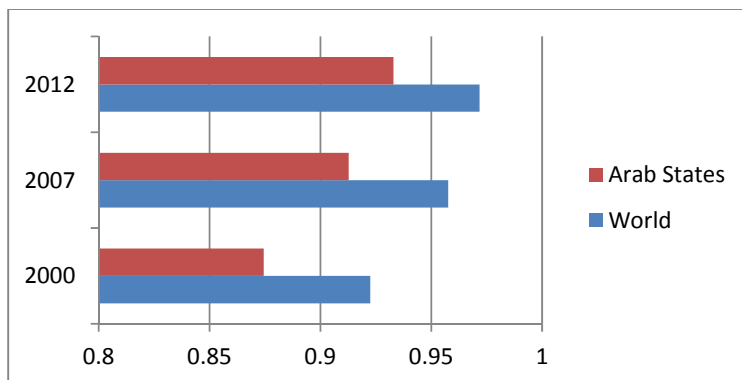


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

One can see that the region achieved better GPI in pre-primary education with an index of 0.97 in 2012 while the world showed a decrease in the index and settled at 0.96 in 2012.

As for primary education, the Arab Region did not achieve as high a GPI as in pre-primary or as the world's average, however, the region has shown progress since 2000 when the index was 0.87 and increased to 0.93 in 2012.

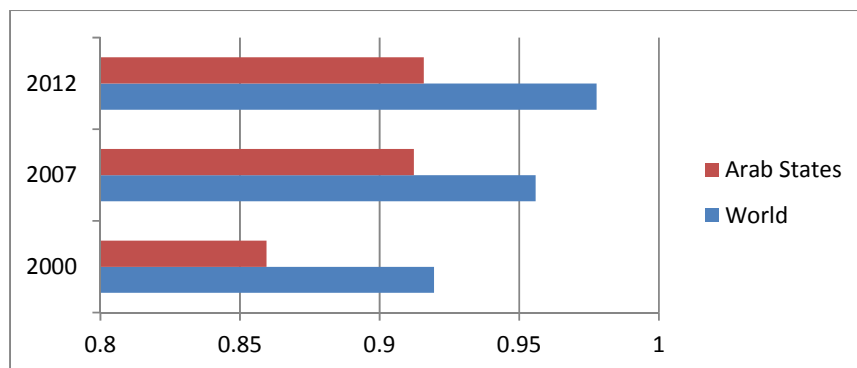
Figure 21: Gender Parity Index in GER: Primary Education



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

The biggest issue is with secondary education where the Arab Region’s average GPI only reached 0.91 in 2012 despite the increase from the average in 2000 when it was only at 0.86. The world’s GPI managed to go over 0.97 in 2012 but the starting point was well ahead of the Arab Region, as shown in the following graph.

Figure 22: Gender Parity Index in GER: Secondary Education, both sexes

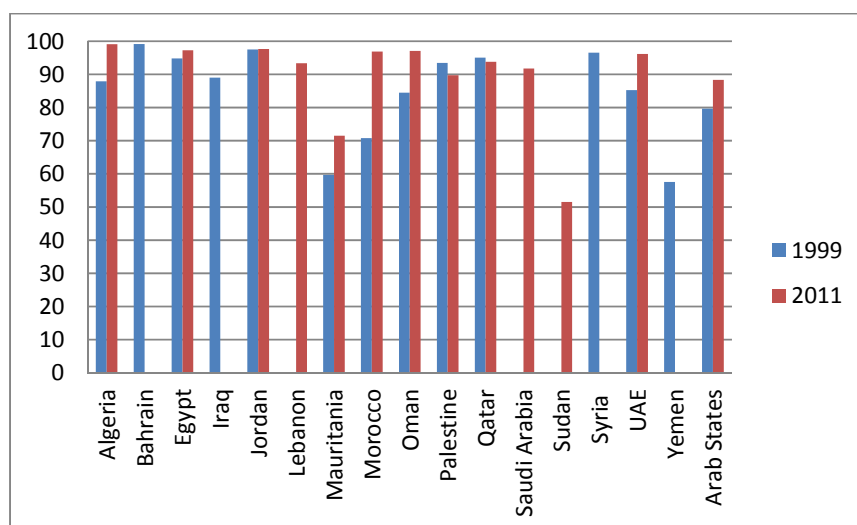


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

GPI, however, needs to be looked at carefully in that it does not necessarily reflect high participation figures, for either sex, but only reflects the ratio of females to males, regardless of whether participation in general is high or low.

To demonstrate the difference across countries in the region in terms of female enrolment, one can look at the below graph that shows the ANER for primary for countries with available data for 2011. By 2011, 12 Arab countries had achieved gender parity in primary education, leaving Yemen behind with a GPI that is less than 0.9 as shown in the below graph.

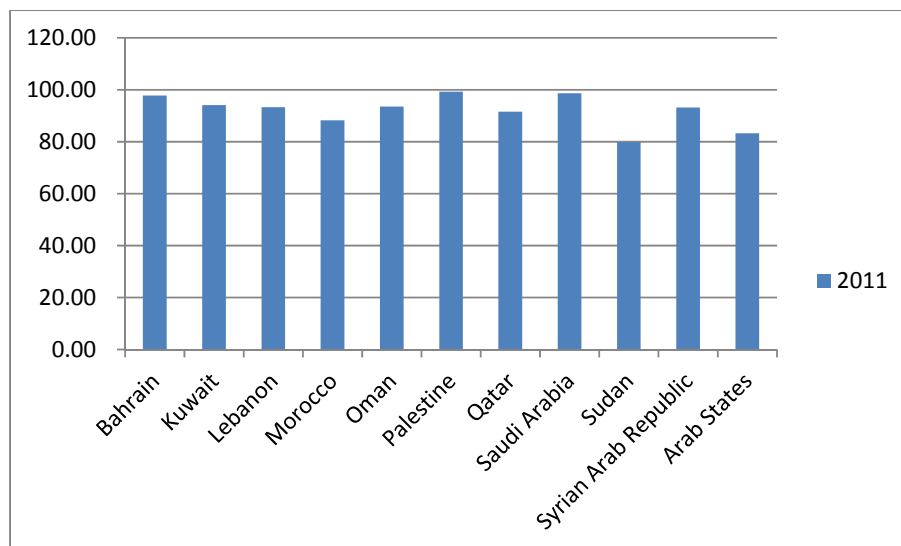
Figure 23: Primary Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) By Sex2011 (%)



Source: EFA Regional Report 2014 for the Arab States (Goal 2)

In terms of survival in primary education, most countries have slightly higher percentages of girls actually surviving through to the last grade of the country's basic education cycle, with an exception for Yemen with its data significantly in favor of boys. This in turn keeps the average of the Arab States slightly in favor of boys too.

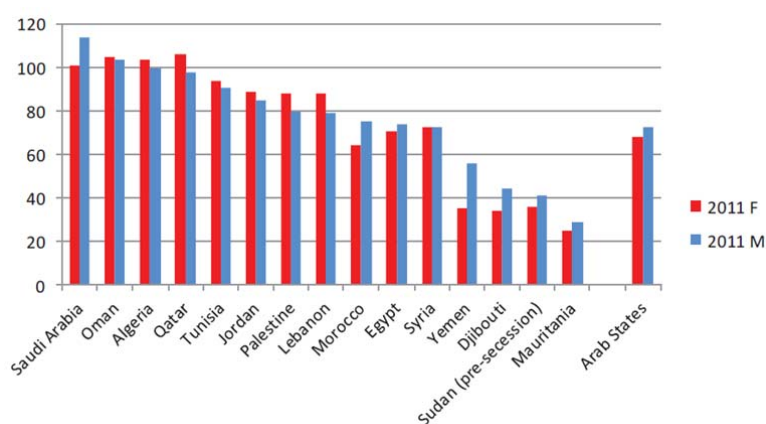
Figure 24: Survival Rates to the Last Grade, both sexes, 2011 (%)



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2011

Secondary education is a completely different story though from primary; several countries have GPI's that are in favor of girls due to more number of boys dropping out of school. In other countries such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Mauritania, the GPI's remain in favor of boys since this phase is when in these countries the cultural limitations and obstacles disadvantage female access to and participation in education. Those countries have GPI's below 0.9 with Yemen at 0.63.

Figure 25: Secondary Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) By Gender 2011 (%)



Source: EFA Regional Report 2014 for the Arab States

Unfortunately, the Arab States did not achieve similar progress in terms of gender equality. A lot of countries did not provide enough description or definition of “equality” between the sexes but stress more on the general suffering of the quality of education (curriculum, learning environment, qualifications of teachers, etc.) that is indiscriminate of gender. The general quality issues certainly do exist, but females in many Arab States are suffering more severely than their fellow male students due to cultural perceptions and barriers, similar to living in rural areas or in poverty. A case in point is one of Iraq: While the completion rate for rich urban boys is 58% in 2011, it is only 3% for poor rural girls. There are many more similar examples in other Arab States.

It is worth pointing out though that the “equality” part of this goal does not provide specific indicators or measurement requirements for countries to report on. The targets are also vague and often not easy to quantify, leaving countries to report on certain indicators not necessarily being clear on whether the achievement is perceived positive or not. One example is an indicator of having more women in management and leadership positions at Ministries of Education. What is the right percentage? Is there one? How reliant is this indicator to measure and monitor gender equality? These questions need to be clarified.

In terms of an aspect of learning achievement, some countries in the region have been witnessing a trend where female performance in schools and international tests is much more impressive than males. This may be attributable primarily to quality issues found more in boys’ schools rather than in girls’ schools. These include the motivation and training levels of female versus male teachers, the level of violence found in girls versus boys’ schools, and the expectations set for each sex by society and the school system itself. This is another issue with the perception of “gender” and how it almost always means female or women, when gender equality really means giving everyone, male or female, the same opportunity to learn and excel. This is becoming a serious challenge in some contexts; therefore, clear and specific strategies are necessary to ensure that both sexes have access to quality education and succeed in their educational progression.

In terms of adult literacy, females remain at a clear disadvantage than males where the proportion has actually increased from 63% to 66%. This deterioration since 1999 could mean that less effective efforts are taking place in terms of adult literacy specific to women with only three countries showing almost equal literacy levels of men and women.

Box 18: Egypt: Girls’ Improved Learning Outcomes

In rural parts of Upper Egypt, poverty has increased since 2004, and more than half a million girls, of 6-10 years old, were not in school at the beginning of the decade. Even though primary school enrolment rates looked high, family circumstances meant that attendance was lower, particularly among girls who are called upon to support their households. In this context, the objectives of the five-year intervention were to:

- Expand girls’ access to quality education in remote and deprived areas of Upper Egypt.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in targeted schools and idaras.
- Strengthen school management and governance.

From February 2008 to its scheduled end in March 2013, the Girls’ Improved Learning Outcomes (GILO) Project at first included direct provision of training, technical support, classroom furniture and IT equipment to selected primary and preparatory schools in four

governorates of Upper Egypt. It later evolved to focus on early grade reading, as well as to technical assistance to central and decentralized departments of the education ministry. As support flowed to schools, there was a marked improvement in girls' enrolment, but standards of achievement remained very low. This realization led to a focus on enabling rural girls to improve their reading and mathematics. Using the Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) based on phonics and word attack skills, an evaluation showed that performance was dramatically improved; in comparison to a control group, girls in the programme achieved increased scores in syllable reading (+174%), in word reading (+77%), and in oral reading fluency (+ 68%). Given these results, the Egyptian government scaled the programme up to national level, and the project gave assistance in training 35,000 Grade 1 teachers in EGRP, certifying 320 EGRP trainers, and providing 48,000 packages of Grade 1 EGRP materials distributed to 16,000 primary schools.

The original justification for the project was the low participation of girls in schooling. In tackling the issue of both access and performance, the project led to the possibility of a significant improvement in the quality of primary schooling through the nation-wide adoption of a new early literacy strategy.

Box 19: Yemen: Promoting girls enrollment

In terms of GPI, Yemen has made the biggest improvement and raised it from 0.37 to 0.63 between 1999 and 2010. The female enrolment from the year 2000/2001 to 2012/13 increased by almost 10 percentage points from 22.8% to 32.1% respectively; this is great improvement especially considering the instability the country in general in suffering from the past number of years. Although there is still a lot of room for more improvement, the progress is nonetheless impressive and shows real effort by the government to including more girls in education post elementary/ basic education. One example of the efforts exerted is increasing the number of female teachers- which definitely encourages the families and the girls themselves to enroll and continue attending secondary school- where the percentage of female teachers rose from 18.6% in 2000/01 to 32.5% in 2012/13. More modest but a similar trend is noticed with principals as well where the number of secondary school female principals increased by 4 percentage points during the same period.

Key issues and challenges

One of the main issues is the low level of awareness of the importance of girls' education and its return on society and the country as a whole. It is worth pointing out though that the "equality" part of this goal does not provide specific indicators or measurement requirements for countries to go by. The targets for this sub-goal are also vague and often not easy to quantify, leaving countries report on certain indicators not necessarily being clear on whether the achievement is perceived positive or not enough.

To achieve this target, governments should also consider what specific obstacles come in the way of women to enable to continue their education; whether it is child bearing, domestic chores or acceptance by male family members of the need for women to educate themselves. In this sense, the value of having educated women and mothers in any society needs to be reconsidered.

The post 2015 agenda, specifically for the region, needs to address the gender issues and design tailor made solutions. Being born a female should no longer be a reason to more obstacles and barriers neither to learning nor to employment.

GOAL 6: QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Improving every aspect of the quality of education and ensuring the excellence for all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all learners, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life-skills.

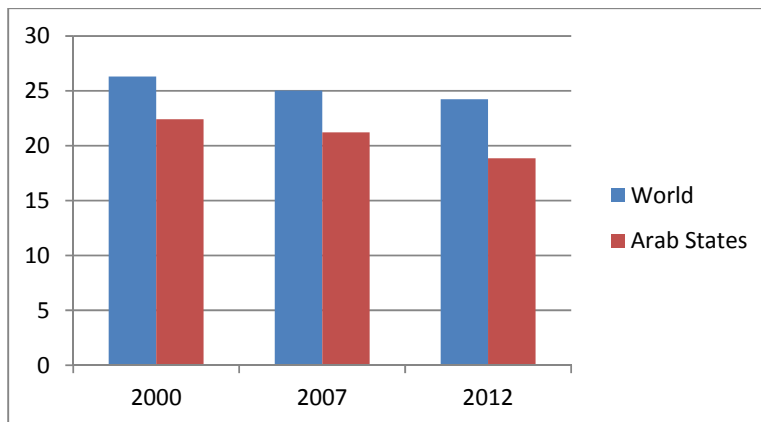
Summary of progress made at the regional level

Similar to all other regions and countries worldwide, the Arab Region is struggling with the education quality issue. While there remain challenges with access, they are easier to identify and the solutions may be more straight-forward, as opposed to quality which is complex and multi-dimensional, where there are so many different factors that contribute to a high or low quality education system. With this goal, the indicators are relatively straightforward but whether or not they are a strong indication to quality education is an important question. One of the most important achievements since the year 2000 is the recognition of the importance of the most important resource of education: teaching personnel and corresponding investment made by Governments to improve qualifications and preparedness of the teaching force.

For this Goal countries were to monitor and report against indicators such as the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), Pupil Classroom Ratio (PCR), and percentage of schools with access to clean water, percentage of schools with sanitary facilities, Pupil Textbook Ratio, and so on. Looking at any country's performance against those indicators and correlating it with their performance on the international tests for example, no trend could be easily identified.

The PTR's decreased in the Arab Region, just as they did in the world's average. The Arab Region's average PTR went down from 22.4 in 2000 to 18.8 in 2012 where the world decreased from 26.3 to 22.4 for the same years.

Figure 26: The Pupil-Teacher Ratio, 2000-2012



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, September 2014

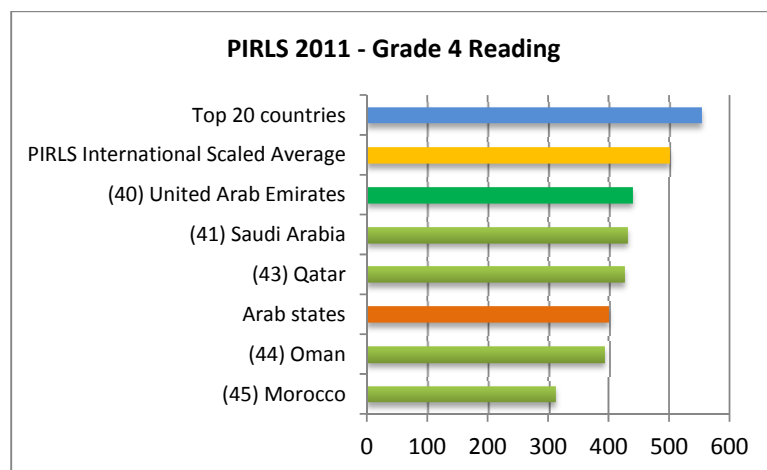
To emphasize the point mentioned above of the difficulty of drawing correlations between certain indicators such as the PTR with quality, a country like Kuwait has less than 7 students to every teacher yet the country is ranked 48 out of the total participating 50 countries in TIMSS. Jordan is another example where the PTR and PCR decreased, 100% of children and teachers have their own textbooks and guides and teachers with bachelor degrees increased between 2000 and 2013, and nevertheless, scores for Jordan on TIMSS and PISA have

declined since 2007. These examples show that the quality issue is complex and every country requires its own in-depth quantitative research and analysis that should be conducted in order to accurately identify what and how certain quality issues need to be tackled.

In terms of teacher quality indicators, such as percentage trained, percentage with higher qualifications, etc., the country reports were inconsistent in their reporting in terms of the data provided and the level of detail. The availability of data on the data center of UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) varies as well. This makes the task of drawing comparisons or identifying trends very difficult.

In terms of student learning outcomes, countries in the region showed more serious efforts in conducting national examinations and participating in international tests to understand where their students are and to be able to draw comparisons and trends locally, regionally and internationally. Below are graphs that show that Arab countries have been participating in different international tests; comparisons are made between them on the different tests and subjects of tests, and with the International Scaled Average and with the average of the Top 20 Countries. On Reading, it is clear that despite the mild difference among participating Arab States, all fall below International average and the average Grade 4 Arab student is performing way below (100 points below World Average and 150 points below Top 20 Countries average).

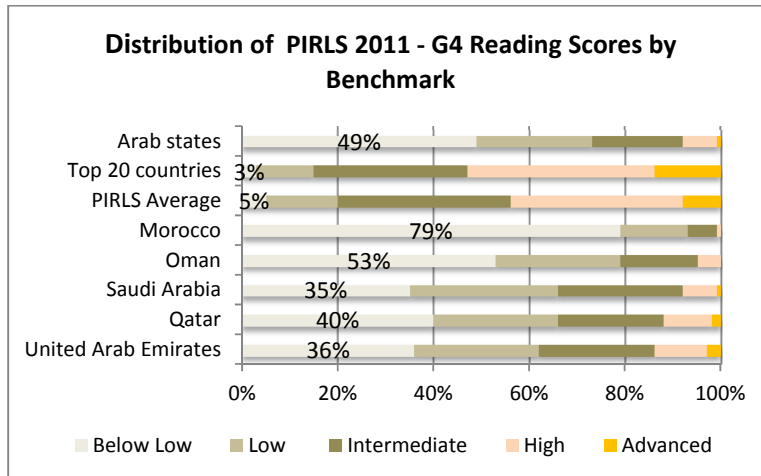
Figure 27: PIRLS 211 – Grade 4 Reading



Source: PIRLS, 2012

When the distribution of Grade 4 students' performance on Literacy along the 5 International Benchmarks is taken into account, poor performance can be seen in Reading and Comprehension in that almost 50 percent of Grade 4 Arab States students scored below the low benchmark compared to only 5% of World students in the same benchmark.

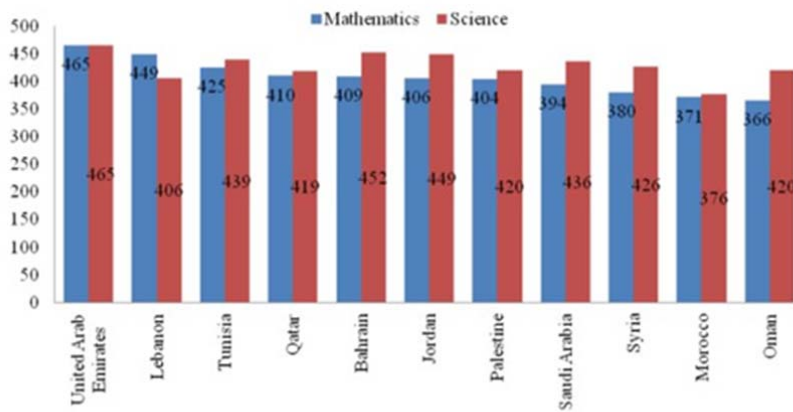
Figure 28: Distribution of PIRLS 2011 – Grade 4 Reading Scores by Benchmark



Source: PIRLS, 2012

The following graph shows the scores of the Arab States that participated in TIMSS in 2011. It is unfortunate to note that none of the participating countries have achieved the average international level of 500 on either subject- as can be seen in the below graph.

Figure 29: Arab States Performance in Math and Science on TIMSS 2011



Source: Mullis et al. 2012; Martin et al. 2012.

Similarly with PISA 2012 results, none of the participating Arab States have achieved scores at or higher than the OECD average for any of the subjects; the OECD averages are 494, 496 and 501 for Math, Reading and Science respectively. Of the total 65 participating countries globally, UAE's ranking was 48 (highest scores of the Arab States) and Qatar's was 63, only two spots from the lowest scores internationally.

Several countries in the Arab World have conducted the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to assess how well their children are reading at Grades 2 and 3. The assessment results in all countries that have conducted it showed concerning results, which means the problem in education exists well before sitting for any international test at 4th or 8th Grade, and the building of the foundations in literacy and mathematics needs to be reexamined.

Box 20: Arab Regional Agenda for Improving Education Quality Program – ARAIEQ

ARAIEQ is an initiative of the Arab States Ministers of Education to give greater impetus to the quality of education – in pursuit of EFA goal six. In cooperation with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), UNESCO and the World Bank, the initiative is a response to the concern expressed across the region that the quality of education is not adequate and so must become a priority for action. Five countries in the region – Djibouti, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen – had transition rates to secondary education of below 90% (a proxy indicator for the quality of primary schooling), and a further six countries had no data (UNESCO 2014). To tackle the dimensions of quality enhancement, ARAIEQ established five streams of work:

- Arab Program on Curriculum Innovation, Qualifications, and ICTs in Education (APIQIT) led by the National Center for Education Technologies (CNTE) in Tunis, Tunisia;
- Arab Program on Teacher Policies (AFTP) led by the Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA) in Amman, Jordan;
- Arab Program on Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis (APEEPA) led by the UNESCO Regional Bureau in Beirut, Lebanon;
- Arab Program on Early Childhood Development (APECD) led by the Arab Resource Collective in Beirut, Lebanon;
- Arab Program on Entrepreneurship (APEEI) led by the Injaz El Arab in Amman, Jordan.

Under each component, the further development of the capacity of national institutions has a central place, through regional training events. In the APEEPA stream, activities including regional workshops have aimed to enhance high-quality national mechanisms for assessing educational quality and systems for analysing assessment data.

Box 21: Kuwait: Focus on Quality

The 2006-2007 EFA report shows that Kuwait attained the main goals of providing primary and secondary education to all its citizens and has now moved its attention to “the quality of education”. A lengthy study was prepared to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the educational system in Kuwait.

In 2013, the NCED conducted a diagnosis study with the National Educational Institute at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. The study covered the effective and efficient learning and teaching process (curriculums, teaching methods and assessment), technology, human rights policies, teachers training (before and during the job) and training on school leadership (before and during the job) in addition to some administrative aspects. The study assessed public education as follows: 1) the need for modern curriculums to accompany the XXIst century, 2) the need to have a test assessment system aimed at enticing “higher” skills for thinking, 3) the need to an inventive development for the schools of the XXIst century, 4) the need to improve the professional competence of teachers, 5) the need to establish a cadre of innovative school leaders, 6) the need to devise an effective tool to assess the performance of teachers.

It is worth mentioning here that Arab countries are faced with the same problems encountered by Kuwait in terms of the quality of education. They must devise several

indicators such as the students - teachers ratio (in Kuwait the average ratio is 7), the percentage of students in classrooms and the percentage of schools equipped with sanitary facilities.

Box 22: Algeria: Improving the Quality of Education

The quality of education is the concept that takes into account a series of dimensions that are directly or indirectly related to education and its impact on the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the educational system. Henceforth, analyzing the quality of education and surveying Algeria's achievements in this domain revolves around the following levels:

The level of inputs namely teachers, schools, curriculums, school books and structures, and schooling criteria:

Taking a series of measures to promote teaching and improve the quality of both training and rehabilitation by entrusting Higher Education with the training of teachers and drafting a national plan of action to improve the level of performance.

Devising new curriculums to all educational levels and introducing many novelties namely: adopting a skills-based approach, introducing human rights education, citizenship and environment education.

Improving the educational and teaching methods, the real time for education, evaluation, and the administrative strategy for running the department and the institution as well as educational supervision.

Decreasing the number of students per class in all sections especially on the level of primary education since the average number of students per class decreased from 30 in 2005 to 27 in 2014;

Offering scholarships to the needy and the orphans and benefiting 3 million children;

Distributing the school book for free to needy students so that the number of beneficiaries amounts to 4 millions.

The outcomes of the educational system mainly the literacy and mathematics skills, the daily life skills, the creative and spiritual competencies and values, the respect for diversity and social cohesion and its impact on development and other social benefits:

Improving the national rates for success at the end of primary education from 71% in 2005 to 92% in 2014. The Bacalaureate results improved drastically from 24% in 2000 to 45% in 2014.

Assessing school achievements: as part of the reform of the educational system a permanent system was devised to follow up and assess school achievements. It is aimed at following up any improvement in the quality of education at all levels: primary, intermediary and secondary, by assessing the students achievements especially in matters related to basic languages and sciences. The school achievements assessment system is aimed at: obtaining as many information as possible about the mastering of basic languages at the end of every stage of basic education; diagnosing learning difficulties among students; preparing the indicators on the quality of basic education to improve the quality of education and learning; amending the course of education and learning; improving national capabilities in the constant follow-up of the quality of education.

Box 23: Lebanon: The Whole School Approach

In Lebanon, quality improvement is central to national education sector development. In support of such efforts, UNESCO Regional Bureau of Education for the Arab States – Beirut planned a series of activities in the context of the Organization’s priority focus on teachers, in cooperation with the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO and other partners devoted to improving the professional capacities of teachers through focusing on innovative teaching and learning concepts and approaches. The Whole-School Approach that is designed to improving teacher professional development through school-based approaches and school networking is one of such challenging yet critical endeavors.

The first workshop in the context of this initiative was conducted in April 2013 and focused on the concept and practice of WSA. It is aimed that schools and school teams (i.e. teachers and headmasters) involved in the project become centres of school networking, thus promoting school-based teacher professional development by exchanging their experiences with fellow colleagues and partner schools.

The WSA stresses the importance of coordinated and coherent actions of teachers, parents and other stakeholders in providing enabling environments for learners and supporting quality learning for all. It also encourages student participation in constructing their learning experiences, as well as in school life and decision-making. Furthermore it fosters stronger ties between schools and their communities by redefining the role of schools as they ensure learning is community-relevant and leads to young people becoming confident lifelong learners.

Following the April 2013 workshop, UNESCO Beirut started developing a *Handbook* for implementing the WSA based on the concrete experiences of different Lebanese schools carrying out school-based professional development and networking. Since then, several Lebanese schools have also engaged in a school-video contest focusing on the topic of teachers’ roles in enhancing education quality. The videos produced by the winning schools served as a basis for developing a teacher training video to be used in Lebanon and the wider Arab Region. The teacher training video emphasizes some main elements of quality education for all, while focusing on the work of teachers in engaging students, parents and the broader community through meaningful whole-school approaches.

Key issues and challenges

There are countless challenges when discussing quality of education but there are two key considerations that need to be resolved first in order to set the education ministries on the right track: 1) identifying every country’s unique issues and challenges regarding quality in order to put in place policies and programmes for improvement, and 2) providing the required resources and support (both financial and technical) for the required interventions such as policies and programmes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the national reviews conducted by countries and complementary analyses of relevant data, following general conclusions can be drawn, which could inform Arab States region's position for the post-2015 agenda

1. Education For All is an unfinished agenda

Despite the commendable progress that has been made on some goals by most Arab States, other goals and sub-goals are far from being close to have been achieved. Moreover, wide disparities within and between Arab States exist on all indicators of EFA goals. In fact, disparities are widening between countries due to impact of political instability directly or indirectly. Post-2015 agenda for education should take into account that achieving EFA remains a priority and EFA goals are still valid for the region. Yet, achieving these goals, however, requires innovative approaches and strategies. In most Arab States, progress was slow and almost leveled off after 2010.

2. The evolving context for the post-2015 framework is dramatically different than that at the turn of the millennium

The EFA and MDGs frameworks were regionally endorsed in an era of relative stability, stronger economic growth and fairly buoyant aid budgets. However, the world's dynamics have changed and in the Arab Region in particular marked by increased instability, slow economic growth rates, high levels of unemployment especially among youth, increased insecurities and deepened financial crisis.

3. Uncoordinated and un-prioritized strategies exist within national EFA plans

Review of national reports revealed that all EFA 2000 Dakar Declaration strategies have guided implementation of EFA agenda in the Arab Region but careful analysis of actual implementation clearly points out to the following dysfunctions in the overall planning for implementation and actual implementation:

- Implementation was done in a piece-meal approach rather by a systemic and holistic approach to ensure alignment, integrity and proper linkages with various components of national EFA plans.
- Planning was made in broad terms leaving detailed planning to take place during implementation which may led to policy fragmentation, poor planning, isolated responses to core issues and imbalances and consequently interventions took place at limited segments of the education system.
- Weak, intermittent and random monitoring and evaluation activities. Even for those Arab States who reported on monitoring, coordination and evaluation mechanisms, it is noticeable that these mechanisms were designed to meet monitoring (at the level of operational indicators) purpose and to a large extent activities were discrete and were not guided by a coherent implementation schedule including a monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Resulted in projects and programs to address each and every concern that have been:
 - Bounded by levels and domains
 - Running simultaneously in parallel
 - Managed largely independently
 - Not well-aligned and linked

- Achieved little success
- Difficult to sustain

4. Support at highest political level, consensus across civil society, and society-wide mobilization were somehow lost during implementation

Due to many factors whether related to a relatively long timeframe (2000-2015) or to lack of engagement of civic society in planning and monitoring EFA or lack of dissemination of information about EFA at national levels, many Arab States suffered from low society-wide engagement in EFA activities.

5. EFA plans were not integrated within a system-wide development framework or within a broader national development agenda

It was clear from national reports that most Arab States dealt with EFA as a stand-alone activity and was not integrated in a wider education development plans and national development agenda.

SECTION 4: PRIORITY AREAS FOR EDUCATION POST-2015 IN THE ARAB STATES REGION

Like the rest of the world, EFA framework has dominated the education development debate since year 2000 in the Arab World but it is only one of many framework in the context of national and regional education development and its contribution has been significant yet at times, unknown. Arab States that showed continuous progress towards EFA targets and came close to achieving EFA goals by 2015 were able to achieve this through effective policy changes, strong commitment, political stability and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

While significant progress towards EFA goals and targets in Arab States has been recorded since year 2000, careful analysis has revealed that neither a single Arab country has achieved all EFA targets nor a single goal has been achieved fully by all Arab States. It can be easily said that many, if not all, EFA goals yet to be achieved and any post-2015 education agenda needs to incorporate existing EFA goals without dropping them off the radar.

The world at large and the Arab world in specific look different now from that at the turn of the millennium. Consequently, the debates on post-2015 development agenda including EFA too are very different in timber and tone from those in late nineties. Within Arab World, pressing challenges related to high unemployment rates, poverty, financial crisis, political stability and deterioration of education quality are dominating the scene across the region.

Through the consultations led by UNESCO (Sharm El Sheikh in 2012 and in their reports of national EFA reviews), Arab States identified some priority areas for action for education post-2015. The identified areas are similar to those emerged throughout various consultations worldwide. Global consensus has emerged that the EFA framework is still valid for post-2015 but post-2015 framework needs to go beyond EFA goals and address all levels of education, giving focus on learning, while incorporating transformative, inclusive, lifelong learning approaches. Other common areas for improvement in post 2015 are related to improvement of governance and management of Arab education systems through accountability measures and community involvement, rationalization of education decisions through reliable and timely data and indicators (Education Decision Support Systems) and increase of financial resources in education. Other priority areas and recommendations are more specific issues related to out-of-school children in countries affected by civil strife, such as Syria and Yemen or those affected by an influx of immigrants such as Jordan and Lebanon such as rehabilitation of schools infrastructure, provision of education and accelerated education programs for those who missed attending schools.

The Education Post 2015 agenda in the region should incorporate the following areas of focus:

1. Quality

There is now a greater realization that it is not enough to provide learners with access to school but more importantly Governments must ensure that learners receive quality learning. There is more evidence suggesting that improvement in access has not been matched with gains in quality of education. Empirical research provides robust evidence that quality education contributes to economic growth and that learning rather than schooling has a direct impact on growth and development.

International debates around this issue stress the fact that the emphasis on quantitative dimensions in previous EFA framework has diluted efforts at ensuring quality. The global agenda now is shifting towards a focus on learning outcomes and the way in which measurement is made, such as the Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF).

That said, one should be careful that measuring these learning outcomes alone will not lead to improvement in the quality if no concrete investments are made to implement the findings through introduction of effective policies, strategies and programmes. One should keep in mind that delivering on results requires measuring the right results. Therefore, it is critical to define what quality education constitutes in each country and invests in its improvement holistically.

2. Teachers

In the last few years, *Teacher Policies* have become a priority in education policy agendas internationally and regionally. Teacher policies and their outcomes at the level of teacher's classroom performance play a key role in improving *school results* by influencing the motivations and capacities of students, and as such their learning as well as the school climate and overall educational environment. Improving the efficiency and equity of schooling depends, in large measure, on ensuring that highly qualified, competent and fully committed people are attracted to work as teachers, that their teaching is of high quality, and that all students have access to high quality teaching. However, a series of key dysfunctions have been accumulated in the areas related to teachers and teaching in Arab States, such as:

- Lack of a Comprehensive and Integrated Policy Framework for Teacher Preparation, Utilization and Career Development.
- Lack of a *professionalized* Pre-service Teacher Training and as such the lack of proper Initial Teacher Qualification.
- Lack of a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Framework that would provide to all teachers consistent and coherent CPD and would encompass all current forms of CPD or CPD-related approaches.
- Lack of a clear "Career Path" Matrix for teachers that would integrate in a common frame of reference all aspects related to teachers' CPD, utilization, ranking, salary and incentives schemes, individual and corporate motivation etc., offering them a clear image of their professional milestones, perspective, and concrete opportunities.

In most Arab States, the issue around teachers is not much related to shortage of teachers but more towards quality of teachers or candidate teachers. Due to many factors, teaching is becoming less attractive to qualified candidates. Although, there were serious debates in the region on developing coherent teachers policy frameworks that would ensure quality teachers, little unfortunately has been done to operationalize the outcomes of these debates into policy actions in most Arab States. Given the importance of teachers and their role in improving educational quality, which is at the top of priorities for post 2015 agenda, investment in teachers must be a specific goal in post-2015 agenda.

3. Secondary education

The current EFA framework with its high emphasis on primary education has been criticized for diverting attention away from secondary education, which should be marked as a stand-

alone goal in post 2015 agenda. Justifications for this are clear if we consider the region's progress in all indicators related to secondary education, be it enrollment, dropout, equity or quality.

Related to secondary education are issues around the necessity to assist youth in learning skills for successful transitions from school to work, providing wider, diverse pathways for youths and to bridge the gap between formal and non-formal education. This is extremely important following the "Arab Spring" to invest more in youth in order to tap into their potentials as agents for economic development and social cohesion.

4. Pre-primary

Greater emphasis needs to be given to ensure quality early learning as well as readiness to learn. The world average enrolment increased from 34.6% to 45% in 2007 and 53.6% in 2012 showing an increase of 19 percentage points over 12 years. The Arab world in comparison have only increased their average of pre-primary enrolment rates by 9.8 percentage points in the same span of time; 15.5% in 2000, 19.3% in 2007 and 25.3% in 2012. Research clearly shows that pre-primary education and care is beneficial to laying the foundation and building the readiness for learning and for life.

5. Equity

Careful analysis of why Arab States have not achieved full primary universal education can be explained by the fact that most of those left behind are from marginalized communities, poor households, often with physical and learning disabilities, living in rural and remote areas and often girls. Because education is a fundamental human right and a universal aspiration, the right measures of access and learning at any level (global, national and sub national) should always pay attention to both aggregate measures of overall conditions (enrollment, achievement) and disparities in those measures among student subpopulations.

This means that the starting point for the focus in post 2015 EFA agenda should therefore be equity. This implies that each goal in EFA post-2015 should have an equity dimension and focused target (e.g. measuring progress for the bottom 20%) on the one hand and to adopt quality indicators for equity moving away from just gender parity indices. Equity should be explicitly addressed along with its basic dimensions: enabling contexts, learning impact, learning process and direct learning outcomes.

6. Re-definition of Arab Education

More calls have been made in the Arab World in recent times to re-define Arab Education to go beyond school attendance and performance on tests and exams. Arab education systems are facing serious challenges when it comes to its contribution to sustainable development. This has been exacerbated by slow economic growth rates across the region, political instability and degraded social cohesion. It is critical that education systems adapt to a multitude of existing and potential challenges. Reading and numeracy are a much too narrow way to think about education. There are many non-cognitive skills and attitudes that are essential to local and global citizenship. EFA framework and agenda for the Arab States should therefore be widened and goes beyond current EFA goals in response to emerging trends.

Arab education systems should be transformed in such a way to provide all students with opportunities to be innovative, able to adapt to and assimilate change and be able to continue learning. Post 2015 education in Arab states should go beyond narrow or even shallow learning outcomes and basic cognitive skills to include higher skills, non-cognitive skills as well as education for social cohesion, creativity, social and emotional development. For this, a new and broadened conceptualization of education and learning is required, using a life-long and life-wide learning approach. It is essential not only to learn, but also learn to continue learning, to re-learn and even to unlearn. Arab education should shift its focus from access to learning and success, from schooling to lifelong learning and from a purely economic perception of education to a more humanistic one.