

# Regional overview: Arab States



*EFA remains a challenge in the region.<sup>1</sup> Since the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, the Arab States have stepped up efforts to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. However, progress has often been slower than in other regions, particularly South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the poorest countries in the region have made great efforts to get more children into primary education, especially girls. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes, however, are still limited or non-existent; responding to the needs of youth and adults remains a challenge; illiteracy affects almost 57 million adults, most of them women; gender parity and equality are still elusive; and further improvements in the quality of education are needed to accompany increasing access.*

*Despite high public spending on education in several countries, international aid is still required for the poorest countries, which are farthest from realizing Education for All.*

*In reviewing progress since 2000, this regional overview summarizes findings in response to key questions addressed by the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report: What are the main EFA achievements and what challenges remain at this point, midway to the target date of 2015? Which countries are advancing fastest? Which are facing difficulties? Which policy initiatives are promoting access to education and improving its quality, especially for the most disadvantaged groups and areas? Has the international community provided adequate support? The 2008 Report shows that, despite progress towards some goals, the Arab States region – along with South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa – is still lagging.*

## EFA progress and challenges

### Early childhood care and education

- Child mortality rates in the Arab States have improved noticeably in the past decade. Between 1995 and 2005 the under-5 mortality rate fell by more than 25% (to 55 per 1,000 births), with Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic experiencing a decline of up to one-third. Despite this generally positive trend, the prevalence of under-5 mortality remains particularly high in Djibouti, Iraq, Mauritania and Sudan, where the rates exceeded 100‰ in 2005, while they were below 15‰ in Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.
- While most children are inoculated against preventable diseases, their well-being varies significantly between countries within the region. Undernutrition and malnutrition affected 32% to 46% of children under age 5 in Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen between 1996 and 2005, well above the world average. These countries also had the highest proportions of children suffering moderate and severe stunting – over half in the case of Yemen. In contrast, only 4% of children under 5 were under- or malnourished in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia.
- Provision of ECCE programmes is insufficient among the Arab States. This reflects the low priority given to development of programmes for the youngest children as well as for children from age 3, the stage at which governments tend to be more active in providing care and education. Only seven countries out of the thirteen with data indicated they had programmes targeting children under 3.<sup>2</sup>
- The number of children enrolled in pre-primary schools has increased by 18% since 1999 to reach about 2.9 million in 2005. Despite this growth, the region's average gross

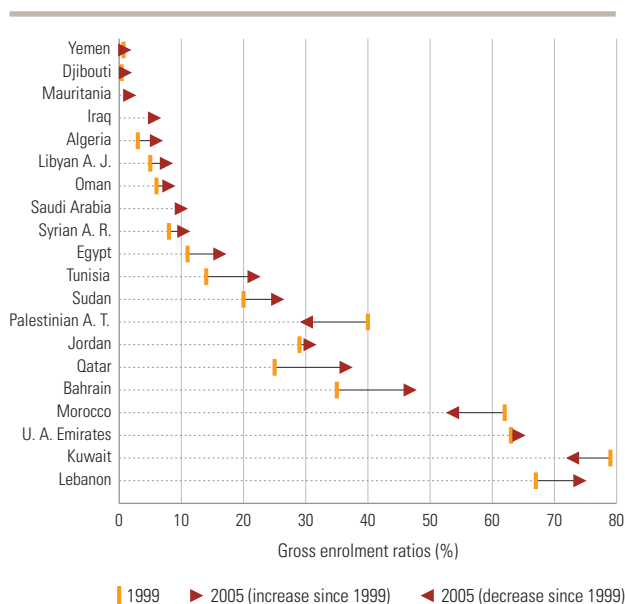
1. This is according to the EFA classification. See Table 3 for countries and territories in the region.

2. The countries and territories that reported having such programmes were Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. No programmes for children under 3 were reported by Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

enrolment ratio (GER) in pre-primary education remained below 20% in 2005. Nonetheless, some countries with moderate levels of coverage in 1999, such as Bahrain and Qatar, registered important increases (more than ten percentage points). Lebanon continued its expansion, enrolling almost three-quarters of the corresponding age group in 2005, the highest participation level in the region. Conversely, pre-primary GERs decreased between 1999 and 2005 in Kuwait, Morocco and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

- The share of pre-primary enrolment provided by the private sector was above 75% in more than half the countries reporting data. The private sector is almost the sole provider in Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, a situation that raises equity issues. Indeed, millions of children who belong to disadvantaged groups and live in vulnerable settings continue to have the least access to ECCE programmes despite evidence of the considerable benefits accruing from their participation.
- While gender disparities in pre-primary education are generally less pronounced than at higher levels of education, big differences at the expense of girls can be observed throughout the Arab States. In 2005, the average gender parity index (GPI) in pre-primary education was only 0.88, the lowest among all world regions. Nonetheless, this represents an improvement in the overall situation of girls since 1999, when the index stood at 0.77. Pre-primary coverage for girls was much lower than that for boys in Morocco (GPI of 0.65 in 2005, although much higher than in 1999) and Yemen (GPI of 0.85), while fewer boys than girls were enrolled in Djibouti (GPI of 1.06).

**Figure 1: Changes in pre-primary education gross enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005**



- The interaction between the child and the carer or teacher is the key determinant of the quality of ECCE programmes. Pre-primary pupil/teacher ratios (PTRs) decreased slightly between 1999 and 2005, to a regional average of 20:1. Yet values well above that (about 29:1) were found in Algeria and Sudan.
- The downward trend in PTRs was significant in some countries, with the largest declines in Bahrain, Djibouti and Qatar. The numbers of teachers in those countries increased at a much higher rate than that of enrolment, reducing PTRs substantially.
- While virtually all pre-primary teachers had received training in most of the countries with data in 2005, only 11% had in Lebanon and 16% in the Syrian Arab Republic. Shortages of trained teachers translated into very high ratios of pupils to trained teachers in these two countries (above 100:1). In the Syrian Arab Republic, the ratio actually worsened between 1999 and 2005, from 27:1 to 137:1.

## Universal primary education

- The region has made significant progress towards UPE since 1999, with an increase of 11.6% in the number of children entering primary school to some 7 million in 2005. However, demographic pressure will remain a challenge throughout the next decade, when the total primary school-age population is projected to grow by 13%. Reaching the goal will prove particularly challenging in countries with gross intake rates (GIRs) that are still below 70%, such as Djibouti and Sudan.
- The average net enrolment ratio (NER) continued to rise between 1999 and 2005, from nearly 79% to 83%, but at a slower pace than in the previous eight years. The average, however, conceals the acceleration experienced by some countries, including Yemen (31% increase in NER), even amid demographic pressures. Primary school participation also expanded significantly in Morocco (20%) and Mauritania (15%), with a concurrent decline in geographical disparities in the former and an increase in the latter. Meanwhile, NERs declined in several countries and territories, including Lebanon, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>3</sup> The level of participation in primary education remained very low in Djibouti, where the NER was only 33% in 2005 in spite of some gains in the number of new entrants.
- Despite improvements in access to and participation in primary education, more than 6 million children in the region were out of school in 2005; without additional incentives most of them (59%) will probably never enrol. About 45% of out-of-school children in the region were

3. The declines in Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates are partly explained by changes in the duration of primary schooling, by one year more in the former and one year less in the latter.

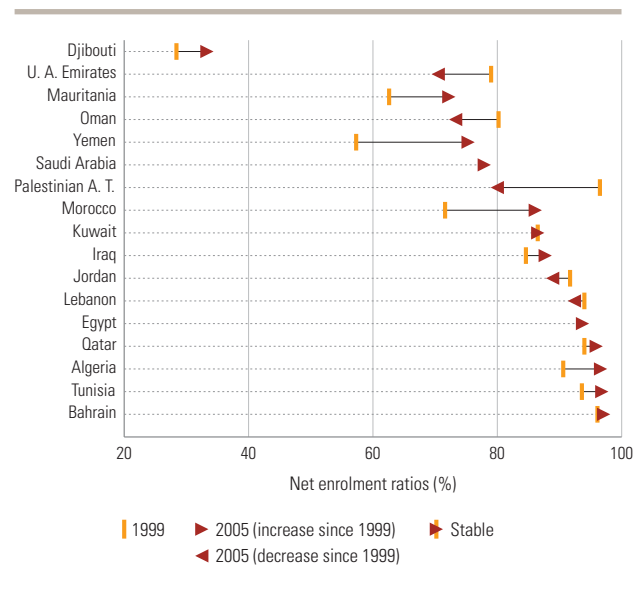
concentrated in Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Children are more likely to be out of school if they are from poor households, live in a rural area and/or have a mother with no schooling. Being a girl accentuates the probability of exclusion from school: three out of five primary school-age children not enrolled in the region in 2005 were girls.

- School progression and completion remain important concerns in several Arab States. While the median percentage of primary school repeaters in the region was 4.3% in 2005, repeaters represented more than 10% of all primary pupils in Algeria, Lebanon, Mauritania and Morocco. In most countries, the repetition rate was highest in grade 1, reaching 16% in Morocco, while Djibouti, Mauritania and Algeria had the highest repetition rates in the last grade, ranging from 15% to 22%. Repetition rates in grade 1 might be reduced if more children attended ECCE programmes to prepare them for the transition to formal primary schooling.
- School retention in the Arab States is high compared with other developing regions: the survival rate to the last grade was 94% or above in more than half the countries with data available in 2004. Yet retention remains a challenge in Iraq, Mauritania and Yemen, where only 70% or less of primary pupils reach the last grade. Most countries in the region maintained or improved the school retention rate between 1999 and 2004. In Iraq, in particular, the survival rate increased from 49% to 70%, though that was still a low level. On the other hand, some school systems have not been able to retain the large flow of new entrants, especially in countries where primary enrolment has expanded significantly. In Mauritania and Yemen, for example, achievement of universal primary education (UPE) is threatened by poor and deteriorating retention rates.
- Not all pupils who reach the last grade complete primary school. The gaps between the cohort completion rate and the survival rate to the last grade were particularly wide in Morocco (ten percentage points) and Mauritania, where only 20% of pupils completed primary school compared with 39% who reached the last grade in 2004.

## Post-primary education

- As increasing numbers of pupils finish primary school, demand for secondary education has continued to grow in the region. Total enrolment at this level has increased by 25% since 1999 to reach 28 million in 2005. The average GER rose from 60% to 68%. Secondary GERs increased in most countries, with Djibouti and the Syrian Arab Republic experiencing more rapid growth since Dakar than in the pre-Dakar period (1991–1999), with annual increases above 10% since 1999.
- Participation in secondary education varied greatly by country, from GERs below 35% in Djibouti, Mauritania and Sudan in 2005 to levels close to or exceeding 100%

**Figure 2: Changes in primary education net enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005**



in Bahrain, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Qatar.

- Participation rates in secondary education differ substantially between levels. In three out of four countries in the region where lower secondary education is now compulsory, the average GER at this level was 81% in 2005. GERs in upper secondary, on the other hand, averaged only 54%. The gaps between the two levels were greatest in Algeria (about fifty percentage points) and the Syrian Arab Republic (fifty-eight percentage points).
- Tertiary education is important to EFA as a component of the gender equality goal and for its relationship to the supply of teachers. In the Arab States, some 6.8 million students were enrolled in higher education in 2005, an increase of 31% since 1999. However, the overall participation remained low, with the region's average tertiary GER at just 21% in 2005. In Lebanon and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya more than half the relevant age group was enrolled in tertiary education in 2005, while GERs were less than 10% in Djibouti, Mauritania and Yemen.

## Learning needs of young people and adults

- Monitoring the learning needs of young people and adults continues to be an important challenge, partly due to a lack of common understanding of what this goal entails and partly due to the difficulty of finding comparable indicators.
- Governments have mainly sought to meet the learning needs of young people and adults by expanding formal secondary and tertiary education. Yet a great variety of structured learning activities for youth and adults takes place outside

formal education systems. Non-formal education programmes are important from an equity perspective because they often give disadvantaged youth and adults an opportunity to acquire basic skills. They are extremely diverse throughout the region and differ in terms of objectives, target groups, content, pedagogy, scale and types of providers. At least nine different ministries and national bodies are involved in Egypt, for example, besides non-government organizations and local communities with small-scale programmes.

- Equivalency or 'second chance' programmes are a common means of providing learning opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged young people. Egypt has pursued a multi-tiered equivalency strategy to meet the learning needs of its youth and adults, including equivalencies to primary, secondary and tertiary education. Other national programmes in Egypt focus on skills development in the informal economy.

## Adult literacy

- Literacy is a fundamental human right, a springboard not only for achieving EFA but also for reducing poverty and broadening participation in society. Yet some 57 million adults still lacked basic literacy skills in the Arab States in 1995–2004, more than two-thirds of them women.
- The average adult literacy rate in the Arab States increased by 21% between the 1985–1994 and 1995–2004 periods, from 58% to 70%, and the increase rate among women was higher (29%). However, continuing high population growth offset these gains, with the number of adult illiterates increasing between the two periods.
- Progress towards adult literacy was also observed at country level. Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait and Yemen experienced gains of more than fifteen percentage points between 1985–1994 and 1995–2004. Yet again, population growth counteracted the improvement in Yemen.
- Despite the overall progress, adult literacy rates remain low (below 55%) in Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen. Clearly, improving regional trends in adult literacy will depend on continuing reductions in illiteracy in these countries and, most importantly, on reducing the number of adult illiterates in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Sudan, which were home to more than 60% of the adult illiterates in the region.
- Youth literacy rates also improved, reflecting better access to and participation in formal schooling among younger generations. Progress was especially marked in Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco and Yemen, where literacy rates grew by between twelve to twenty-two percentage points between 1985–1994 and 1995–2004. Moreover, in Algeria and Kuwait, as well as in Saudi Arabia, literacy rates of youth aged 15 to 24 were above 90% in 1995–2004.
- Women's literacy is of crucial importance in addressing wider issues of gender inequality. Despite progress in the past two decades, the Arab States region is one of the three regions with the greatest gender disparities in adult literacy, the other two being South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Its average GPI of adult literacy rates was 0.74 in 1999–2004, up from 0.66 in 1985–1994. Striking gender disparities prevailed in Morocco and Yemen, where literacy rates for females were less than two-thirds of those for males. On the other hand, gender parity in adult literacy was achieved or nearly so in Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The situation improved significantly in some of the countries with data for both periods, particularly Algeria, Egypt and Yemen, with about a 30% or more increase in GPI between 1985–1999 and 1995–2004.
- Besides gender, key correlates of illiteracy include poverty and place of residence. In general, illiteracy rates are highest in the countries with the greatest poverty. The link between poverty and illiteracy is also observed at household level, with the literacy rates of the poorest households substantially lower than those of the wealthiest.
- Achieving EFA implies paying strong attention to youth and adult literacy by providing a diverse range of literacy programmes. It also involves strong attention to the literate environment, particularly the availability and use of written materials and of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which encourage literacy acquisition, a reading culture, improved literacy retention and access to information.

## Gender parity and equality

Gender disparities have been reduced in the region, but not eliminated. Only Jordan and Qatar had achieved the gender parity goal in both primary and secondary education by 2005.

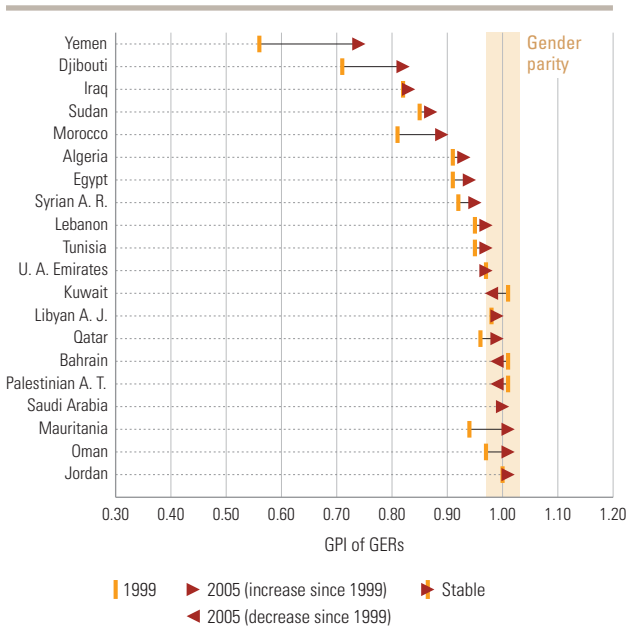
- Gender disparities often favour boys and are greater at higher levels of education: about two-thirds of the Arab States had achieved gender parity in primary education by 2005 or were close to achieving it, compared with 35% in secondary education, while parity in tertiary education was observed in none of the countries.
- Part of the improvement in primary education is explained by higher proportions of girls entering the first grade, with the GPI of GIR rising from 0.93 in 1999 to 0.95 in 2005. Improvements in girls' access to primary school were especially noticeable in Djibouti, where the GPI of GIR rose by 19%, and Yemen (11%). However, access across the region was still gender unbalanced in 2005, especially in Yemen, at the expense of girls (GPI below 0.80), and Saudi Arabia, at the expense of boys (GPI of 1.05).

- The average GPI of primary GER increased from 0.88 to 0.91 between 1999 and 2005. However, the pace of progress towards gender parity in primary education was slower than in the pre-Dakar period. Encouraging trends at country level since 1999 include noticeable improvements in the participation of girls in Djibouti, Mauritania (which achieved parity), Morocco and Yemen. The GPI of primary GER in Yemen increased by nearly 32% between 1999 and 2005, but further progress is still needed, as the female GER for primary education in 2005 was only three-quarters that of male, and the gender disparities were the highest in the region.
- Overall, when girls have access to school they tend to do better than boys, with the percentages of female primary repeaters lower than those of males in most countries in 2005. In terms of survival rates to the last grade, roughly the same number of countries had gender gaps in favour of boys as in favour of girls in 2004.
- Even more than in primary education, the pace of reducing gender disparities in secondary education has been much slower since Dakar than it was in 1991–1999. The region’s GPI of secondary GER increased from 0.89 to 0.92 between 1999 and 2005. Again, Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen made significant progress, due especially to girls’ participation increasing more than that of boys. In Yemen, in particular, the GPI increased by 32% between 1999 and 2005, but the participation of girls in secondary education is still less than half that of boys. Conversely, in Djibouti, disparities against girls increased, while in Kuwait, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Tunisia, the

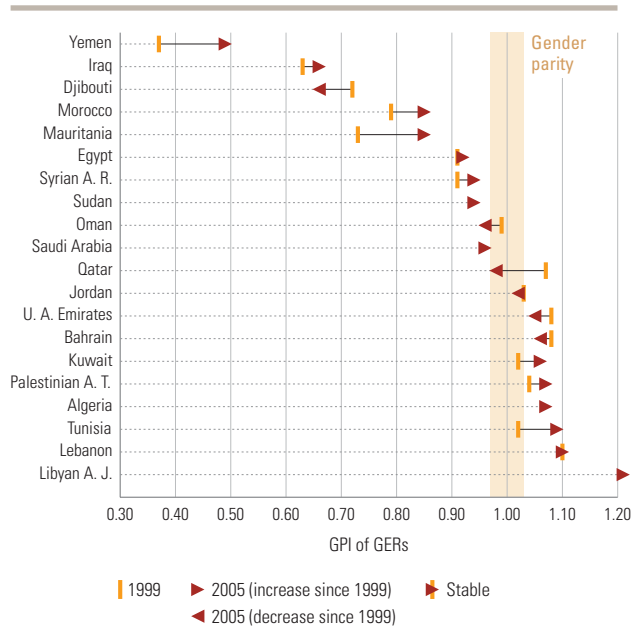
situation of boys worsened (in 1999 they already had lower enrolment than girls).

- In twelve out of the seventeen countries with data, more women than men were enrolled in tertiary education in 2005. In Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, for example, women made up more than two-thirds of enrolment in tertiary education. Mauritania and Yemen were at the other extreme, with GPIs below 0.40 despite improvements since 1999 in the latter. In Djibouti, women’s situation has deteriorated significantly since 1999, when they outnumbered men in higher education.
- Narrowing the gender gap in education does not automatically translate into equality between women and men. Salary gaps and differential access to particular occupations and political representation are evidence of enduring gender inequality. Overall, gender equality remains elusive: sexual violence, insecure school environments and inadequate sanitation disproportionately affect girls’ self-esteem, participation and retention.
- Female teachers help assure girls’ access. The share of women in the teaching staff varies by level of education: they are overrepresented in pre-primary education (86% in 2005) and, to a lesser extent, in primary education (58%), while accounting for less than half the teaching force in secondary education and only one-third at tertiary level. The presence of female teachers remained particularly low in countries including Djibouti and Mauritania, where in 2005 they represented only 27% and 31%, respectively, of all primary teachers.

**Figure 3: Changes in gender disparities in primary education gross enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005**



**Figure 4: Changes in gender disparities in secondary education gross enrolment ratios, 1999 to 2005**



- Textbooks, curricula and teacher attitudes continue to reinforce stereotypes of gender roles in society. For instance, however measured – in lines of text, proportions of named characters, mentions in titles, citations in indexes – girls and women are under-represented in textbooks and curricula. A study of mathematics textbooks in Tunisia, for example, found the proportion of female characters in written material to be below 30%.
- While globally the academic performance of boys and girls is moving towards convergence, challenges regarding gender differences in learning outcomes remain in the region, varying by grade and subject. Girls consistently perform better than boys in language test scores, even in countries with significant gender disparities in enrolment, as in many Arab States. The PIRLS, an international assessment, identified Kuwait as one of the countries facing the greatest challenges in improving gender equality in language achievement. Another assessment, TIMSS 2003, showed girls in Bahrain and Jordan largely outperforming boys in mathematics and science, while the reverse was true in Tunisia.

## Quality of education

### Monitoring learning outcomes

- Efforts to monitor learning outcomes in the region have accelerated since Dakar. Ten of the twenty Arab States had conducted at least one national learning assessment between 2000 and 2006,<sup>4</sup> compared with only three during the previous period, 1995–1999. National assessments tend to focus more on grades 4 and 6 than on grades 1 to 3 or 7 to 9, and are predominantly curriculum-based and subject-oriented, in contrast to international assessments of cross-curricular knowledge, skills or competencies. All the countries that have carried out national, subject-oriented assessments since 2000 have evaluated mathematics, almost all evaluated language (Arabic or mother tongue and a second language) and half assessed outcomes in science. Most countries in the region have also participated in at least one international or regional assessment of mathematics, science or reading literacy.<sup>5</sup>
- The findings of international assessments suggest low levels of achievement among participating countries in the region. PIRLS 2001, for example, found that over 40% of grade 4 pupils in Kuwait and Morocco read at or below the lowest level. TIMSS 2003 showed that 32% to 81% of grade 8 students did not reach the lowest benchmark

in mathematics in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, while 20% to 52% failed to do so in science.

- National evaluations also confirm the quality challenge and highlight the need for policies to improve students' skills. An assessment of grade 6 students in a sample of schools in Morocco, carried out in 2006, suggests that overall performance in Arabic, French, mathematics and science is weak. Only 36% of pupils achieved the minimum level in Arabic and 18% in French. Though outcomes in mathematics and sciences were better, just 43% of students achieved minimum levels in the former and 65% in the latter. Achievement rates for mastery levels were 7% in Arabic, 1% in French, 11% in mathematics and 20% in science.
- Not all the countries have carried out periodic assessments, thus reducing the possibility of comparing changes in learning outcomes over time. However, since 1995, Morocco's Ministry of National Education has conducted periodic evaluations of language and mathematics in grades 4 and 6. The findings offer a mixed picture. On the one hand, outcomes of fourth grade students declined dramatically between 1995 and 2001 – by 30% in mathematics and by 55% in Arabic. On the other hand, mean achievement scores of sixth grade students improved, especially in Arabic (44%), French (23%) and mathematics (11%).

### Instructional time

- A key requirement for an adequate learning environment is ample instructional time. Officially, countries in the Arab States require a median of 789 hours of instruction over the first six years of schooling, well below the 850 to 1,000 hours per year recommended by several international agencies and reports. Furthermore, if official mandates are compared to the actual number of instructional hours delivered, children in several of the countries in the region receive, on average, 30% less than the required time.

### School and learning environment

- In some countries, the availability of textbooks and other learning materials is severely limited. In Mauritania, most schools were without blackboards and chalk in 2004, whereas at least 90% of classrooms in most other PASEC participant countries were equipped with these basic resources.
- Retention and learning are hampered when pupils attend school in dilapidated or overcrowded buildings, or in noisy or unsafe environments. In conflict-ridden countries or areas hit by natural disasters, damage to education infrastructure may be acute, if often transitory. In Iraq, for example, more than 2,700 schools were looted, damaged or burned in 2003 and require considerable rehabilitation.

4. The countries are Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Djibouti and Lebanon carried out learning assessments before 2000, but have not done so since. Mauritania began evaluations in 1999 and has continued almost yearly for various grades.

5. Mauritania participated in PASEC; Kuwait, Morocco and Qatar in PIRLS 2007; Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia in PISA 2006; and Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen in TIMSS 2003.

## Teachers

- Between 1999 and 2005 the number of teachers in the Arab States grew by 16% in primary education to 1.8 million – the second largest increase globally – and by over 23% in secondary education. Although primary school enrolment also increased during this period, the employment of additional teachers was greater still. As a result, the average PTR declined slightly to 22:1 in 2005.
- The effort to improve PTRs is noticeable in most countries with data, including some of those with the largest primary enrolment increases. Djibouti, for instance, reduced PTRs from some 40:1 to 35:1 between 1999 and 2005, amid an enrolment increase of 33%. The number of primary school teachers in Mauritania grew by 49% in the period, compared with a 28% increase in enrolment. Nevertheless, at 40:1 in 2005, the regional PTR was still relatively high and masked disparities in teacher distribution, to the detriment of state schools.
- In some countries expansion of the teaching workforce took place at a time of declining enrolments. This was the case in Oman, where the primary PTR fell from 25:1 to 14:1 between 1999 and 2006, and in Tunisia, where a fall in primary school enrolment accounts for most of the improvement in the ratio.
- In seven of the ten Arab States with data, all or almost all primary teachers were trained in 2005. However, some countries faced serious shortages of trained teachers. The percentage of trained primary teachers was only 14%<sup>6</sup> in Lebanon and 60% in Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. The last two also have significant gender disparities in teacher training: while women are overrepresented in primary teaching, the proportion of those with training is considerably lower than that for male teachers. Two-thirds of primary teachers in Sudan are women, but less than half are formally trained, compared with over 80% of male teachers. In the United Arab Emirates, where primary female teachers accounted for 84% of the total primary teaching staff in 2005, just 58% were trained, compared with 69% of the men.

## The Education for All Development Index: summarizing progress

The EFA Development Index (EDI) is a composite measure of a country's situation with regard to attainment of the EFA agenda. It was introduced in the 2003/4 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* and is updated annually. It focuses on the four most easily quantifiable EFA goals: UPE, adult literacy,

gender parity in primary and secondary education, and education quality, each proxied by one indicator.<sup>7</sup>

The EDI for 2005 could be calculated for fifteen of the twenty Arab States. Among those excluded are Djibouti and Sudan, two countries that continue to suffer from low educational development and hence deserve particular attention.

Some of the results:

- None of the Arab States has achieved the four quantifiable goals and only one, Bahrain, is close to doing so, with an EDI of 0.952.
- Ten of the fifteen countries are in an intermediate position, with an EDI value between 0.80 and 0.94. While most countries in this group have relatively high education quality as measured by the survival rate to grade 5, the EDI is pulled down by low adult literacy rates (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia) and low total primary NERs (Kuwait, Oman, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Saudi Arabia).
- Four countries are far from achieving EFA as a whole, with EDI scores lower than 0.80. They require improvements across the EFA spectrum, including in primary school participation, adult literacy, gender parity and equality, and school quality.
- The five countries with data available for both 1999 and 2005 showed improvement in the EDI. Yemen, in particular, increased its EDI by 10.6% through significant growth in primary school participation, gender parity and adult literacy, though a fall in survival rates limited the rise. Conversely, large gains in the survival rate to grade 5 were behind Iraq's EDI increase of 6.6%. Reductions in one or more EDI component undermined improvements in Bahrain, Mauritania and the United Arab Emirates.

**Table 1: Mean distance from the EFA goals**

EFA achieved (EDI between 0.98 and 1.00)	Close to EFA (EDI between 0.95 and 0.97)
None	{1}: Bahrain
Intermediate position (EDI between 0.80 and 0.94)	Far from EFA (EDI below 0.80)
{10}: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates	{4}: Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen

7. UPE (goal 2) is proxied by total primary NER (children of primary school age enrolled in either primary or secondary education); adult literacy (goal 4) by the literacy rate of those aged 15 and above; gender parity and equality (goal 5) by the gender-specific EFA index, which is an average of the GPIs for primary and secondary GER and the adult literacy rate; and quality of education (goal 6) by the survival rate to grade 5. The EDI gives equal weight to the four proxy measures. Since each measure is expressed as a percentage, the EDI for a country ranges from 0% to 100% or, when expressed as a ratio, from 0 to 1, where 1 represents full achievement of EFA as summarized by the EDI.

6. In Lebanon, the low percentage of trained primary school teachers is apparently due to the use of a definition of 'trained teacher' that differs from that used by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

## Country efforts to achieve Education for All

Box 1 below illustrates how Arab States, as exemplified by Egypt, Morocco and Yemen, are developing policies to advance EFA in three areas: enabling institutional environments, expanding equitable access and improving learning.

## Financing Education for All

### National financial commitments to EFA

- Half of the nine Arab States with the relevant data allocated 4.5% or more of GNP to education in 2005. There was wide variation between countries, however, with Lebanon, Mauritania and the United Arab Emirates spending less

than 3% of GNP while Djibouti, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia allocated more than 6%. In most countries with data, the share of education in GNP increased between 1999 and 2005, particularly in Lebanon and Morocco. On the other hand, in Mauritania the share declined from 3.1% to 2.4%.

- Most of the eight Arab States for which data are available devoted at least one-fifth of total government expenditure to education in 2005, a proportion considerably larger than that observed in many countries in other regions. The share ranged from 11% in Bahrain to some 27% or more in Iraq, Oman, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and the United Arab Emirates. It increased between 1999 and 2005 in all countries with data for both years: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

### Box 1: Examples of policies to:

#### Enable institutional environments

- Since 2000, many developing countries have gone through the process of preparing comprehensive national education plans focusing on country-specific issues. For example, the Government of Egypt introduced the General Framework for Education Policies in 2006, including decentralization, national standards, school-based reform and strengthened partnerships with the non-state sector among its strategic approaches. Morocco's 2000-2009 National Education and Training Charter promotes universal basic schooling, higher-quality teaching, improved governance and girls' education. Yemen launched its National Basic Education Strategy in 2002 aimed at achieving UPE and improving school quality, with an emphasis on increasing the access and performance of girls.
- The increased focus on planning has been accompanied by improved capacity for monitoring performance in education systems. In Morocco, the Education Management Information System was strengthened through the National Education and Training Charter in 2000 and a unified system to monitor education progress is being developed in Yemen.
- Some countries are moving towards more decentralized forms of education governance. As part of education reform in Morocco, services have been decentralized and public regional academies with independent decision-making and management authority have been created. Here and in Egypt there has also been a drive for school-based management, with the participation of parents.

#### Expand equitable access

- Countries have expanded school infrastructure to accompany the growth in primary school enrolment, with priority on disadvantaged areas and groups.
- While most Arab States guarantee the right to free primary education in their major legal frameworks, households continue to face direct and indirect costs of schooling. To reduce this burden, the Government of Yemen initiated a process of school fee abolition in 2006, waiving tuition fees in grades 1 to 6 for girls and in grades 1 to 3 for boys.

- Progress in girls' access to educational opportunities has been achieved through a combination of policies. The National Girls' Education Strategy in Yemen is at the centre of the country's overall sectoral policy. Key elements include community mobilization to raise awareness of the importance of girls' and women's education, construction of co-educational and female-only schools, especially in rural areas, and more female teachers. Female secondary school graduates from remote rural areas are selected to teach lower grades in local schools. They receive in-service training and professional support. Egypt has also been conducting successful initiatives to increase girls' access, such as community schools, one-classroom schools and girl-friendly schools. Morocco has established incentives for girls' enrolment: conditional food aid in rural areas, boarding facilities and boarding grants.
- Non-formal education and literacy programmes have been developed for those who have missed out on schooling. Morocco, for example, carries out four literacy programmes, targeted at different populations through collaboration with non-state providers. It also implements non-formal programmes for out-of-school children, including street and working children.

#### Improve learning

- A trend to revise curricula to make classroom interactions more responsive and child-centred can be seen in recent years. In Morocco, the curriculum has been made more responsive to local circumstances: teams in regional academies prepare input to their own curricula, Berber-language teaching has been introduced in primary schools in Berber regions, and aspects of environmental and health education have been integrated into the curriculum.
- The recent expansion of ICT has facilitated two education trends: increased application of various models of distance education, and pedagogical innovations linked to ICT and used by teachers and learners. Egypt and Morocco are carrying out professional development programmes for teachers using ICT.



- Public expenditure on primary education varies considerably within the region. While half the countries spent over 12% of GNP per capita for each student in primary education in 2005, the shares ranged from 7% in Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates to 45% in Djibouti.

### Contribution of external aid to EFA

- The past few years have been characterized by a significant shift in total official development assistance (ODA) towards countries in the Arab States region. Over 1999 and 2000 the region received an annual average of US\$6.5 billion. By 2004 ODA to the region had increased by over 170%, and it rose by an additional 60% in 2005 to reach US\$28.3 billion, second only to sub-Saharan Africa.
- While sectoral aid continued to represent a significant portion of total assistance in the region, debt relief was the largest component in 2005, a consequence of the large relief programme for Iraq.
- Total aid to education in the region has also increased since Dakar – by 26% between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005 – but less rapidly than total aid. As a result, the share of aid for education in total aid declined considerably, from 16% to 6%.
- Aid to basic education increased by 54% between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005, a rate higher than that for education as a whole. The main beneficiaries of the increase were Iraq and Yemen, which accounted for 27% and 23%, respectively, of the total allocation for basic education to the region in 2004–2005.
- In addition to the aid described above from members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, the Islamic Development Bank and Gulf Cooperation Council provided assistance, including US\$109 million for education in Yemen.

### Prospects for achieving EFA by 2015

For the three goals with explicit quantitative targets – goal 2 (UPE), goal 4 (reduction by half in the level of adult illiteracy) and goal 5 (elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education) – relevant education indicators were projected to 2015 and 2025, extrapolating trends observed in each country between the early 1990s and 2005. Table 2 below summarizes the findings from the projections.

For the EFA goals without explicit quantitative targets:

- *ECCE* has been receiving attention, but much remains to be done. Even without projections, it is evident on present trends that participation rates will remain relatively low to 2015 in most Arab States, especially among the poor and disadvantaged who stand to benefit the most from these programmes.
- *Learning needs of young people and adults.* Most countries have yet to seriously address the challenging tasks that EFA goal 3 entails: meeting the diverse learning needs of young people and adults through organized programmes of education, training and the building of basic, life and livelihood skills. Given the understandable pressure to extend the cycle of basic education in schools and to expand secondary education, there is a clear risk that the disparity between government commitments to formal and to non-formal schooling will be further accentuated in coming years.
- *Quality.* Despite the growing interest in quality issues, the accumulated evidence points to the prevalence of weak pupil performance, widespread learning disparities, high repetition and low survival and completion rates in several countries in the region. Disparities in learning outcomes, while narrowing between girls and boys in many contexts, remain significant in others, to the disadvantage of poor, rural, urban slum, indigenous and minority pupils. Some countries in the region face serious shortages of teachers, indicating an urgent need to recruit new primary school teachers to replace those who will be leaving due to retirement, career change, illness or death. Overall, countries in the Arab States regions will need to make a substantial effort and employ 1.8 million new primary teachers by 2015. While increasing the number of teachers is important, providing them with adequate training is also key to achieving universal access to and participation in quality education; this will require significant resources.

Table 2: Prospects for achieving UPE, adult literacy and gender parity

UPE goal	
Goal already achieved ( <i>total NER ≥ 97%</i> )	<b>6 countries</b> Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia
UPE prospects	
<i>(Projections made for twelve countries that have not yet achieved the goal, extrapolating trends between 1991 and 2005)</i>	
High chance of achieving the goal by 2015 <i>(moving towards the goal, with steady progress)</i>	<b>3 countries</b> Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco
Low chance of achieving the goal by 2015 <i>(moving away from the goal or progress too slow)</i>	<b>3 countries</b> Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Yemen*
At risk of not achieving the goal by 2015 <i>(moving away from the goal or progress too slow)</i>	<b>3 countries</b> Iraq*, Jordan, Palestinian Autonomous Territories*
Serious risk of not achieving the goal by 2015 <i>(furthest to go, and moving away from the goal or progress too slow)</i>	<b>3 countries</b> Djibouti, Oman, United Arab Emirates
Not included in the prospects analysis ( <i>insufficient or no data</i> )	<b>2 countries</b> Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Sudan  * UPE likely to be achieved in 2025
Adult literacy target	
Universal literacy achieved ( <i>Adult literacy rate ≥ 97%</i> )	None
Adult literacy prospects	
<i>(Adult literacy rate projections made for eighteen countries that have not yet achieved the target, extrapolating trends between 1995 and 2004)</i>	
High chance of achieving the target by 2015 <i>(moving towards the goal, with steady progress)</i>	<b>4 countries</b> Jordan, Kuwait, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, United Arab Emirates
Low chance of achieving the target by 2015 <i>(moving towards the goal with rapid progress, but further to go)</i>	<b>2 countries</b> Morocco, Yemen
At risk of not achieving the target by 2015 <i>(moving towards the goal, but progress too slow)</i>	<b>6 countries</b> Bahrain, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic
Serious risk of not achieving the target by 2015 <i>(furthest to go and moving towards the goal, but progress too slow)</i>	<b>6 countries</b> Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania, Sudan, Tunisia
Not included in the prospects analysis ( <i>insufficient or no data</i> )	<b>2 countries</b> Djibouti, Lebanon
Gender goal (parity in primary and secondary education)	
Achieved or likely to be achieved in 2005 ( <i>GPIs between 0.97 and 1.03</i> )	<b>2 countries</b> Jordan, Qatar
Gender parity prospects	
<i>(Projections of GPI in primary and secondary education GERs were made for seventeen countries that have not yet achieved the goal, extrapolating trends between 1991 and 2005)</i>	
Gender parity goal likely to be achieved in 2015	<b>5 countries</b> Bahrain, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates
Gender parity goal likely to be achieved in 2025	None
Gender parity goal at risk of not being achieved in 2015 or in 2025	<b>12 countries</b> Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, <b>Kuwait*</b> , <b>Lebanon*</b> , Mauritania*, Morocco, Oman*, Sudan, <b>Tunisia*</b> , Yemen
Not included in the prospects analysis ( <i>insufficient or no data</i> )	<b>1 country</b> Libyan Arab Jamahiriya  * Gender parity achieved in primary education but not in secondary education 1. In countries whose names are shown in blue, gender disparities at the expense of boys are observed in primary or secondary education.

## Abbreviations

**ECCE: early childhood care and education.** Programmes that, in addition to providing children with care, offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities either in a formal institution (pre primary or ISCED O) or as part of a non-formal child development programme. ECCE programmes are normally designed for children from age 3 and include organized learning activities that constitute, on average, the equivalent of at least 2 hours per day and 100 days per year.

**GER: gross enrolment ratio.** Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. For the tertiary level, the population used is that of the five-year age group following on from the secondary school leaving age. The GER can exceed 100% due to late entry or/and repetition.

**GIR: gross intake rate.** Total number of new entrants to a given grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the official school entrance age for that grade.

**GNP: gross national product.** Gross domestic product plus net receipts of income from abroad. As these receipts may be positive or negative, GNP may be greater or smaller than GDP. This latter indicator is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy, including distributive trades and transport, plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products.

**GPI: gender parity index.** Ratio of female to male values (or male to female, in certain cases) of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI above or below 1 indicates a disparity in favour of one sex or the other.

**NER: net enrolment ratio.** Enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the population in that age group.

**PASEC: Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN.**

**PIRLS: Progress in Reading Literacy Study.**

**PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment.**

**PTR: pupil/teacher ratio.** Average number of pupils per teacher at a specific level of education, based on headcounts for both pupils and teachers.

**TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.**

Table 3: Arab States, selected education indicators

Country or territory	Total population (thousands)	Compulsory education (age group)	EFA Development Index (EDI)	Adult literacy rate (15 and over)				Early childhood care and education				Primary education								Country or territory		
				1985–1994 <sup>1</sup>		1995–2004 <sup>1</sup>		Child survival and well-being		Pre-primary education		NER, total (%)		GPI of GER (F/M)		Out-of-school children <sup>2</sup>	Survival rate to last grade (%), total		% of trained teachers, total		Pupil/teacher ratio <sup>3</sup>	
				Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Under-5 mortality rate (%)	Moderate and severe stunting (%)	GER		1999	2005	1999	2005		1999	2004			2005	1999
				2005	2005	2005	2005	2005–2010	1996–2005 <sup>1</sup>	1999	2005	1999	2005	2005 (000)	1999	2004	2005	1999	2005			
Arab States																					Arab States	
Algeria	32 854	6-16	0.890	50	0.57	70	0.76	33	19	3	6.0	91	97	0.91	0.93	39	91	93	99	28	25	Algeria
Bahrain	727	6-15	0.952	84	0.87	87	0.94	15	10	35	46.8	96	97	1.01	0.99	1	92	99	...	...	...	Bahrain
Djibouti <sup>4</sup>	793	6-15	...	...	...	...	...	125	23	0.4	1.0	28	33	0.71	0.82	83	...	...	...	40	35	Djibouti <sup>4</sup>
Egypt	74 033	6-13	0.883	44	0.55	71	0.71	35	18	11	16.2	93	94	0.91	0.94	269	99	99	...	23	26	Egypt
Iraq	28 807	6-11	0.793	...	...	74	0.76	105	23	5	5.7	85	88	0.82	0.83	552	49	70	<b>100</b>	25	21	Iraq
Jordan	5 703	6-16	0.947	...	...	91	0.91	22	9	29	30.7	92	89	1.00	1.01	62	97	<i>98</i>	...	...	20	Jordan
Kuwait	2 687	6-14	0.939	74	0.88	93	0.96	11	24	79	72.9	87	87	1.01	0.98	28	94	99	100	13	12	Kuwait
Lebanon	3 577	6-12	0.921	...	...	...	...	22	11	67	74.1	94	92	0.95	0.97	24	91	90	14	14	14	Lebanon
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	5 853	6-15	...	75	0.70	84	0.81	18	15	5	<b>7.6</b>	...	...	0.98	<b>0.99</b>	...	...	...	...	...	<b>5</b>	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mauritania <sup>4</sup>	3 069	6-14	0.666	...	...	51	0.73	141	35	...	1.7	63	72	0.94	1.01	130	61	39	100	47	40	Mauritania <sup>4</sup>
Morocco	31 478	6-14	0.740	42	0.52	52	0.60	37	18	62	53.6	72	86	0.81	0.89	525	75	73	100	28	27	Morocco
Oman	2 567	6-15	0.881	...	...	81	0.85	15	10	6	<b>8.0</b>	80	<b>73</b>	0.97	<b>1.01</b>	<b>86</b>	92	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	25	<b>14</b>	Oman
Palestinian A. T.	3 702	6-15	0.923	...	...	92	0.91	20	10	40	30.1	97	80	1.01	0.99	70	99	98	100	38	25	Palestinian A. T.
Qatar	813	6-14	...	76	0.94	89	0.99	12	8	25	36.5	94	96	0.96	0.99	0.3	...	...	...	13	11	Qatar
Saudi Arabia	24 573	6-11	0.881	71	0.72	83	0.87	21	20	...	10.0	...	78	...	1.00	793	...	97	...	...	...	Saudi Arabia
Sudan	36 233	6-13	...	...	...	61	0.73	107	43	20	25.5	...	...	0.85	0.87	...	77	74	58	...	29	Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic	19 043	6-12	...	...	...	81	0.84	18	18	8	10.4	92	...	0.92	0.95	...	87	94	...	25	...	Syrian Arab Republic
Tunisia	10 102	6-16	0.896	...	...	74	0.78	21	12	14	21.7	94	97	0.95	0.97	22	87	94	...	24	20	Tunisia
United Arab Emirates	4 496	6-15	0.896	79	0.99	89	0.99	9	17	63	64.3	79	71	0.97	0.97	76	90	97	60	16	15	United Arab Emirates
Yemen <sup>4</sup>	20 975	6-14	0.650	37	0.30	54	0.47	79	53	0.7	0.9	57	<b>75</b>	0.56	0.74	<b>861</b>	80	67	...	22	...	Yemen <sup>4</sup>
	<b>Sum</b>			<b>Weighted average</b>				<b>Weighted average</b>		<b>Weighted average</b>		<b>Weighted average</b>				<b>Sum</b>	<b>Median</b>			<b>Weighted average</b>		
Arab States	312 085	...	...	58	0.66	70	0.74	55	24	15	17	79	83	0.88	0.91	6 122	90	94	100	23	22	Arab States
Developing countries	5 165 463	...	...	68	0.77	77	0.84	86	31	28	34	81	86	0.91	0.94	68 825	...	79	...	27	28	Developing countries
World	6 450 253	...	...	76	0.85	82	0.89	78	30	33	40	83	87	0.92	0.95	72 124	...	87	...	25	25	World

Data in italics are for 2003. Data in bold italics are for 2004. Data in bold are for 2006 or 2005 for survival rate to last grade.

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

2. Data reflect the actual number of children not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific enrolment ratios of primary school age children, which measure the proportion of those who are enrolled in either primary or secondary school (total primary NER).

3. Based on headcounts of pupils and teachers.

4. Fast Track Initiative: country with endorsed sector plans.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, statistical tables; UNESCO Institute for Statistics; CRS online database (OECD-DAC, 2007).

Table 3 (continued)

Country or territory	Secondary education								Tertiary education		Education finance			Country or territory
	GER in lower secondary		GER in upper secondary		GER in all of secondary				GER		Total public expenditure on education as % of GNP	Total aid to basic education (constant 2005 US\$ millions)	2004–2005 annual average	
	2005		2005		1999		2005		2005					
	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	1999	2005		
<b>Arab States</b>														
Algeria	108	0.95	58	1.36	...	...	83	1.07	20	1.37	...	...	22	Algeria
Bahrain	101	1.01	96	1.13	94	1.08	99	1.06	36	2.23	...	...	0	Bahrain
Djibouti <sup>4</sup>	29	0.67	17	0.63	15	0.72	24	0.66	2	0.73	...	7.1	18	Djibouti <sup>4</sup>
Egypt	96	0.92	75	0.93	81	0.91	86	0.92	34	...	...	...	57	Egypt
Iraq	57	0.64	31	0.70	34	0.63	45	0.66	15	0.59	...	...	126	Iraq
Jordan	93	1.01	76	1.04	88	1.03	87	1.02	39	1.06	5.0	...	32	Jordan
Kuwait	93	0.97	98	1.20	99	1.02	95	1.06	18	2.19	...	4.5	...	Kuwait
Lebanon	99	1.09	78	1.11	80	1.10	89	1.10	51	1.15	2.0	2.7	3	Lebanon
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	<b>114</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>1.44</b>	...	...	<b>105</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<i>56</i>	<i>1.09</i>	...	...	0	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mauritania <sup>4</sup>	20	0.86	21	0.84	19	0.73	21	0.85	3	0.33	3.1	2.4	17	Mauritania <sup>4</sup>
Morocco	65	0.83	35	0.88	37	0.79	50	0.85	11	0.85	6.2	6.8	21	Morocco
Oman	<b>93</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>0.97</b>	75	0.99	<b>88</b>	<b>0.96</b>	18	1.09	4.2	<b>4.3</b>	0	Oman
Palestinian A. T.	106	1.05	76	1.16	79	1.04	99	1.07	38	1.04	...	...	31	Palestinian A. T.
Qatar	102	0.96	98	1.00	90	1.07	100	0.98	19	3.45	...	...	...	Qatar
Saudi Arabia	87	0.99	88	0.93	71	...	88	0.96	28	1.47	7.0	<b>6.7</b>	0	Saudi Arabia
Sudan	46	0.89	26	1.00	26	...	34	0.94	...	...	...	...	21	Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic	90	0.93	32	0.97	40	0.91	68	0.94	...	...	...	...	1	Syrian Arab Republic
Tunisia	105	0.99	69	1.22	73	1.02	84	1.09	30	1.37	7.2	7.6	8	Tunisia
United Arab Emirates	70	0.95	56	1.22	82	1.08	64	1.05	22	<i>3.24</i>	...	<b>1.6</b>	...	United Arab Emirates
Yemen <sup>4</sup>	52.5	0.52	40	0.46	41	0.37	47	0.49	9	0.37	...	...	110	Yemen <sup>4</sup>
	<b>Weighted average</b>								<b>Weighted average</b>		<b>Median</b>		<b>Sum</b>	
Arab States	81.3	0.89	54	0.96	60	0.89	68	0.92	21	1.01	...	...	476	Arab States
Developing countries	75	0.93	46	0.92	53	0.88	60	0.93	17	0.91	4.4	4.7	3 940	Developing countries
World	79	0.94	53	0.94	60	0.91	66	0.94	24	1.05	4.5	4.9	4 373	World

Data in italics are for 2003. Data in bold italics are for 2004. Data in bold are for 2006 or 2005 for survival rate to last grade.

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

2. Data reflect the actual number of children not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific enrolment ratios of primary school age children, which measure the proportion of those who are enrolled in either primary or secondary school (total primary NER).

3. Based on headcounts of pupils and teachers.

4. Fast Track Initiative: country with endorsed sector plans.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, statistical tables; UNESCO Institute for Statistics; CRS online database (OECD-DAC, 2007).

## Regional overview: Arab States



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