

# TEACHING AND LEARNING:

## Achieving quality for all

### Monitoring the Education for All goals

#### Progress towards the six Education for All goals in the Arab States

Indicator	Arab States		World	
	1999	2011	2010	
Goal 1	Pre-primary gross enrolment ratio (%)	15	23	50
Goal 2	Primary net enrolment ratio (%)	77	87	89
	Out-of-school children (million)	8.4	4.8	57.2
Goal 3	Lower secondary gross enrolment ratio (%)	73	88	82
	Out-of-school adolescents (million)	5.5	3.8	69.4
Goal 4	Adult literacy rate* (%)	55	77	84
	Youth literacy rate* (%)	74	90	89
Goal 5	Primary gender parity index	0.87	0.92	0.97
	Secondary gender parity index	0.88	0.93	0.98
Goal 6	Primary pupil/teacher ratio	23	22	24
Finance	Public education spending (% GNP)	5.3	4.8	5.1
	(% total government expenditure)	21.0	18.1	15.5

\* Progress on literacy is reported for the periods 1985/94 (left column) and 2005/11 (right column).  
Source: UIS database

#### Despite progress, most EFA goals are likely to be missed by 2015

##### Early childhood care and education

Early childhood outcomes have improved. For example, the under-5 mortality rate fell from 53 deaths for every 1000 live births in 2000 to 33 in 2012.

The pre-primary education gross enrolment ratio increased from 15% in 1999 to 23% in 2011, but remains the second lowest ratio of any region in the world. Access to

early childhood education services remains unequal as the region has the highest share of private provision, with more than two-thirds of total enrolment in private pre-schools and nurseries. Algeria, which stands out as the country with the highest share of government provision in the region at 86%, achieved the largest expansion in pre-primary education - from just 2% in 1999 to 75% in 2011 - as a result of a reform that introduced a pre-primary curriculum in 2004 and aimed to increase the gross enrolment ratio to 80% by 2010.

### **Universal primary education**

The Arab states are far from achieving universal primary enrolment but are making progress towards the target with a primary enrolment ratio of 89%, compared with 79% in 1999. Yet, there are still almost 5 million children out of school in the region, 60% of which are girls – a share that has remained unchanged since 1999. In addition, almost two in three out-of-school girls are expected never to go to school.

Between 2006 and 2011, the out-of-school population fell by 68% in Morocco but increased by 11% in Yemen.

### **Youth and adult skills**

The Arab States continued making progress in secondary education enrolment over the past decade. By 2011, the net enrolment ratio had reached 63%.

The proportion of secondary education enrolment in technical and vocational schools in the Arab States has declined from 14% in 1999 to 9% in 2011.

### **Adult literacy**

Adult literacy rates have increased in the Arab States from 55% in 1990 to 77% in 2011. Nevertheless, as a result of population growth, the actual number of illiterate adults has only fallen from 52 million to 48 million.

### **Gender parity and equality**

Despite improvements over the past decade, there are still cases of extremely unequal enrolments in secondary education. In Yemen, the female gross enrolment ratio increased from 21% in 1999 to 35% in 2011, resulting in an improvement in the gender parity index from 0.37 to 0.63.

In Iraq, not only has progress towards gender parity been slow, but poor, rural girls have not benefited. The lower secondary completion rate was 58% for rich urban boys and just 3% for poor rural girls in 2011. Safety remains an issue for girls' schooling, particularly in areas of major instability and insecurity.

### **Quality of education**

Lower pupil/teacher ratios indicate improved conditions. However, the ratio increased by at least 20% in Egypt and Yemen between 1999 and 2011 at the primary education level. In some contexts, the presence of female teachers is crucial to attract girls to school and improve their learning outcomes. Women teachers are particularly lacking in countries with wide gender disparity in enrolment. In Djibouti, only about 8 girls were enrolled for every 10 boys in lower secondary school, with very limited progress since 2000. The percentage of female teachers remained at just 25% over the period.

### **Monitoring global education targets after 2015**

The pace of progress is too slow for many countries in the region, particularly for the disadvantaged. For example, in Iraq, it is projected that universal lower secondary school completion will be achieved in the 2050s for the richest young men but 50 years later among the poorest young women. Post-2015 goals need to include a commitment to make sure the most disadvantaged groups achieve benchmarks set for goals. Failure to do so could mean that measurement of progress continues to mask the fact that the advantaged benefit the most.

### **Trends in financing Education for All**

New EFA goals after 2015 should set a target for all countries to allocate at least 6% of GNP to education and at least 20% of total government expenditure on education. In 2011, the Arab States spent on average 4.8% of GNP on education and 18.1% of total government expenditure on education. While some countries in the region, such as Tunisia, put more emphasis on education financing, for example, meeting the benchmark on spending as a percentage of GNP, other countries, such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia, moved away.

Often the problem is low tax revenue. If Yemen increased its tax-to-GDP ratio by

# Supporting teachers to end the learning crisis

1 percentage point per year from 2011 onwards, and if the government ensured that 20% of the budget is allocated to education, then an additional US\$ 1 billion would be available for education in 2015.

Total aid to education in the region almost doubled from US\$ 1053 million in 2002-03 to US\$ 1939 million in 2010 but fell by 1% to US\$ 1922 million in 2011. Total aid to basic education more than tripled from 2002 to 2010 but increased only by 2% to US\$ 845 million in 2011.

Humanitarian aid appeals neglect education needs. Education is the sector receiving the smallest proportion of requests for humanitarian aid, and just 26% of the amounts requested are actually covered. Conflict-affected countries in particular receive only a small share of their requests for humanitarian education funding. For instance, the funds requested for the education sector in Yemen's consolidated appeal was the lowest for any sector (3.2% of the total requested), and despite this just a quarter of the request was met. As a share of total funding, education received just 1.4%

of the Yemen humanitarian appeal. Similarly, 3% of Syria's Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan for 2013 was earmarked for education, with 36% of the resources requested for education having been pledged by September 2013, even though one in five schools have been destroyed in some areas.

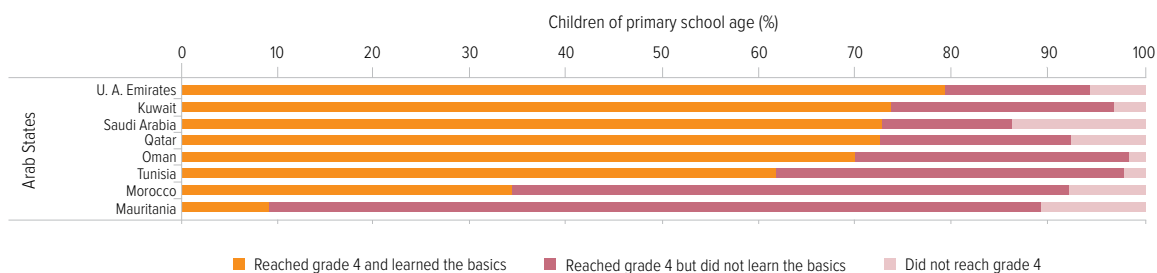
## The learning crisis hits the disadvantaged hardest

Globally, 250 million children of primary school age are not learning the basics, whether they are in school or not. In the Arab States, 57% of children of primary school age reached grade 4 and learned the basics in reading. Over a third (35%) reached grade four but did not learn the basics, and 8% did not reach grade four.

There are wide disparities between countries. In the Arab States, the share of children of primary school age who are learning the basics in reading ranges from above 70% in the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to 34% in Morocco and just 9% Mauritania.

### Learning outcomes vary widely between countries

Percentage of children of primary school age who reached grade 4 and achieved minimum learning standard in reading, selected countries



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4.

Performance in mathematics is worse. Many schools are also not teaching students the basics in mathematics in their early years. In Iraq, 61% of grade 2 students and 41% of grade 3 students were unable to answer a single subtraction question correctly.

Poverty can affect children's ability to learn. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds lag far behind their wealthier peers and these disadvantages become wider as they get older. In Jordan, early grade reading assessments conducted in 2012 indicated that differences between children from different wealth groups widened as children moved between grade 2 and 3, with poor students increasing the number of words they read per minute from just 15 to 19, compared with an improvement from 16 to 27 for rich students. Wealth gaps are also remarkable in some wealthy countries in the region, including Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The chance of a poor student in Oman making it over the minimum learning threshold is similar to that of a student in less wealthy countries, such as Ghana, on average.

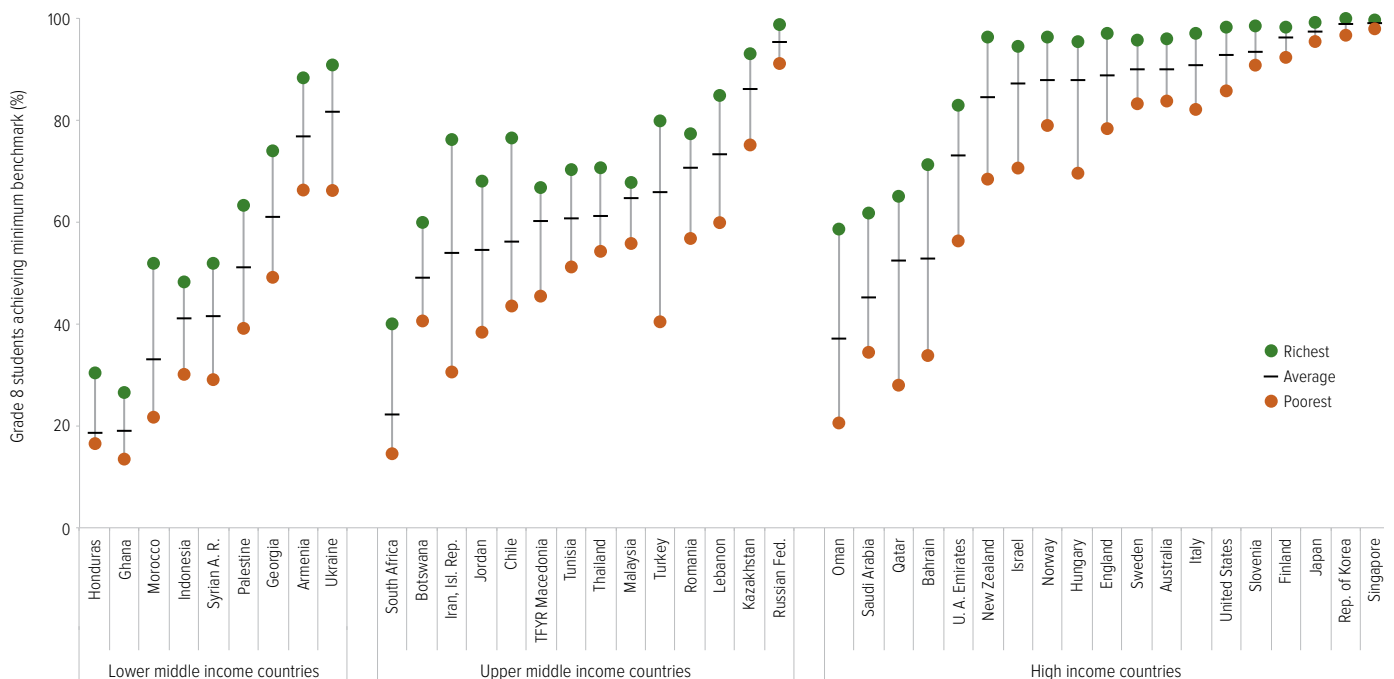
Inequality is often particularly marked among those within urban areas. The gap between rich and poor is wider in urban than in rural areas. In Tunisia, almost half of all 15-year-olds from rich urban households acquire the basics in mathematics, compared with only 15% of the urban poor.

Inequalities remain in secondary education. In Bahrain, only 34% of poor 15-year old students reached the minimum learning standard in mathematics in 2009, compared with 71% of their rich peers. In some countries, the gap between rich and poor only becomes apparent in later grades.

There is a need to identify policies that not only ensure overall progress in access and learning, but also guarantee that this progress reaches disadvantaged groups. Learning outcomes at the secondary education level in mathematics have worsened in Jordan between 2003 and 2011. Among poor households only around one third of boys and one half of girls reached the minimum learning standard.

### Poverty holds back learning in lower secondary school

Percentage of grade 8 students scoring above the low international benchmark in mathematics, by wealth, selected countries, 2011 TIMSS



Note: Richest/poorest refers to students in the top/bottom quartile in the TIMSS socio-economic status index.  
Source: Altinok (2013c), based on 2011 TIMSS data.

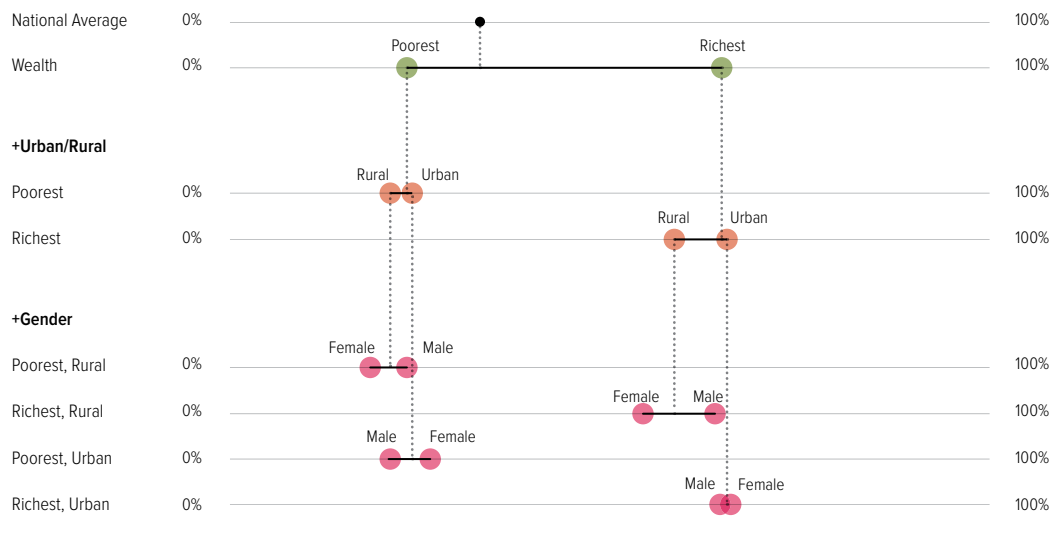


[www.education-inequalities.org](http://www.education-inequalities.org)

## Disadvantages interact to create even larger barriers for some

The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) highlights the powerful influence of circumstances, such as wealth, gender, ethnicity and location, over which people have little control but which play an important role in shaping their opportunities for education. It draws attention to unacceptable levels of inequality in access and learning across countries and within countries, with the aim of helping to inform policy design and public debate.

In Morocco, 65% of the richest students achieved the minimum learning standard in mathematics in lower secondary education in 2011 compared to only 24% of the poorest students. The gap widens depending on where a young person lives and their gender: only 18% of poor, rural young women achieved the minimum learning standards.



## Making teaching quality a national priority

Strong national policies that make teaching quality and learning a high priority are essential to ensure that all children in school actually obtain the skills and knowledge they are meant to acquire. Poor quality of education holds back the learning of children from marginalized groups the most, so the global learning crisis cannot be overcome unless policies aim to improve

learning among the disadvantaged. Lebanon mentions in its education plan that learning achievement data can be used to identify ways to improve student learning.

For plans to be successfully implemented, they need to be backed by sufficient resources. In its education sector plan, Palestine specifically categorized projected expenditure items according to objectives to increase education quality. However, there is a significant gap between

the expenditure envisaged and the funds available in the overall education budget. Only 77% of the quality component in the optimal scenario of the education plan is financed from committed funds. Likewise, Sudan outlines less than 5% of its recurrent budget on quality inputs. Such gaps raise the question of whether aspirations for improved education quality can be met, and underline the need for significant donor support throughout the periods covered by the plans.

Between 2011 and 2015, the Arab States region needs to recruit about 85,000 additional teachers per year to reach a ratio of 32 pupils per teacher in lower secondary education. Between 1999 and 2011, the number of lower secondary school teachers grew by 37,000 annually in the region. In some countries, such as Yemen, enrolment is low so additional teachers are needed to ensure that all children are in school. In others, education quality needs to be improved by reducing class size.

## A four-part strategy to provide the best teachers

### 1. Attract the best teachers

The quality of an education system is only as good as the quality of its teachers. It is not enough just to want to teach. People should enter the profession having received a good education themselves. They need to have completed at least secondary schooling of appropriate quality and relevance, so that they have a sound knowledge of the subjects they will be teaching and the ability to acquire the skills needed to teach. To elevate the status of teaching and attract talented applicants, Egypt has introduced more stringent entry requirements, requiring candidates to have strong performance in secondary school as well as a favorable interview assessment. Once selected, candidates also have to pass an entrance examination to ensure that they match the profile of a good teacher.

Policy-makers also need to focus their attention also on achieving the right mix of teachers, including recruiting teachers from under-represented groups. Flexible policies for entry qualifications may be required to increase the number of female teachers and improve the diversity of the teaching force. Recruiting teachers from ethnic minorities to work in their own communities ensures that children are taught by teachers familiar with their culture and language.

### 2. Improve teacher education so all children can learn

Initial teacher education should make up for weak subject knowledge. Prospective teachers should ideally enter teacher education programmes knowing enough about the subjects they are going to teach.

In some income countries, however, teachers often enter the profession lacking core subject knowledge because their own education has been poor. In such circumstances, initial teacher education programmes need to ensure that all trainees acquire a good understanding of the subjects they will be teaching.

Training teachers to teach, particularly in early grades. Teacher education programmes need to support teachers in being able to teach early reading skills in more than one language and to use local language materials effectively. One successful example is the USAID-funded Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes, a three-year project in Egypt that aims to improve quality of teaching and learning for girls in primary schools in four governorates by training teachers to teach reading in Arabic. After six months of improved phonics instruction, grade 2 pupils in intervention schools were, on average, correctly reading nearly three times as many syllables as pupils of the same grade in control schools.

It is important to prepare teachers to support learners from diverse backgrounds. As a result of inadequate training, many newly qualified teachers are not confident that they

have the skills necessary to support children with more challenging learning needs.

Teachers' skills should be improved through ongoing education. Regular supervision and ongoing training have the potential to address knowledge gaps and upgrade and reinforce acquired skills. Traditional pre-service teacher education and school examination practices often do not encourage teachers to introduce learner-centred approaches. Jordan undertook curriculum reforms and training to promote transferable skills for the 'knowledge economy', including creativity, critical thinking and teamwork. Teachers, however, still relied on rote learning, as this was what the secondary school graduation examination required. Responding to training needs, the Queen Rania Teacher Academy, established in 2009, provides subject-based professional development programmes for teachers that focus on using active learning for implementing the national curriculum, and has developed an induction programme for newly appointed teachers. The academy also supports a Schools Network initiative that provides opportunities for teachers, school leaders and supervisors to share ideas regarding instruction and receive support during and after training. The challenge will be for initiatives like this to reach the many teachers who need such support.

### 3. Get teachers where they are most needed

Inequality in deployment leads not only to fewer teachers in deprived areas but also to disadvantaged students being taught by teachers with weaker subject knowledge, exacerbating inequality in learning outcomes. In Yemen, for example, schools with 500 students were found to have between 4 and 27 teachers: in Ryma governorate there were 13 teachers for each average-sized basic school, while in Abyan governorate there were 28.

Financial incentives and good housing can promote deployment to remote or rural areas. In Sudan, adequate accommodation rarely exists in rural areas, and married

women teachers have to be deployed where their husbands live. As 67% of primary school teachers are women, this further reduces the pool of teachers available for rural areas.

Local recruitment of teachers to serve in their own communities can address teacher shortages in remote or disadvantaged areas and can result in lower teacher attrition. However, local recruitment can bring challenges in deploying teachers effectively over the span of their careers.

### 4. Provide incentives to retain the best teachers

Governments should ensure that teachers earn at least enough to lift their families above the poverty line and make their pay competitive with comparable professions.

Teachers' salaries – and the rates at which they increase – are conventionally determined by formal qualifications, the amount of training and years of experience. But pay structures based on these criteria do not necessarily lead to better learning outcomes. Using multiple evaluators is one way of producing fair and successful teacher appraisals, but requires considerable time and resources on the part of the evaluators and those being evaluated.

Performance-related pay can have perverse outcomes if it rewards schools that were already performing well. Relating teachers' pay to the performance of their students is an alternative approach that has intuitive appeal. But it is difficult to find reliable ways to evaluate which teachers are the best and add the most value. Performance-related pay can also have unintended side effects on teaching and learning and may reward teachers whose students are already performing well.

However, a more appropriate way of motivating teachers to improve education quality is to offer an attractive career path, with promotion criteria that take into account initiatives by teachers in addressing diversity and supporting weak students.

## Strengthen teacher governance

If days are lost because teachers are absent or devote more attention to private tuition than classroom teaching, the learning of the poorest children can be harmed. Understanding the reasons behind these problems is crucial for the design of effective strategies to solve them. Strong school leadership is required to ensure that teachers show up on time, work a full week and provide equal support to all.

In some countries, high levels of absenteeism are due to many teachers missing more school days than can be explained by non-teaching duties or illness, rather than extreme absenteeism by a minority of teachers who might be easily identified.

Even though teacher absenteeism is widespread in some countries, it is not inevitable, which suggests it is a response to working conditions. Combining monitoring with incentives could be more beneficial than penalties for tackling absenteeism. Other interventions aimed at enhancing teacher accountability are often expected to reduce teacher absenteeism, but do not necessarily do so.

Governments should work more closely with teacher unions and teachers to formulate policies and adopt codes of conduct to tackle unprofessional behaviour such as persistent absenteeism and gender-based violence. Codes of practice should be consistent with legal frameworks for child rights and protection and a range of penalties, such as suspension and interdiction, clearly stipulated.

Private tutoring by teachers reinforces disparities between students whose parents can afford to pay the fees and those who cannot. In Egypt, in urban areas, 44% of

students receive private tuition, and in rural areas the share is 35%. In Lower Egypt over half of students receive private tuition. The proportion reaches 60% among secondary school students. Children from rich households are almost twice as likely to receive private tuition. An important reason for widespread private tuition in the country is that the social status of teachers has declined in recent decades as the government began hiring less qualified teachers to meet the demand of growing public education. School-leavers often become teachers not by choice but as a last resort. The undervaluing of teachers in Egyptian society has led to teaching being one of the lowest paid government jobs, with a base salary of between US\$20 and US\$60 per month in 2006. Teachers thus turn to private tutoring to supplement their salaries.

Strategies should be in place to prevent tutoring of pupils by teachers who are responsible for teaching them in their daily classes. Preventing tutoring of pupils by teachers who are responsible for teaching them in their daily classes would ensure that full curriculum coverage is available to all students, even those not able to afford supplementary tutoring.

Private schools that charge low fees are seen by some as one way of expanding access to better quality education for disadvantaged children in areas where government schools are failing. Such schools are also seen as a less expensive way of achieving quality, because they can recruit teachers at lower cost than government schools. Advocates of low fee private schools argue that students in these schools achieve better learning outcomes than students in government schools, but such differences arise partly because teachers in government schools often face more difficult conditions, teaching larger classes and children with a wider diversity of learning needs.



## Curriculum and assessment strategies that improve learning

Policy-makers should ensure the curriculum focuses on securing strong foundation skills for all, is delivered at an appropriate pace and in a language children understand. Governments should ensure that adequate and relevant resources are in place to support learning from the earliest years and build a culture of reading.

Curricula that do not acknowledge and address issues of inclusion can alienate disadvantaged groups within the classroom, and so limit their chances to learn effectively. In some countries, curricula reinforce traditional gender stereotypes.

Getting out-of-school children back into school and learning is vital. Governments and donor agencies should support accelerated learning programmes to achieve this goal. Formal schools can also use accelerated learning in situations where large proportions of students are over-age for their grade.

Technology can greatly extend the reach of educational provision and enrich curriculum delivery. Teachers' ability to use ICT as an educational resource, for example, plays a critical role in improving learning.

Some countries have made great strides in using national assessments to identify children with inherited disadvantage who need extra attention.

Classroom-based learning assessments help teachers identify students who are struggling to learn, diagnose their learning difficulties and choose strategies to support them. Alternatively, students can also make considerable gains if they are offered more opportunities to monitor their own learning.

Targeted additional support via trained teaching assistants or community volunteers is another key way of improving learning for students at risk of falling behind.

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