ALL IN SCHOOL كلّنا في المدرسة

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN INITIATIVE

REGIONAL REPORT
ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN



OCTOBER 2014

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Preface

In the last decade, the countries of the Middle East and North Africa have invested considerable resources and political capital to bring more children into the classroom. Most impressively, out-of-school rates for primary school children have plummeted, often by as much as half, bringing hope and new opportunity to millions.

But in recent years, progress has stalled. 4.3 million primary-aged children and 2.9 million lower secondary-aged children are still not in school. If we include one year of pre-primary education – the foundation on which a child's future learning is built – a staggering 12.3 million children across 20 countries are being left behind.

Who are these children? Broadly speaking, they are the poorest, the girls, those who live in rural areas and those from minority communities. They are the millions of children whose lives have been torn apart and whose schools have been destroyed by conflict. And they are the large number of lower secondary-aged children, mostly boys, who drop out every year.

What keeps them out of school? Sometimes it's poverty and poor infrastructure – families can't afford to send their children to school, or the schools are too far away, or of low quality, with badly trained teachers, poor learning outcomes and miserable, even dangerous, environments. Sometimes children are driven out by corporal punishment in the classroom, by language difficulties or by discrimination. And worst of all, sometimes families don't, or won't, recognize the value of an education – particularly for their daughters.

These are the findings from studies carried out in nine MENA countries within the framework of the Out-of-School Children Initiative. They paint a complex picture of overlapping challenges that will require all of us – governments, the UN, NGOs and the international community, along with specialists in the fields of education, healthcare, and child welfare – to work together to come up with new and innovative ideas for bringing more children into the classroom.

Winning the fight against education exclusion won't be easy – but armed with the evidence and findings in this report, we are in a much stronger position. We can target money and programmes where they are most needed – particularly among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. We can advocate for the most effective public policies and legal changes at the national level, and we can put in place the strategies and systems we need at the local level to track and evaluate results.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and we can be proud of our success in getting more children into school. But we must also be mindful of our remaining commitment to those children whose right to a quality education has not yet been realised.

It is time to finish our homework.

Maria Calivis
UNICEF MENA Regional Director

Acknowledgements

Many colleagues, experts and institutions contributed to this Regional Report and provided technical input and support in the process of research, drafting and review. The genuine engagement has been remarkable.

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), as the main partner in OOSCI, has provided significant support to the measurement framework, to data collection and analysis, and to the technical review, as well as engagement and passion. This is one of the most successful collaborations where the added values of UNICEF and UIS are put into play for the benefit of children. Special thanks go to Sheena Bell (Assistant Programme Specialist), Talal El Hourani (Statistician), Friedrich Huebler (Programme Specialist), and Yousef Ismail (MENA Statistical Cluster Adviser).

Anna Haas, Education Specialist at Oxford Policy Management (OPM), has drafted the Report. Her expertise, hard work, resourcefulness and commitment have made a difficult and complex task flow seamlessly. Other colleagues from the OPM team have also made substantial contributions: Keith Lewin (Professor of International Education and Development at the University of Sussex) has provided key insights on the problem of dropout risks; Hafedh Zaafrane (Economist and Independent Consultant) has contributed to the methodological framework and to the analysis of bottlenecks and barriers; Stuart Cameron (Consultant at OPM) had provided significant support on data collection and analysis.

OOSCI has also been launched with the support of Understanding Children's Work (UCW) to bring in the issue of child labour in the analysis of out-of-school children. Lorenzo Guarcello (Researcher at UCW) has undertaken the data collection and analysis on the child labour components in the Report.

The Report received substantial technical review from the following colleagues in UNICEF: Mark Waltham (Senior Education Adviser, New York), Hiroyuki Hattori (Education Statistics and Monitoring Specialist, New York), Sarah Ahmad (M&E Specialist and Regional MICS Coordinator, MENARO) and Samman Thapa (Social Policy Specialist, MENARO).

The team in UNICEF's Education Section in MENARO has been a key pillar in supporting the production of the Report through research, technical review, communication and logistics: Vesselina Naidenova (Education Knowledge Management Consultant), Daria Ng (Education Knowledge Management Specialist), Farida Aboudan (Technical Adviser on M&E and Education in Emergencies), Snjezana Hansen (Technical Adviser on School-Based Management), Francesco Calcagno (Education Specialist), Haogen Yao (Education Economist), and Fadwa Fraih (Programme Assistant). The Report builds on the nine MENA OOSCI Country Reports. It is partially funded by the Global and Regional Activities (GRA) programme of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). This underlines the commitment of all partners and stakeholders to address equity and inclusion in education.

Dina Craissati
UNICEF MENA Regional Education Adviser

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List of acronyms

ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
CCT	conditional cash transfer
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMF	Conceptual and Methodological Framework
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
CSP	Community Schools Project
ECD	early childhood development
EEP	Education Enhancement Program
EFA	Education for All
EGEI	Egypt's Girls Education Initiative
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
GDP	gross domestic product
GER	gross enrolment ratio
GFS	girl-friendly school
GNI	gross national income
GNP	gross national product
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human Development Index
ICRN	Iraqi Child Rights Network
IDP	internally displaced persons
INEE	International Network for Education in Emergencies
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LAS	League of Arab States
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
	According to UNICEF classification of countries, the MENA region includes Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen.
MENARO	UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoRES	Monitoring Results for Equity Systems
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism

NCCM	National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
NER	net enrolment rate
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OOSCI	Out-of-School Children Initiative
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTA	parent-teacher association
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPD	United Nations Population Division
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Programme
YEP	Youth Education Programme

Executive summary

Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Report is part of the Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI), launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2010. The overall objectives of the Initiative are to:

- Improve the statistical information and analysis on out-of-school children;
- Identify and analyse the barriers that contribute to exclusion from education;
- Analyse existing policies and strategies related to enhanced school participation.

The Regional Report bases its analysis of the problem of out-of-school children on the model developed by the Initiative, the so-called Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model. The model works with five main target groups:

- Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 include children who are not participating in formal education in three age groups: pre-primary, primary and lower secondary age; and
- Dimensions 4 and 5 include children who are enrolled in primary or lower secondary education respectively but who are at risk of dropping out.

The report builds on nine recent national studies on out-of-school children in MENA: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen, by bringing in analysis and key findings on profiles as well as barriers and policy responses from these studies.

Profiles of MENA's out-of-school children

Children's exclusion from education remains a significant problem in MENA. Data from the UIS show that in 2012, an estimated 7.2 million children in MENA were out of school. The figure comprises 4.3 million children of primary school age and 2.9 million of lower secondary age. A further 5.1 million children of pre-primary school age were not enrolled in pre-primary or primary education in 2012.

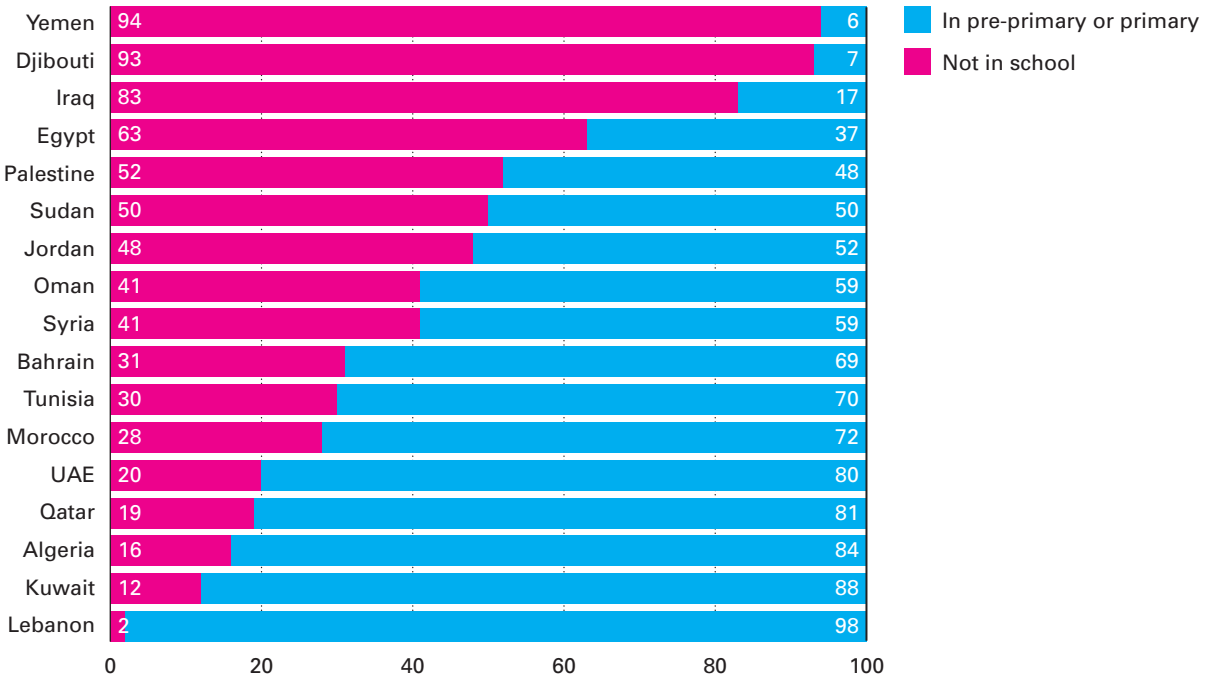
Education exclusion is intimately linked to the region's challenge of early school leaving. Many of the countries in MENA have children dropping out of primary and lower secondary education, which reflects the need for greater attention to school retention and underlines the exclusion patterns in these countries. The problem is particularly severe at the lower secondary level, where half of the countries struggle with dropout rates at or above 10 per cent before the last grade of the lower secondary school cycle. Reasons for children's exclusion include persisting and mutually reinforcing inequalities

in school participation based on household wealth, location and gender. Excluded children are predominately from the poorest households in rural areas, with poor rural girls often the most disadvantaged.

Dimension 1: Very high level of exclusion for children of pre-primary school age

Close to 60 per cent of the pre-primary age children in MENA do not participate in pre-primary or primary education, and progress over the past decade has been limited in close to half of the countries. Children from poor families are far more likely to be excluded from pre-school, although they have the most to gain from participation. In Djibouti, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, attendance in early childhood education programmes among four-year-old children from the richest wealth quintile is at least four times higher than among children from the poorest wealth quintile. Current provision of early childhood education in the region reinforces existing inequalities that are linked with children's home background. Except for Morocco, gender disparities in pre-primary education participation are low.

Share of children of pre-primary school age who are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary education in 2013, by country



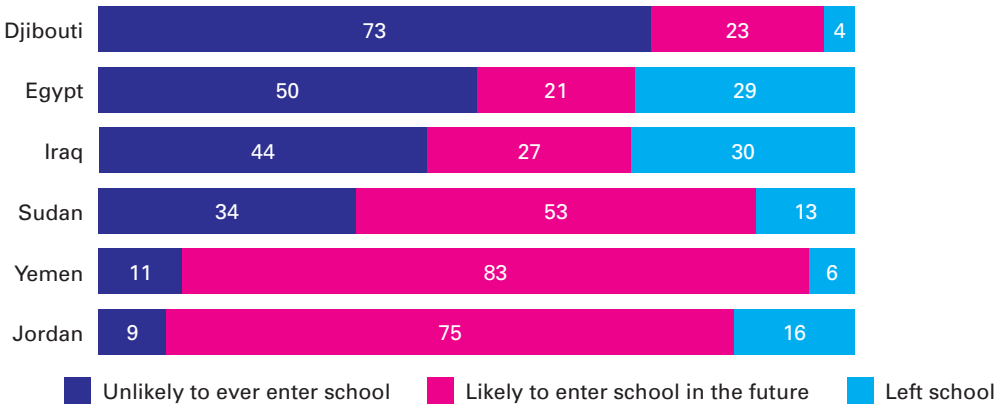
Note: Data for Morocco are from 2013, Algeria, Djibouti and Jordan from 2011, Yemen from 2010 and Iraq and Kuwait from 2007.

Source: (UIS, 2014b); draft national OOSCI studies from Sudan and Tunisia.

Dimension 2: Major progress in reducing education exclusion for primary age children

Over the past decade, the large majority of countries in the region have reduced the share of primary age children who are out of school and two thirds of the countries have reduced the share by at least 50 per cent. Particularly remarkable progress is recorded in Djibouti, Morocco and Yemen. While girls still make up the majority of children who are out of school, the overall expansion in school participation has reduced girls' education disadvantage. In Djibouti and Sudan, limited access to primary education is still very common and the systems in these countries struggle to extend the general coverage of primary education to the whole primary school age population. By contrast, today more than half of the countries in the region have out-of-school populations representing 3 per cent or less of the relevant age cohort.

Share of out-of-school children of primary age by school exposure, selected countries

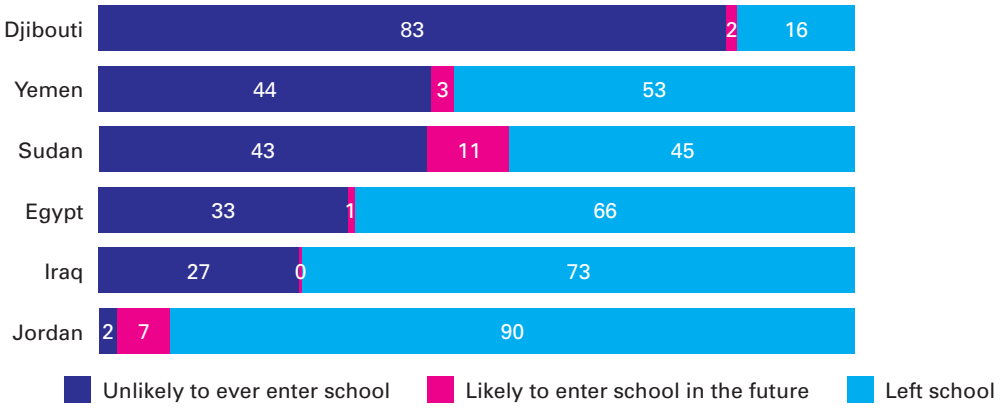


Source: UIS calculations based on Djibouti MICS 2006; Egypt DHS 2008; Iraq MICS 2011; Jordan DHS 2007; UNPD (2010); draft national OOSCI studies from Sudan and Yemen.

Dimension 3: Exclusion for children of lower secondary school age remains a challenge

The participation of lower secondary school age children has increased over time, with the share of this age group who are out of school declining from 18 per cent in 2003 to 12 per cent in 2012. Yet, in one quarter of the countries in MENA, at least one of every four lower secondary age children were still out of school in 2012, with the highest levels of exclusion recorded in Djibouti, Sudan and Yemen. The disparities by gender are substantial for this age group, with the majority of countries favouring boys' participation. This is also an age where children from disadvantaged households fall behind. In Tunisia, 19 per cent of lower secondary age children from the poorest wealth quintile are out of school, compared to only 1 per cent of children from the richest quintile. In Sudan, 42 per cent of children from the poorest group are out of school, compared to 3 per cent of children from the richest households.

Share of out-of-school children of lower secondary age by school exposure, selected countries

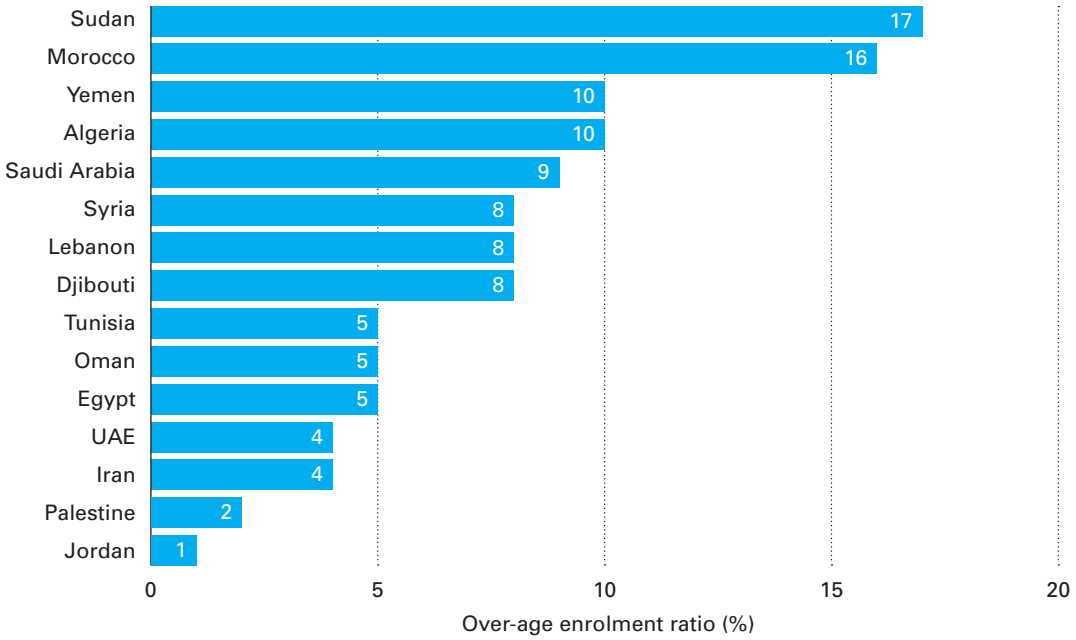


Source: UIS calculations based on Djibouti MICS 2006; Egypt DHS 2008; Iraq MICS 2011; Jordan DHS 2007; UNPD (2010 revision); draft national OOSCI studies Sudan and Yemen.

Dimension 4: High dropout from primary education in the region's poorest countries

At the primary level, early school leaving remains a major concern in the region's poorest countries. Nearly one quarter of those children who entered Grade 1 in Yemen and Djibouti leave school before reaching the final grade of the primary cycle. In the five countries where gender disparity is still a major issue at the primary level, girls are at a disadvantage in two countries (Djibouti and Sudan) and boys in three countries (Algeria, Oman and Lebanon). One common characteristic of children who drop out of school is that they are older than the official age for a particular grade. Overage children are disproportionally from the poorest households and from rural areas. In Sudan, almost 80 per cent of children from the poorest wealth quintile who attend school are overage, compared to fewer than 20 per cent from the richest quintile.

Overage enrolment ratio in primary education in 2012, by country



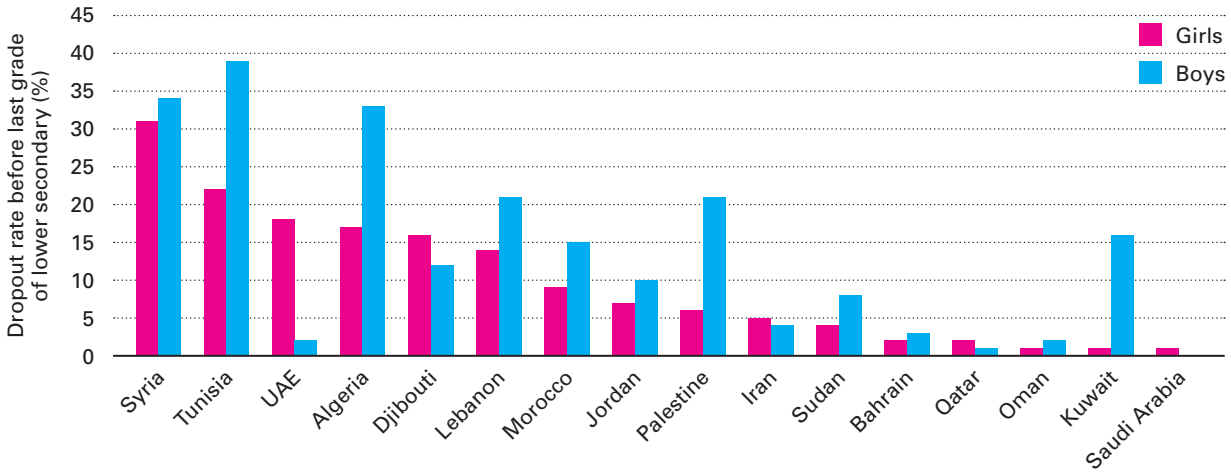
Note: The indicator covers the share of the primary school age population that is over the official primary school age (ISCED 1). It does not capture primary age children who are overage for their grade. Data for Djibouti, Jordan and Sudan are from 2011.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

Dimension 5: Early school leaving is a big problem at the lower secondary school level

Several countries in the region, most notably Algeria, Syria and Tunisia, face a severe dropout crisis at the lower secondary level. In these three countries alone, a range from one quarter to one third of all enrolled children drop out before the last grade of the lower secondary cycle. The gender profiles on dropout show considerable heterogeneity across countries. The sharpest gender disparities are found in Algeria, Kuwait, Palestine, Tunisia and UAE, with disparities ranging from 15 to 17 percentage points between girls and boys. In all of these countries except in the UAE, high dropout rates for boys constitute a major problem. In Tunisia, 39 per cent of boys drop out before the last grade of the lower secondary school cycle, compared to 22 per cent of Tunisian girls.

Dropout rate before the last grade of lower secondary education by gender and country in 2011



Note: The dropout rate before the last grade is defined as 100 per cent minus the survival rate to the last grade of the lower secondary level. Data for Djibouti and Morocco are from 2012, Jordan and Qatar from 2010, and Sudan and Tunisia from 2009.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

Barriers to education participation and policy responses

The profiles of out-of-school children in MENA reveal that three of the most serious areas of exclusion in the region are linked to high levels of dropout, in particular at the lower secondary level, persisting inequalities by gender, and limited protection of the right to education for conflict-affected children.

Tackling dropout rates by addressing low demand, low quality of education and violence

Household wealth and social perceptions about the benefits of education are closely linked to schooling decisions, affecting families' demand for continued education. Poverty and child labour reinforce each other and are associated with lower school attendance. High costs of private tuition also emerge as an important barrier for school retention. Policy responses to directly offset economic barriers to education for vulnerable groups, typically through cash transfers, do not come forward as a strong theme in the national OOSCI studies from the region. While the majority of the MENA countries have social assistance programmes in place, most have a narrow focus on smoothing family income and consumption rather than directly addressing social inequalities among children and youth. One exception is Morocco, where the large-scale conditional cash transfer 'Taysir programme' is linked to school attendance and shows promising results.

A low quality of education and bad school climate push children out of school. The limited data available point to a high prevalence of violence in schools in several countries, often playing out differently for girls and boys. Adequate legislation against corporal punishments in schools, at home and in all other settings is a necessary foundation for efforts to improve school climate and combat education exclusion. Half of the countries in the region have yet to adopt laws prohibiting corporal punishment in schools. Some of the OOSCI studies highlight existing interventions to track and support children at risk of dropping out. In Tunisia, three national programmes specifically aimed at preventing early school leaving in primary and lower secondary education have been put in place. In Morocco, the 2009-2012 Urgency Programme includes the expansion of a system of support units in schools that are responsible for detecting pupils at risk of dropping out and providing pedagogical support.

Addressing gender discrimination by working on social norms, demand and supply

Social norms and traditions continue to be major barriers for girls' education in MENA. Perceptions and expectations on the role of women and men in the family, in the labour market and in the broader society contribute to girls and boys being valued differently, with implications for families' schooling decisions. The practice of early marriage is one of the most extreme barriers for girls schooling and is an important cause of early school leaving in Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Yemen. Analysis for this report shows that mixed schooling can be favourable to girls' education participation in the region. This contrasts sharply with the move towards segregated schooling in several countries in the region. Country examples show that education has been, and continues to be a powerful strategy for increasing girls' autonomy and social mobility. The innovative Ishraq Programme in Egypt, targeted at girls who have dropped out of school, has improved girls' literacy skills and self-confidence, and has led to greater mobility and participation of girls in the local community.

The regional study points to particularly high levels of dropout for boys from lower secondary education in Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Boys' lack of motivation for studies in Algeria and Tunisia is driven by uncertainty with respect to future employment opportunities and in many cases leads to dropout. In Tunisia, a recent survey showed that more than 41 per cent of young boys wish to emigrate and

the most cited motivation behind this desire was the view that there is no future in Tunisia. Girls, on the other hand, express a desire for liberation and this necessarily involves education, which is seen as the only way for social advancement. As a result, girls are far more motivated and show stronger demand for secondary and higher education. In Tunisia, young women account for two thirds of the students in higher education.

Responding to the impact of conflict on education through protection, policy reforms and sustained funding

While an armed conflict continues to exclude many children in the region from education, the exact scale of the impact remains largely hidden. From the findings of the study, the following three issues emerge as particularly important:

- The security situation for students and teachers in many of the conflict-affected countries in the region is appalling. Direct attacks on schools, abductions, looting and military use of school buildings undermine children's right to education and are a major cause of education exclusion. Still, on a daily basis, a range of protection measures are used in insecure areas in Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Sudan and Yemen that make it possible for children to attend school.
- Children displaced by conflict face particularly severe barriers to education. A number of recent needs assessments for the education response to the Syrian war point to major barriers and bottlenecks for Syrian refugee children's education access. The most notable barriers include the high cost of schooling, language of instruction, insecurity, bureaucratic procedures and lack of legal papers for school registration.
- Low levels of funding emerge as the most critical bottleneck for reaching conflict-affected children with education. Numerous experiences show that even in very challenging environments, flexible and innovative measures can keep education going. The Global Education Cluster estimates that in 2012, only 1.3 million of those targeted by education in emergency responses in Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen received support, while nearly 2.2 million were not reached due to funding shortfalls.

Key recommendations

The core message emerging from this study is that overcoming education exclusion will require public policies and investments to be better geared towards the narrowing of disparities in MENA. Building on the conclusions and recommendations from the recently conducted national OOSCI studies, decisive actions for eliminating education exclusion will necessarily have to address barriers at two levels – national-level delivery of education targeted at marginalized groups, and school-level learning. Looking ahead, three broad recommendations for taking such efforts forward include:

1. Scale up early childhood development (ECD) programmes and pre-primary education as part of wider poverty reduction programmes. The governments in the region should ensure that appropriate attention is paid and measures taken to expand the provision of ECD. The current patterns across MENA, where poor children's participation in ECD is consistently lower than that of richer children, is one of the most striking signs of deep inequality in the region. Levelling the playing field in terms of equal access to ECD is a matter of urgency and an area highlighted as a top priority in the national OOSCI studies from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

2. Enhance cross-sectoral efforts to address multiple barriers to schooling. Children who are out of school rarely face only a single barrier to schooling, but usually face multiple factors that interact to cause education exclusion. Overcoming these barriers requires public policy actions and investments on several fronts, not all of them traditionally within the remit of the formal education sector. To have an effect on the hardest to reach children, education authorities need to work in close collaboration with other sectors that may include staff from health, child protection and welfare, as well as with NGOs. While cross-sectoral efforts need political, legal and economic backing from the highest political level, it is important that such efforts are driven from the local level and that from the outset these efforts are focused on practical solutions for excluded children.
3. Pay more attention to school retention. Above all, financial and human resources must be better targeted towards ensuring that dropouts are not 'push outs' from school. This requires close attention to several inter-related issues, including processes in which education staff ensure that children attend school, ability of schools to better respond to diversity among pupils, adequate resources for support structures for weaker students, relevant curriculum and improved school climate where corporal punishment is prohibited in law and in practice. All such efforts for improved school retention should put the role and capacity of teachers at the centre.

1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the study

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Report is part of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2010. The overall goals of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) are to introduce a more systematic approach for assessing the magnitude of the problem of out-of-school children and to guide concrete education sector reforms in this regard.

The objectives of OOSCI are to:

- Improve the collection of quality statistical information on, and analysis of, out-of-school children;
- Identify and analyse the barriers that contribute to exclusion from education;
- Analyse existing policies and strategies related to enhanced school participation.

These objectives fall within the context of UNICEF's focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals with equity, which involves giving priority to the poorest and most vulnerable children and their families, as well as supporting the right to education as put forth in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). The report builds on nine recent Country Reports on out-of-school children in MENA: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan,Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen, by presenting analyses and key findings on profiles as well as barriers and policy responses from these studies.

1.2 Development context in MENA

Children's exclusion from schooling is anchored in, and influenced by, a wide range of interrelated development factors. The demographic profiles, socio-economic and cultural features, and degree of political stability are all among the factors that shape the development opportunities for children in MENA.

The region, which covers a total of 20 countries[1], has suffered from political instability for decades and the chain of events linked to the Arab Spring has escalated the levels of violence since 2011 (UCDP, 2011). Although the transition paths differ across countries, public expectations across the whole region for fundamental political, social and economic changes are

[1] According to UNICEF's classification of countries, the MENA region includes Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen.

tremendous. Levels of unemployment remain high, in particular among youth, and the outcomes of the ongoing political processes are likely to be favourable only if they create jobs and improve the lives of large groups of citizens (UNDP, 2013a; World Bank, 2013c).

There is immense demographic, political and socio-economic diversity in the region. Some defining features of the development context in MENA are summarised below (*see Table 1.1*).

Demography

Most countries in MENA are experiencing a demographic transition from high to lower rates of population growth. Yet the annual population growth rate is still relatively high in the region, with an average growth rate of 2.1 per cent over the 1990-2011 period. For the world as a whole, the annual population growth rate over the same period was considerably lower, at 1.3 per cent. It is, however, expected that the speed of growth will slow down over the coming decades, with an estimated growth rate of 1.5 per cent between 2011-2030 (UNICEF, 2013b).

As a result, most of the countries in the region are young societies. In proportion to its total population, the MENA region has one of the largest cohorts of young people in the world. In 2011, the UN Population Division (UNPD) estimated that 38 per cent of the region's total population was under the age of 18. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world with a higher share of young people. The regional average number of children per woman is still high, at 2.8 children in 2011 (*see Table 1.1*). This is markedly higher than the world average, at 2.4 children per woman. However, this average figure masks diversity across the region, with fertility levels ranging from 5.1 and 4.6 in Yemen and Iraq respectively, to 1.6 in Iran and 1.7 in United Arab Emirates (UAE) (UNICEF, 2013b).

Socio-economic context

Over the past decade, most MENA countries have experienced sustained economic growth and the growth rate for the region as a whole was more rapid than during the 1990s. Between 1996 and 1999, the average real gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 3.6 per cent annually. Between 2000 and 2008, that figure rose to an average of 5 per cent (World Bank, 2013a). At the same time, per capita economic growth has remained modest in MENA. Over the 1990 to 2011 period, the GDP per capita growth rate only averaged 0.8 per cent per year, compared to a world average of 2.6 per cent. This pattern is mainly explained by high population growth rates.

The existing youth bulge in most MENA countries has made it difficult for the labour market to absorb the many new entrants. Interestingly, however, over the last decade employment in MENA has grown more rapidly than in other regions of the world, but due to the large size of the youth population this has been insufficient to absorb the population of working age. As a result, 54 per cent of MENA's working-age population is either unemployed or inactive. Unemployment in the region is higher than in any other of the world's regions and disproportionately affects women and youth. Three of every four women of working age are outside the labour force and constitute 80-90 per cent of MENA's inactive population. The region suffers from the highest youth unemployment rate in the world, with one quarter of MENA's 15-25 year olds unemployed (World Bank, 2013a).

The region is marked by significant disparities in wealth between countries and absolute levels of poverty remain high in some countries. In Djibouti and Yemen, just below one fifth of the population live below the international poverty line of US$1.25 per day and in the 2012 Human Development Index (HDI) ranking, Djibouti was ranked 164 and

Table 1.1 Demographic, health and economic indicators in MENA countries

	Annual population growth rate (%)	Total fertility rate (%)	Under-5 mortality rate		Total adult literacy rate (%)	GNI per capita (US$)
	1990-2011	2011	1990	2011	2007-2011*	2011
Algeria	1.7	2.2	66	30	73	4.470
Bahrain	4.7	2.5	21	10	92	15.920
Djibouti	2.3	3.7	122	90	...	1.270
Egypt	1.8	2.7	86	21	72	2.600
Iran	1.5	1.6	61	25	85	4.520
Iraq	3.0	4.6	46	38	78	2.640
Jordan	2.9	3.0	37	21	93	4.380
Kuwait	1.4	2.3	17	11	94	48.900
Lebanon	1.8	1.8	33	9	90	9.110
Libya	1.9	2.5	44	16	89	12.320
Morocco	1.3	2.2	81	33	56	2.970
Oman	2.0	2.2	48	9	87	19.260
Palestine	3.3	4.4	43	22	95	...
Qatar	6.5	2.2	20	8	96	80.440
Saudi Arabia	2.6	2.7	43	9	87	17.820
Sudan	2.5	...	123	86	...	...
Syria	2.5	2.9	36	15	83	2.750
Tunisia	1.2	2.0	51	16	78	4.070
United Arab Emirates	7.0	1.7	22	7	90**	40.760
Yemen	3.5	5.1	126	77	64	1.070
MENA average	**2.1**	**2.8**	**72**	**36**	**77**	**6.234**
World average	**1.3**	**2.4**	**87**	**51**	**84**	**9.513**

* Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified in the column heading.

** Data refer to years or periods other than those specified in the column heading. Such data are not included in the calculation of regional and global averages.

Source: UNICEF, 2013b.

Yemen 160 out of the 186 countries included (UNICEF, 2013b; UNDP, 2013b).[2] Sudan was ranked 171, making it the country with the lowest level of human development in the MENA region (UNDP, 2013b).

Political context

The countries in the region face major challenges in creating social cohesion and enlarging the freedoms of citizens. Despite some recent positive steps towards greater political freedom for Palestinians, including UN recognition of Palestine's observer status, the situation in Palestine and for displaced Palestinians remains a serious challenge, both regionally and internationally. Lack of political and economic freedom and a strong sense of social injustice have been central to the uprising of the Arab Spring in early 2011. The call for greater freedom and the end of authoritarian and corrupt regimes in Tunisia and Egypt spread rapidly to other countries in the region.

Women and young people in MENA are excluded from many facets of political and economic life and have played, and continue to play, crucial roles in the protests of the Arab Spring. The status of women is a major issue, with the region ranking last globally in terms of women's economic participation and political empowerment. Discrimination

[2] In Sudan, according to the 2009 National Budget Household Health Survey, 47 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line.

against women is still embedded in the legal frameworks and perpetuated through existing social norms, values and practices. Violence and sexual harassment against women remain common and woman are particularly vulnerable in areas affected by conflict (UNICEF, 2011).

At the highest official level, most governments in the region recognize and state commitment to political reform. One strong sign of the official commitment was the first Arab Development Challenges Report, published jointly by the League of Arab States (LAS) and UNDP, and endorsed by the Arab Economic Summit. In 2009, the LAS recognized that:

'The first main element of any proposed social contract is that which relates to the need to move from a non developmental oil-led growth model to a developmental state model where productive sector performance, poverty, inequality reduction, and employment are the main benchmark for success (…). This no doubt requires a major revisiting of the current institutional and governance frameworks' cited in (UNDP, 2013a).

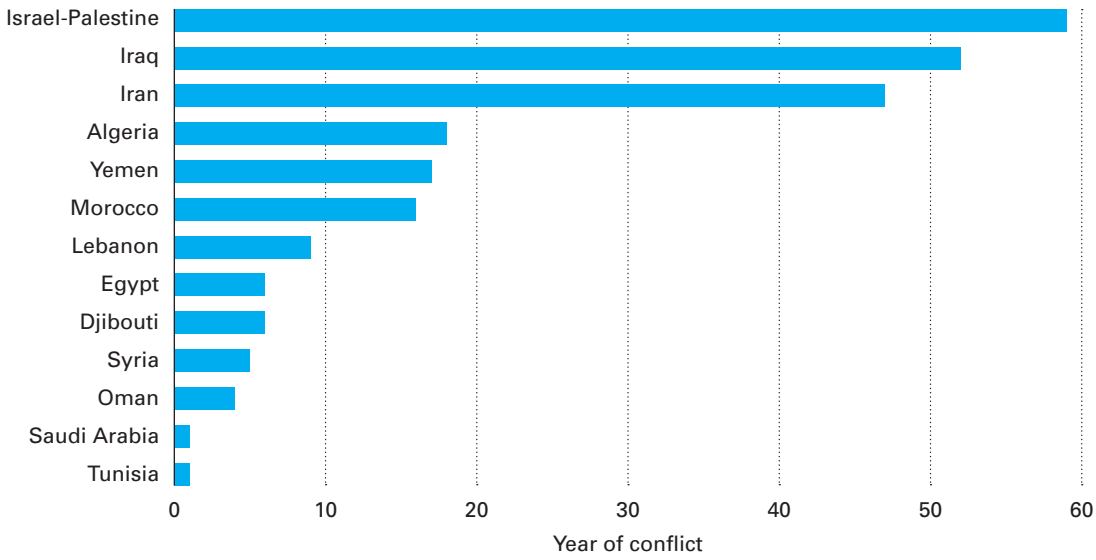
Whether or not political statements translate into practice depend in large part on the ongoing political movements in the region. While the Arab Spring uprisings were an important period for the region, only four countries – Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen – actually experienced regime changes. Syria and Libya have been driven into civil war and Yemen has shown some signs of following in the same path. Overall, the political context in MENA remains diverse and unpredictable.

Conflict

The region has suffered from political instability and a number of protracted humanitarian crises for a long time. But the chain of events set in motion by the Arab Spring since 2011 has escalated the levels of violence throughout the region (UCDP, 2011). Instability and conflict have forced people to flee their homes, caused massive displacements and deprived children of access to education. The Syrian war is causing unprecedented waves of displacements to countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. By mid-2013, it was estimated that as a result of the Syrian war, as many as 100,000 people had been killed, nearly 2 million had fled to neighbouring countries and a further 4 million had been internally displaced. About half of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are children (UN, 2013a; OCHA, 2013e). While the war in Syria is currently the most extensive, violence and conflict in several other countries in the region have caused damage and major population movements in recent years. People from Palestine still form the largest group of refugees in the world. After successive decades of war in Iraq, more than 750,000 Iraqis were refugees abroad and some 1.1 million were internally displaced persons in 2013 (UNHCR, 2013b). Sudan has experienced nearly four decades of civil war.

The region has experienced disproportionate levels of conflict over time. While MENA accounts for 5.5 per cent of the world's population, it has accounted for 15 per cent of the world's conflicts since the end of World War II (World Bank, 2011). At the same time, there is great variation in the incidence of conflict across the countries in the region (*see Figure 1.1*). It is estimated that nearly two thirds of the total number of conflict years in MENA since 1960 are restricted to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and conflicts in Iran and in Iraq. Algeria, Morocco, Yemen and Lebanon account for another quarter of the total conflict years. The remaining countries in the MENA region have experienced five years or less of conflict over the past 50 years (Ross et al., 2011). The protection of refugees and children affected by conflict remains one of the most fundamental development challenges for the countries in MENA.

Figure 1.1 Number of years of conflict in MENA countries, 1960-2009



Note: The analysis excludes Sudan.

Source: Adapted from (Ross et al., 2011).

1.3 Overview of methodology

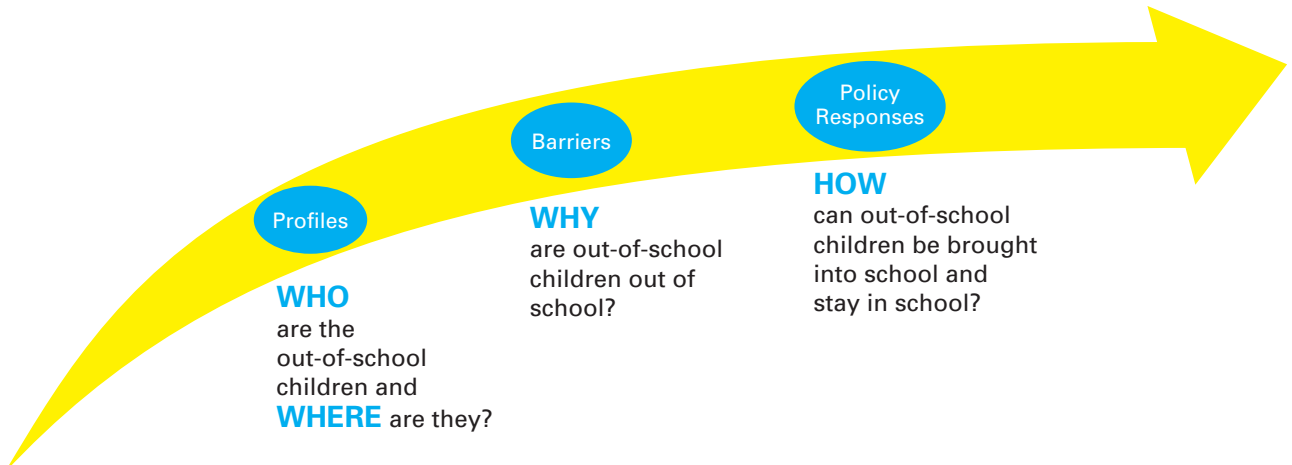
The second part of this chapter provides the methodological approach for the analysis of the out-of-school children issue in the MENA region. The conceptual model that guides the global analysis is presented, followed by an explanation of the critical methodological issues for analysing education exclusion.

To achieve a breakthrough in understanding the situation of out-of-school children, OOSCI focuses on three major gaps that need to be addressed through a more systematic approach:

- Gaps in data on out-of-school children and children at risk of dropping out,
- Gaps in the analysis of the major barriers for school participation, and
- Gaps in the identification of effective policies and strategies to overcome existing barriers.

These three types of gaps are intrinsically linked to each other (*see Figure 1.2*). OOSCI aims to link research to policy to action, and to engage key stakeholders around issues of equity and education rights. To eliminate education exclusion, there is a strong need to focus on evidence for more effective policy making.

Figure 1.2 Links between profiles, barriers and policy responses to education exclusion



Source: UNICEF and UIS, 2013.

1.4 The Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model

The study bases its analysis of the problem of out-of-school children on the model developed by the Initiative, termed the Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model (UNICEF and UNESCO-UIS, 2011).

This model presents five target groups of children that span:

- three age groups: children of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school age; and
- two groups by school participation status: children who are out of school and children who are in school but at risk of dropping out.

The term 'exclusion' has a slightly different meaning depending on the population concerned: children who are out of school are excluded from education, while children who are at risk of dropping out may be excluded within education.

The Five Dimensions of Exclusion are:

Dimension 1: Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school

Dimension 2: Children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school

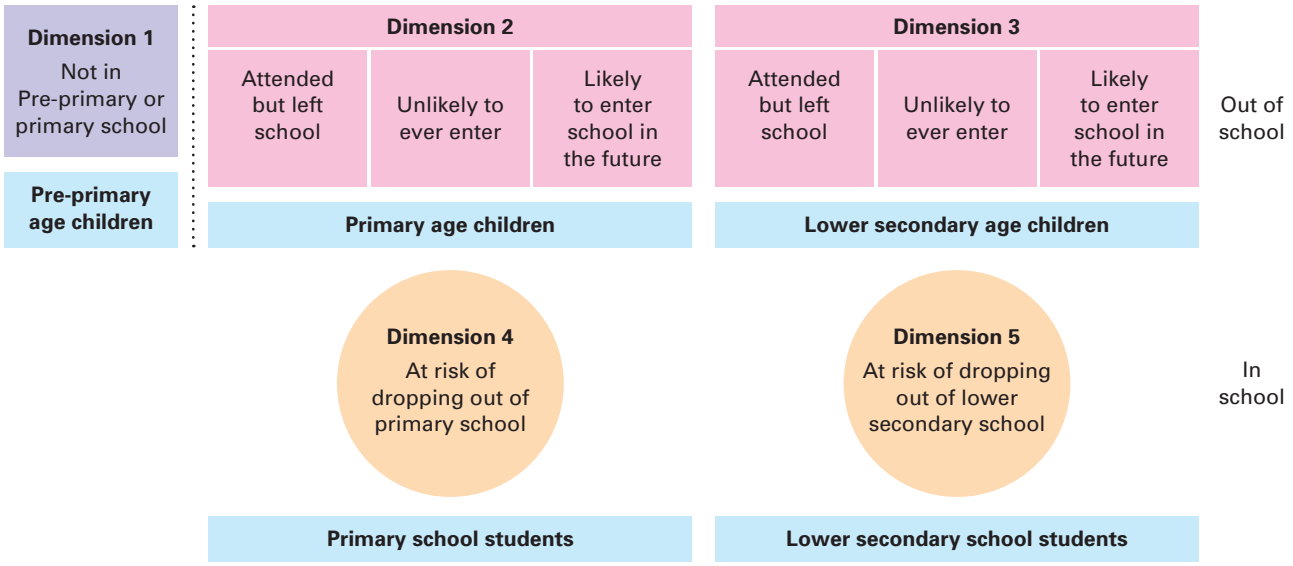
Dimension 3: Children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school

Dimension 4: Children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out

Dimension 5: Children who are in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out

Below are summaries of the groups of children this report focuses on by age, by out of school and in school with the risk of dropping out, and by the Five Dimensions (*see Figure 1.3*).

Figure 1.3 The Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model



Source: UNICEF and UNESCO-UIS, 2011.

Dimensions 2 and 3 are split into three distinct groups (UIS and UNICEF, 2005):

- children who attended school in the past and left school;
- children who are unlikely to ever enter school; and
- children who are likely to enter school in the future.

In general, all children of primary or lower secondary school age are considered to be in school if they participate in primary or secondary education. However, two groups of school age children are considered to be out of school even though they may be participating in learning-related activities:

- Children of primary school age or older who are in pre-primary education are considered out of school because the educational properties of pre-primary education and the qualifications of teaching staff in such programmes do not meet the criteria applied to primary education.
- Children of primary school age or older who attend a non-formal education programme may be considered out of school unless the programme has a clear path into the formal education system.

In relation to each dimension, an important goal of OOSCI is to conduct a disparity analysis to identify the most disadvantaged children. As OOSCI is a tool of action at the national level, it focuses the disparity analysis on the most critical and relevant issues for national policy making.

1.5 Methodological issues for analysing education exclusion in the MENA region

Over the past five years, important lessons have been learnt for how to analyse the out-of-school children problem. The 26 countries from seven regions that participated in the first round of OOSCI studies have generated essential insights. OOSCI has also been able to draw upon research conducted by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE).[3] Building on these experiences, this section explains some critical methodological matters for the analysis of education exclusion in the MENA region.

1.5.1 OOSCI's expanded vision of access

Definitions of access to education usually offer a simple dichotomy – enrolled or not enrolled. However, there is growing awareness that such definitions are no longer sufficient to understand the magnitude and nature of the problems of children who leave school or who never attend school regardless of whether or not they are enrolled. 'The move away from such a dichotomic view on education access is at the heart of OOSCI. The question then becomes 'access to what?' Is it to enrolment or to education? The Initiative adopts the 'access to what?' question as an essential point of departure, most notably by focusing on the risk of dropout in the Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model.

An expanded vision of access to education is needed because:

- Gross enrolment rates (GER) conceal uneven flows of children through school systems. High GERs can coexist with large numbers of out-of-school children, especially where many are overage and there is much repetition. Grade-specific enrolment rates give a much better indication of flows through the system.

[3] Another recent example of important knowledge generation on the OOSCI problem is Omoeva, C., Sylla, B., Hatch, R. and Gale, C. (2013) Out of School Children. Data Challenges in Measuring Access to Education, Education Policy and Data Center, FHI 360, Washington D.C.

- Out-of-school children include those who never attend and those who leave school. In MENA most of those who do not complete primary and lower secondary school are likely to be children who have left school rather than those who never attended school.
- Enrolment rates can be high but many of the children can be significantly overage, which may reflect that children start school late, repeat grades, and/or queue for high-stakes examinations. Being overage increases the probability of drop out, is especially damaging to girls completion rates, and is likely to create pedagogic and psychosocial issues in the classroom for both girls and boys.
- High enrolment rates can coexist with very low levels of attendance and time on task. The amount of learning that takes place depends on whether children attend regularly for most of the days in the school year, whether their teachers are present, and whether their class sizes are appropriate.
- Learning depends on an adequate learning environment provided with clean water, sanitation, basic services, light, heat and ventilation, as well as an appropriate range of learning materials and learning aids. If these facilities and services are not present then learning will be compromised and access to education will not be delivered effectively.
- Acceptable levels of achievement of learning outcomes are part of the expanded vision of access to education. When children are not learning at a level appropriate to their grade they no longer have full access to education.
- Children who are overage, attending irregularly or performing poorly are likely to be at risk of dropping out. They may be described as silently excluded, attending sporadically and learning little. Though they are nominally enrolled they do not have meaningful access to education.
- Equality of opportunity is part of access to education. If there are large variations between communities, locations, and schools in quality, pedagogy, achievement and the costs of attendance, then access is compromised. Variations in pupil-teacher ratios, class sizes, levels of achievement, and physical infrastructure should converge rather than diverge as access to education improves.

An expanded vision of access is needed to capture those who are excluded and not in school, those who are in school and learning little, and those at risk of dropping out. The expanded vision can be used to further enhance the Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model, which is restrictive in the sense that it is a quantitative model of participation as measured by nominal enrolment. As such, the expanded vision of access offers a set of eight elements that can make the quantitative model more meaningful (*see Figure 1.4*).

Figure 1.4 Expanded vision of access to education

All children should:	
1	enrol in the year in which they reach the official school starting age
2	progress over the next nine years with no more than one repetition and remain within one year of the nominal age for the grade
3	attend for at least 90% of the teaching days available
4	transit to lower secondary school and complete nine grades of schooling
5	attend schools with clean water, sanitation, basic services, light, heat and ventilation, and adequate learning materials
6	be taught by trained teachers who are present in class at least 95% of the teaching days available with pupil teacher ratios of 40:1 or less
7	achieve at levels within two years of the norm for their grade
8	have equitable access to fee free schools located within 30 minutes travel of households at primary level and 60 minutes at secondary level

These eight elements can be adapted and modified to suit circumstances in different countries within MENA. In the expanded vision, access to education cannot be separated from continuous participation, learning within appropriate infrastructure under conditions where worthwhile educational outcomes can be achieved, and where there are equal opportunities to succeed. The following section provides further explanation of the expanded vision of what all children should do.

1. **Enrol in the year in which they reach the official school starting age**

   Enrolment at the appropriate age is essential for reducing the number of out-of-school children. Studies of dropout show that being overage is associated with a greater probability of leaving school prematurely. This is particularly true for older girls. Overage students tend on average to perform at lower levels than those who are of the correct age for their grade. This disadvantage may result in the average score being 5 per to 10 per cent lower for every year overage.

2. **Progress through nine years of education with no more than one repetition and remain within one year of the nominal age for the grade**

   The expanded vision includes nine continuous grades of education as a requirement of universal basic education. This should be achieved by the age of 15 years. This is the case in all high-performing education systems that manage learning and discourage significant dropout below the legal minimum age of work. Where there is significant repetition of grades, the causes need to be identified. Where schooling is interrupted by seasonality, temporary or permanent migration or relocation, it should not result in the loss of the school year.

3. **Attend for at least 90 per cent of the teaching days available**

   High levels of attendance are essential to effective learning. This is especially the case in subjects such as mathematics and science, which are hierarchical in that learning must be undertaken in a specific order to understand material as it progresses. Even a temporary absence in such subjects can result in severe shortfalls in mastery of the curriculum. School monitoring of absenteeism amongst students and teachers is essential for the expanded vision of access.

4. **Transit to lower secondary school and complete nine grades of schooling**

   Secondary schooling up to at least Grade 9 is within the basic education cycle. In the MENA region, most middle-income countries will aspire to universal access to 12 years of school within the next decade. Managing the transition rates from primary into secondary schooling and from lower secondary to upper secondary will affect the numbers of out-of-school children. Where the probability of continuing from one level to the next is low, children and parents may simply give up, with children leaving before completion. Where high-stakes examinations are used to select students, these may create queuing points where examinations are repeated to obtain better grades. More than one repetition is often associated with dropout.

5. **Attend schools with clean water, sanitation, basic services, light, heat and ventilation, and adequate learning materials**

   Learning needs to take place in an appropriate physical environment that is not overcrowded and has safe and adequate access to basic services, clean water and sanitation, and learning materials. Poor-quality physical environments may reduce the demand for schooling, especially when it is coupled with low levels of achievement and little prospect of progression to higher levels.

6. **Be taught by trained teachers who are present in class at least 95 per cent of the teaching days available with pupil teacher ratios of 40:1 or less**

   Effective access to education requires the presence of trained teachers who are motivated and available on every school day. It is essential to ensure that there are enough qualified teachers, that class sizes are sufficient to allow learning to take place, and that teachers are supported and adequately rewarded.

7. Achieve at levels within two years of the norm for their grade

Learning has to be managed effectively with appropriate pedagogies that recognize and respond to mixed capability, mixed age, and mixed subject preferences within schools and classrooms. Curricula and pedagogy have to be adjusted to learning levels and offer support to those who may fall below national norms of achievement.

8. Have equitable access to fee free schools located within 30 minutes travel of households at primary level and 60 minutes at secondary level

An expanded vision of educational access must include concerns for equity. Access to education that is uneven within and between levels fails to deliver on the promises of the right to education for all and equal opportunities to progress. Hence, an expanded vision of access encompasses the expectation that differences between children of different genders, from rich and poor households, of urban and rural backgrounds, and from different social and ethnic groups should diminish rather than increase as educational access improves.

An expanded vision of access benefits from including the flows of children through formal school systems. This helps address the dynamic characteristics of inclusion and exclusion that lead to children out of school. Using enrolment data to chart enrolments by grade can draw attention to bottlenecks and grade levels where dropout is concentrated. This may also focus attention on grade levels where there are gender inequalities. In Djibouti for example, enrolments peak where there are high-stakes selection examinations and repetition to improve grades (*see Figure 1.5*). Those who fail to be selected leave the school system and become out-of-school children. Tunisia also has a spike in enrolments at the end of primary school. In Djibouti there are always more boys than girls, but in Tunisia above Grade 6 there are more girls than boys. Similar charts of enrolment by age can also be useful in understanding patterns of dropout related to overage enrolment in different grades.

Figure 1.5 Enrolment by grade in Djibouti (2012) and Tunisia (2011), number of students

Source: Adapted from Lewin and Cameron, forthcoming.

1.5.2 Understanding and assessing silent exclusions in OOSCI

The OOSCI approach recognizes that many of the children who are nominally enrolled in school and whose names appear on registration lists may not enjoy meaningful access to education. Though children may be physically in school they may experience little difference in terms of learning opportunity to those who are out of school. Those who are silently excluded in this way are likely to have a high risk of subsequent dropout and it is those children who are in focus in Dimensions 4 and 5. Programmes designed to encourage those who are out of school to re-enter formal education must address the causes of exclusion; otherwise, the return to school will repeat similar sequences leading to dropout.

At the simplest level, silent exclusion is a function of age of entry and age in grade, attendance, and levels of achievement. This definition can be enhanced if there are data to include those who have a diagnosed disability or chronic illness that affects learning, those who may be socially excluded because they come from a disadvantaged group, or those who are from a different affinity group to their teachers. Where classroom activities are strongly gendered this may result in less attention being paid to boys or girls and activities which favour one group over another.

Age of entry and age in grade, regular attendance and levels of achievement are easily understood and are often predictors of dropout.

Age and grade

Age of entry and age in grade are important for several reasons:

1. Delayed entry to school disadvantages children. Those entering school later are usually from the poorest households with the least cultural capital and least ability to pay the costs of pre-schooling. They are also disproportionately likely to suffer disadvantage from poor health and nutritional status.
2. Primary school curricula are generally not multi-graded. All children in a grade receive the same curriculum independent of their age and level of cognitive development. Where there is a significant range of age in grade, natural variation in capability is overlaid with those differences that stem from age-related cognitive development. Mono-grade curricula assume learning readiness across class groups of children who can progress at the same pace. Being overage and repeating grades is likely to increase the chances of dropout and have effects on motivation and social development where older less capable children learn alongside younger peers.
3. Being significantly overage has adverse effects on girls' participation where cultural practices give preference to boys' schooling, where young ages of marriage are common, and when puberty occurs whilst children are still in the primary grades. If all girls in the MENA region progressed on age, grade differences in enrolments between boys and girls would fall. In some low-enrolment education systems, boys tend to persist longer and leave later than girls. Overage boys may experience rising opportunity costs that pull them out of school where income-earning livelihoods are available. They may also be more likely to cite the perceived irrelevance of curricula as a reason for dropping out. In high-enrolment systems, there may be more girls enrolled than boys especially in higher grades. But patterns are country and intra-country specific so generalizations have to be contextualized.
4. In many low-enrolment systems, low achievers are held back from the final year of primary-school-leaving examinations where schools are judged by league tables of pass rates. Blocking progress through to the last grade may discourage overage children from remaining enrolled as it becomes clear that they have little chance of gaining access to secondary schools.

Age-in-grade data is normally collected by Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). In low-enrolment countries such as Djibouti, Sudan and Yemen, students' age is uncertain and birth certificates may not be available. This in itself may lead to children becoming not being in school if registration documents are required in order to attend school. Collection and analysis of age-in-grade data can be used to study the consequences and dropout patterns of overage children at different educational levels.

Attendance

Patterns of attendance are associated with dropout and exclusion that lead to becoming out of school. Irregular attendance itself is a form of dropout. Definitions of dropout vary but the most common ones include non-attendance for a defined period, e.g. three months. Administrative systems generally do not capture patterns of dropout very accurately. At best, they report changes in numbers of students in successive grades on an annual basis. School-level reporting of dropout often under-represents those who complete a year but fail to return in the following year, and fail to capture school transfers.

Effectively managed schools keep continuous records of attendance and are able to identify children who lose significant amounts of learning time through their own absence, or that of their teachers. There is a threshold of lost learning time below which it becomes difficult to acquire and consolidate core skills and capabilities.

Dropout is a process and can occur in a number of different ways, and can be either temporary or permanent. Temporary dropouts fall into at least three different categories:

- Children drop in and drop out as sporadic attendees, often linked to seasonality where household demands for labour peak at particular times. Children from nomadic populations in MENA may face similar problems and attendance patterns.
- Children's dropout relates to specific events, which precipitate non-attendance, e.g. illness or death of a relative or the loss of a job. When the event has passed, attendance may be resumed.
- Children who fail to complete a grade and/or miss large parts of a year's work, then have to re-enrol in the same grade.

Those who drop out permanently may do so in at least two ways:

- Unsettled dropouts wish to return to the education system but are prevented from doing so by force of circumstance.
- In contrast, others who have dropped out become settled and express no desire to return to education.

Understanding the reasons why dropouts have left an education system is a pre-requisite to acting to discourage more from following the same pathway. It is also essential to recommending actions that could be taken to reduce the probability of those enrolled becoming out-of-school children in the future.

Achievement

Patterns of achievement in MENA suggest that large proportions of the child population are performing at unacceptably low levels. Achievement can be studied directly using standardized national or international achievement tests on representative samples of children at different levels. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in particular is available for a large number of countries in the region and recent data is available for analysis. Performance can be disaggregated by gender, income groups, language spoken at home, and several other home and school background characteristics. Performance on TIMSS indicates that in about half the countries in MENA on which there is data, children from low income households are performing below the low benchmark score suggesting that they have not mastered an elementary knowledge of math and science. This is a signal of silent exclusion.

1.5.3 Data issues in the MENA national and regional OOSCI studies

There are a number of data challenges involved in the measurement of the out-of-school problem. Most of the issues are not new and are well described in the OOSCI Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF) (UIS and UNICEF, 2011). Yet OOSCI constantly evolves and some of the issues are more pertinent in the MENA region. This section highlights critical data issues in measuring education exclusion with special relevance to the development of the nine national OOSCI studies in MENA. More detailed accounts of data sources to calculate the Five Dimensions and discussions of the limitations of those sources are included in the national OOSCI studies from the region. The final topic discussed in this section is specific to this regional report and details particular data issues for the regional data analysis.

Methodology for measuring the risk of dropout in Dimensions 4 and 5

Based on experiences from working with countries in the first round of OOSCI, the UIS proposed a new indicator for measuring dropout from primary and secondary education at the launch of OOSCI in the MENA region in mid-2013 (UNICEF and UIS,

2013; UIS, 2013). This indicator measures the share of students who risk dropping out before reaching the last grade of the primary or lower secondary education level. It uses a reconstructed cohort method to estimate the number of students in primary or lower secondary school in a given year who are expected to leave school before they reach the last grade. Data needed to calculate this indicator include enrolment by grade for two consecutive years and repeaters by grade for the second year. The indicator is still under development and not published by the UIS for all countries in its Data Centre.

Following the work on the national MENA OOSCI studies during the second half of 2013, some important experiences from using the new indicator for measuring Dimensions 4 and 5 have been gained. While the indicator provides a useful new measure for analysing the risk of dropout before the last grade of the primary and lower secondary level, there are particular challenges involved in using the reconstructed cohort method for showing the risk of dropout per grade. A main reason for the difficulty is that the risk of dropout from the early grades is always higher than in later grades, because a first grade student can drop out during Grade 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, while a Grade 4 student only runs the risk of dropping out during Grade 4 or 5. This has been a source of confusion in the development of some of the national OOSCI studies in the MENA region. The issue that the risk of dropout is often higher than the actual dropout rate per grade in one specific year has at times made the communication and dialogue around the indicator challenging at the national level.

One fundamental challenge with OOSCI's Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model is that the measurement of Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 are based on age-specific data while the measurement of Dimensions 4 and 5 are based on data by grade. Overall, more methodological work will be needed to better measure Dimensions 4 and 5 and reconcile the measurement of the number of out-of-school children with the children at risk of dropping out. Methodological improvements could also involve the analysis of the relationships between the Dimensions 2 and 4 on the one hand and Dimensions 3 and 5 on the other hand. It would be desirable to establish the extent to which Dimensions 4 and 5 feed into Dimensions 2 and 3 and to determine the evolution of this relationship over time.

Using administrative and household survey data

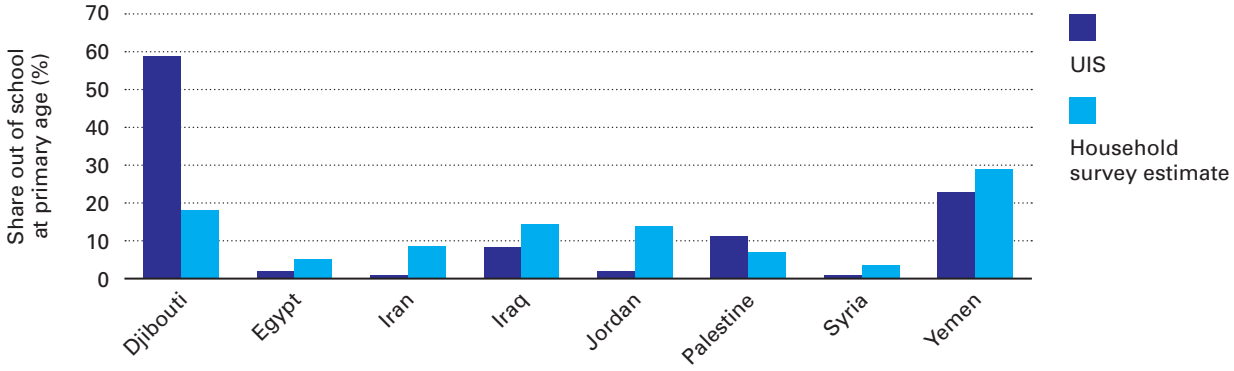
Conventional definitions of access to education identify children who are not enrolled in school. This is usually based on administrative data that can capture those children who are registered in school, though they may not necessarily be attending. In some systems there are also incentives for schools to exaggerate their enrolments, for example when such benefits as capitation payments are linked to the number of children enrolled. Conversely if the school census is incomplete and many schools are omitted then this can result in undercounting. Data may also be incomplete for some countries, sometimes making it difficult to analyse trends over time.

An alternative method for ascertaining the number of out-of-school children is to base the estimates on household surveys. These use samples which are more or less representative to establish from the self-reporting by household respondents on how many children are attending school from that household. Since in most countries it is well known that there is legislation requiring parents to send their children to school it is likely that self-reported behaviour overestimates the number of children actually in school on a consistent basis.

Estimates based on household surveys of the proportion of out-of-school children at primary school age (Dimension 2) are usually higher than those based on administrative data (*see Figure 1.6*). An exception is Djibouti, where the 2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) reports much lower numbers of out-of-school children than the administrative data would suggest. In Palestine, the latest MICS also recorded a lower share of out-of-school children than the data from UIS. The discrepancy can go either way depending on factors including the accuracy of population data, adequate sampling in household surveys, and incentives for schools to report accurately or otherwise.

A systematic difference, however, is that household surveys look at school *attendance* whereas administrative data focus on *enrolment*. This may explain why, in several countries administrative data appear to underestimate the proportion of out-of school children (*see Figure 2.5*).

Figure 1.6 Comparison of estimates of the share of primary school age children out of school (Dimension 2), by country



Source: Djibouti MICS 2006; Egypt DHS 2008; Iran 2006 census; Iraq MICS 2006; Jordan DHS 2009; Palestine MICS 2010; Syria MICS 2006; Yemen MICS 2006; and UIS estimates of the share of out-of-school children at primary age from the same year (or +/- 1 year if the same year is not available).

Data sources used in this regional study

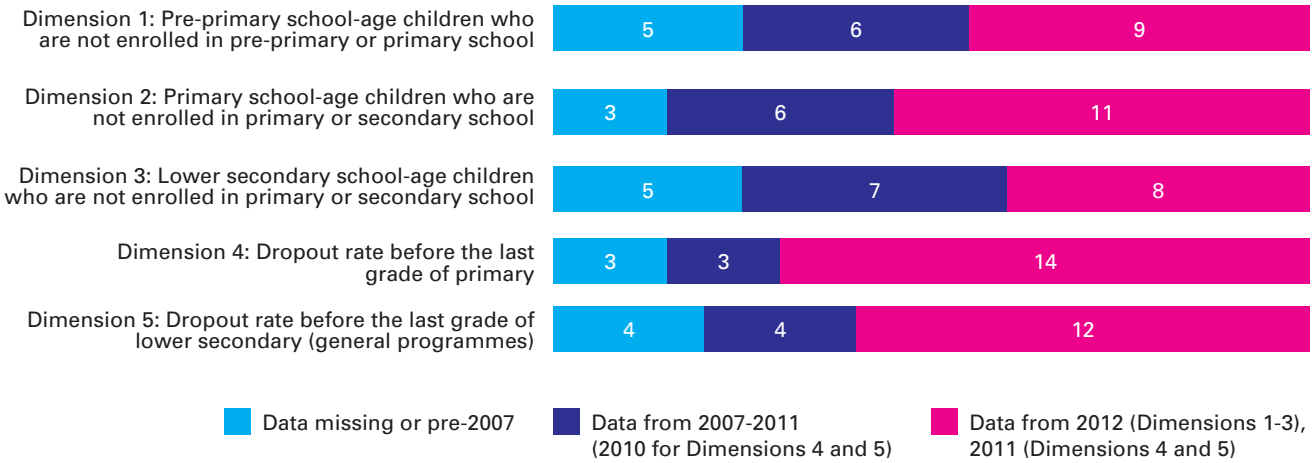
This regional study uses existing data sources and no new data have been collected. The main source of data for the Profile Chapter is administrative data from the UIS (UIS, 2014a). Some of the main advantages of administrative data compared to survey data are that they are on the whole more recent, more comprehensive in country coverage and better suited for capturing trends over time. For the purposes of this regional study, the administrative data from UIS are the most appropriate source, as it allows for comparisons across countries.

To render indicator estimates internationally comparable, the UIS uses the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to classify education levels. In some cases, the ISCED classifications differ from the definitions at the country level and help explain why estimates from UIS and national sources are different. For example, Yemen has a nine year basic education cycle, which is classified into two ISCED levels: Grades 1 to 6 as primary (ISCED 1), and Grades 7 to 9 as lower secondary (ISCED 2). An out-of-school children rate which is based on the basic education age (Grades 1-9) will be different from out-of-school rates for children of ISCED 1 age (Grades 1 to 6) and ISCED 2 age (Grades 7 to 9).

Another source of discrepancy between UIS data and national administrative data is that they can use different sources of population data. The UIS uses data from the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) to estimate the school age population and these may differ quite significantly from national population estimates used in EMIS. The profiles in the next chapter will show that this is a strong contributing factor behind the differences between the presented rates of out-of-school children in this MENA regional study and the national OOSCI studies.

Some limitations in terms of the coverage of recent UIS data should be noted. Data from Bahrain, and Libya are, except for very few indicators, not available from the UIS. Below is an overview of the existing gaps in data from the UIS with regard to the key proxy indicators for measuring the OOSCI's Five Dimensions of Exclusion (*see Figure 1.7*). The figure shows that the major data gaps are for Dimensions 1 and 3, where data are missing from five countries respectively, out of 20 MENA countries in total. In cases where data for Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 are not available from the UIS but exist in the recent national OOSCI studies, data from the national studies are used in the front tables of the Profile Chapter.

Figure 1.7 Overview of UIS data coverage for OOSCI key indicators in the MENA region



Source: UIS, 2014a; UIS, 2014b.

One common limitation of administrative data is that it can normally not be used for disaggregated data analysis by socio-economic characteristics such as population groups and household wealth. To complement the analysis based on UIS administrative data, some household survey data from a few countries in the region are used to analyse how school attendance is associated with wealth and some other background variables at the household level. As highlighted earlier, data on the number and share of out-of-school children based on administrative data tend in most cases to be lower than data from household surveys. The nine national OOSCI studies from the MENA region include detailed accounts of existing national data sources to calculate the numbers of children out of school and discussions of the limitations of those sources.

2 Profiles of excluded children in MENA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the scale of education exclusion in the MENA region following the Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model. It also presents some of the individual and household characteristics of children who are not in school and some main features of those who are at risk of dropping out. To better target policy responses to reduce education exclusion in MENA, more detailed information is needed about who the excluded children in the region are. Hence, the chapter focuses on profiling children of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school age by addressing the following three main questions:

- How many children in the region are out of school?
- What are the profiles of the group of children who are out of school? (Dimensions 1, 2 and 3)
- What are the profiles of children at greatest risk of dropping out from school? (Dimensions 4 and 5)

The main purpose of the profiles in this chapter is to bring in a regional perspective to the analysis of the problem with out-of-school children in MENA. As such, it builds on and complements the profiles provided in the nine national OOSCI studies from the region.

2.2 Dimension 1: Pre-primary age children not in school

Good quality early childhood development (ECD) programmes can improve education outcomes in a number of ways. Such programmes help children develop essential cognitive, behavioural and social skills, which in turn have positive knock-on effects on primary school participation and learning achievements. Evidence from a large and steadily growing number of countries shows that the benefits are particularly strong for children from poor families. While children from poor families have the most to gain from participating in ECD programmes, their participation is consistently lower than that of children from richer families (UNESCO, 2010). MENA countries are no exception to this pattern of deep inequality.

This section highlights the scope of exclusion from education for children of pre-primary age. The analysis only covers exclusion from formal pre-primary education. Provision of non-formal ECD programmes is relatively common in the region, but comprehensive and standardized data on children's participation in such programmes rarely exist.

2.2.1 The scale of exclusion from school for pre-primary age children

The majority of MENA's pre-primary age children are not in school and the data point to a very high level of exclusion from this type of education. Best available estimates from the UIS detect that approximately 5.1 million children of pre-primary age did not participate in pre-primary or primary education in the MENA region in 2012 *(see Table 2.1)*.[4] This corresponds to 58 per cent of the relevant age group. An overview of the corresponding data from the national OOSCI studies from the region is provided further on *(see Box 2.1)*.

Table 2.1 Dimension 1: Number and share of pre-primary age children not in school by country in 2012

	Dimension 1: Pre-primary age children	
	Number not in school in 2012	Share not in school in 2012 (%)
Algeria	96,459	16
Bahrain	5,761	31
Djibouti	17,661	93
Egypt	1,056,452*	63*
Iraq	682,234*	83*
Jordan	72,339	48
Kuwait	5,054	12
Lebanon	1,002	2
Morocco	159,863	28
Oman	20,880	41
Palestine	59,379	52
Qatar	3,517	19
Sudan	490,673**	50**
Syria	217,350	41
Tunisia	54 600**	30**
UAE	18,193	20
Yemen	612,009	94
MENA	**5,078,339***	**58***

* UIS estimate

** National OOSCI study

Note: The UIS calculates MENA regional estimates, which are also based on the countries that are not included in the table (i.e. Iran, Libya and Saudi Arabia). Data for Morocco are from 2013, Algeria, Djibouti and Jordan from 2011, Yemen from 2010 and Iraq and Kuwait from 2007.

Source: (UIS, 2014b; UIS, 2014c); draft national OOSCI studies from Sudan and Tunisia.

The overall figure masks the large disparities that exist across the region *(see Figure 2.1)*. While close to all five-year-old children in Djibouti and Yemen were excluded from pre-primary (or primary) education, very few five-year-olds in Lebanon were excluded. To some extent, better coverage of pre-primary education tends to be associated with higher national income. The per capita income in Lebanon is more than eight times that of Yemen's. At the same time, a closer look at variations across exclusion patterns from pre-primary education reveal that national income is not the only determinant, but that other factors are also at play. For instance, while gross national income (GNI) per capita is similar in Egypt and Morocco, a much higher share of five-year-old children are excluded from school in Egypt than in Morocco. At the age of 5 in Egypt, nearly two thirds of all children are excluded from school. In Morocco, the corresponding share is less than one third. Another example is Qatar and Algeria. While the former is much richer than the latter, about the same proportion of children are not in school at the age of 5 in each country.

[4] In accordance with the OOSCI methodology, Dimension 1 contains five-year-old children who are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary education. These data are not published by the UIS, but have been prepared by the UIS for the purposes of this report.

Box 2.1 Dimension 1: Pre-primary age children not in school in the national OOSCI studies

The main source of data used for the regional MENA profile of Dimension 1 is the UIS. As discussed in the methodology section, there are several reasons why the UIS data can differ from the data that come directly from national administrative sources. The number and share of children not in school at the age of 5 in the recent national OOSCI studies, alongside the corresponding UIS data are highlighted below *(see Table 2.2)*. The notes below the table point to some of the factors that drive the discrepancies. Apart from the use of data from different years, another relatively common issue refers to the use of different sources for the population data.

Table 2.2 Dimension 1: Comparison of number and share of pre-primary age children not in school in MENA national OOSCI studies and UIS data

	Dimension 1: Pre-primary age children						
	Number not in school		Share not in school		Year of data		
	National OOSCI study	UIS	National OOSCI study	UIS	National OOSCI study	UIS	Note
Algeria	241,790	96,459	32%	16%	2013	2011	1
Djibouti	19,008	17,661	96%	93%	2013	2012	2
Egypt	1,297,354	1,056,452	69%	63%	2013	2012	3
Iraq	788,485	682,234	78%	83%	2012	2007	4
Jordan	72,339	77,880	41%	48%	2012	2011	5
Morocco	175,878	159,863	31%	28%	2011	2013	6
Sudan	490,673	...	50%	...	2010	...	7
Tunisia	54,600	...	30%	...	2013	...	8
Yemen	401,545	612,009	92%	94%	2012	2010	9

Note 1: The national OOSCI study uses projections from UNPD, which in turn are based on the 2008 census. In 2013, the estimated population aged 5 is 763,346 and the number of enrolled five-year-olds 521,553.

Note 2: Same source of population data (2012 UNPD revision), but different years.

Note 3: Same source of population data (2012 UNPD revision), but different years.

Note 4: The UIS data are from 2007, while the national OOSCI study data are from 2012.

Note 5: Data from the Ministry of Education. The data in the OOSCI study are more recent than the UIS data, and may use different population projections.

Note 6: The current draft of the Morocco national OOSCI study does not include number not in school. This has been calculated by the author using population data from the 2012 UNPD revision. The data from UIS are more recent (2013) than the national OOSCI study (2011).

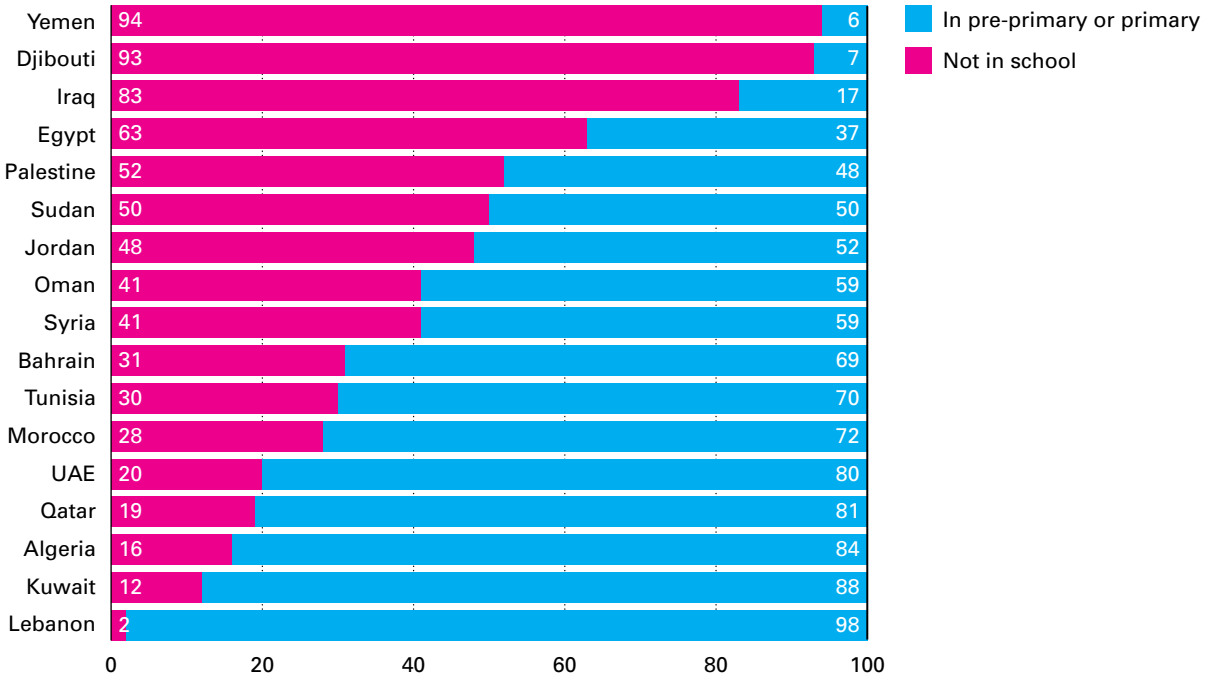
Note 7: Ministry of Education estimates of pre-primary enrolment at age 5 and population projections from Central Bureau of Statistics. UIS data not available.

Note 8: Calculations based on national administrative data, with adjustments of population data using the 2012 UNPD revision and national data.

Note 9: National Social Protection Monitoring Survey in Yemen, Baseline 2012 (UNICEF and IPC, 2013). The national OOSCI study uses household survey data for its main estimates. The UIS estimates rely on projections from the UNPD population projections while the OOSCI study population estimates are informed by a 2012 relisting exercise or 'mini-census'.

Well-conceived public policies are critical for improved enrolment in pre-primary education. The extent to which the MENA countries have put in place policies and strategies for the provision of education for pre-primary age children differ widely with uneven progress over the past decade *(see Figure 2.2)*. In Qatar, Bahrain, Iran and Egypt the pre-primary GER increased by a range of 15 to 44 percentage points from 2000 to 2012. At the same time, a relatively large number of countries in the region have not seen much progress in increasing participation in pre-primary education since the year 2000. Over the past decade, five out of 12 countries with sufficient data have seen no or limited increases in the pre-primary GER.

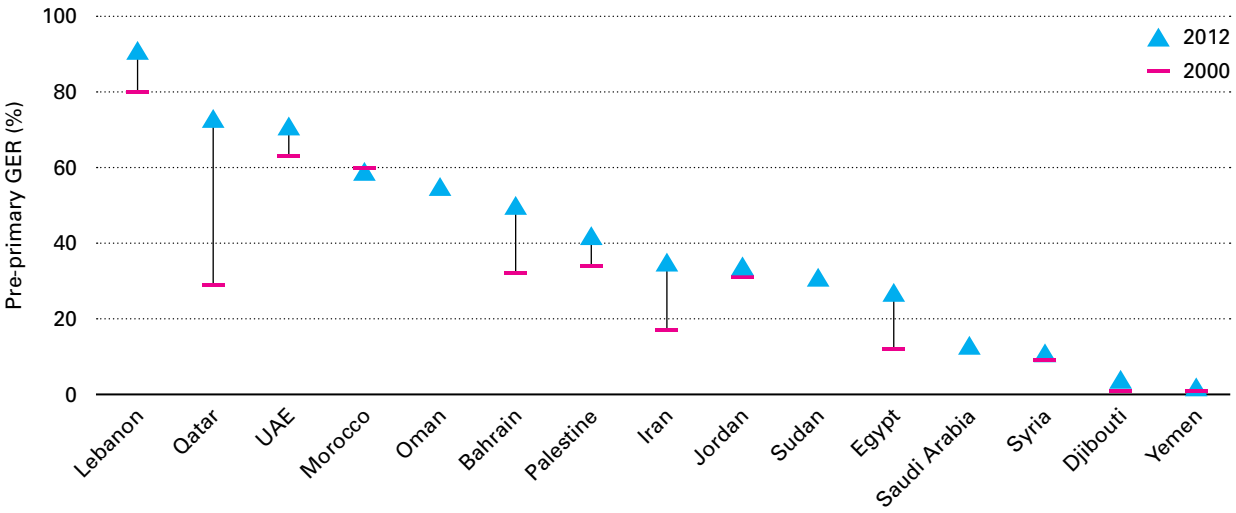
Figure 2.1 Share of children of pre-primary school age who are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary education in 2013, by country



Note: Data for Morocco are from 2013, Algeria, Djibouti and Jordan from 2011, Yemen from 2010 and Iraq and Kuwait from 2007.

Source: (UIS, 2014b); draft national OOSCI studies from Sudan and Tunisia.

Figure 2.2 Pre-primary GER by country, 2000 and 2012

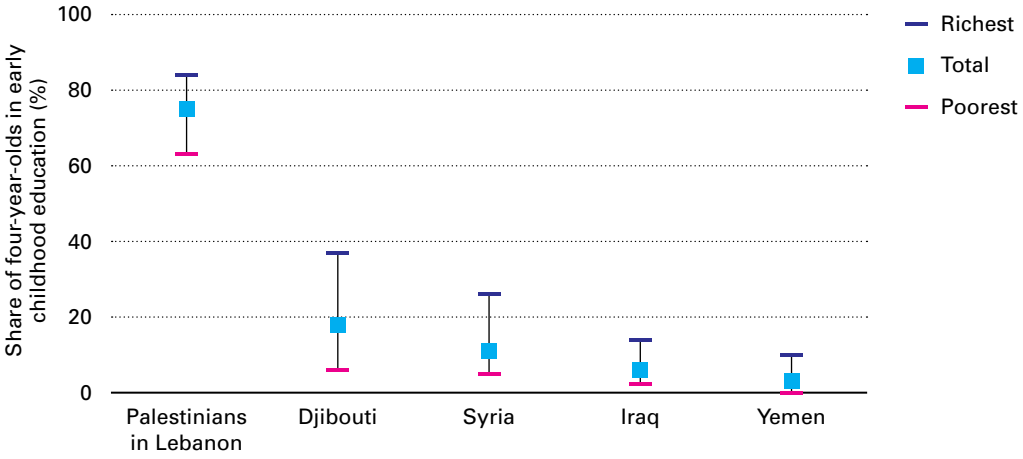


Note: Data for Yemen are from 2001 (instead of 2000), Jordan and Yemen from 2011 and Sudan from 2010 (instead of 2012).

Source: UIS, 2014a.

Participation in pre-primary education in the MENA region is strongly linked to household wealth. Data from the Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) point to large gaps by household wealth in early childhood education attendance among four-year-olds. In Djibouti, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, children from the poorest households face close to total exclusion from early childhood education. In none of these countries does attendance for the poorest group of children exceed 6 per cent. The starkest level of exclusion is recorded in Yemen, where no children from the poorest households attend. In the four countries, children living in one of the richest households are at least four times as likely to attend early childhood programmes as children from the poorest households *(see Figure 2.3)*. The figure shows the high extent to which the provision of early childhood education reinforces inequalities that are linked with children's home background.

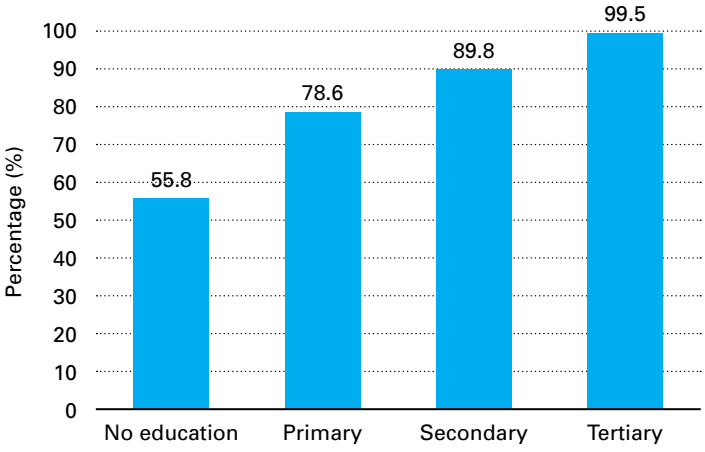
Figure 2.3 Share of four-year-olds who attend early childhood education programmes by richest and poorest wealth quintile and total, selected countries



Source: MICS 2006, 2011.

Inequalities by wealth are often echoed by those relating to the level of education of a child's parents. Maternal education in particular is often a powerful predictor of enrolment in pre-primary education. In Tunisia, a child enrolled in the first year of primary school is almost twice as likely to have been to pre-primary if his or her mother received higher education, compared to those whose mothers have no education *(see Figure 2.4)*.

Figure 2.4 Share of children in the first grade of primary school who have been to pre-primary in the preceding year, disaggregated by mother's education



Source: OOSCI Tunisia Country Report.

2.3 Dimensions 2 and 3: Out-of-school children of primary and lower secondary age

This section provides an overview of the profiles of children who officially should be in primary or lower secondary school in MENA but are not. Two groups are the focus of attention: children of primary school age (Dimension 2) and children of lower secondary school age (Dimension 3).

2.3.1 The scale of education exclusion for primary school age children

In 2012, an estimated 4.3 million children of primary school age were excluded from school in the MENA region. On average, this represented 9 per cent of the region's primary school age population in that same year. This relatively high average figure is to a large extent driven by the high number of out-of-school children in just one country: Sudan. Of all children of primary school age who are not in school in the 20 countries in the MENA region, nearly two in three live in Sudan. The overall picture of school exclusion in the region is provided below *(see Table 2.3)*. For countries where no data are available from the UIS, data from existing national OOSCI studies are used. A comparison of the UIS data for Dimension 2 with the figures in the national OOSCI studies is also highlighted *(see Box 2.2)*.

Table 2.3 Dimensions 2 and 3: Number and share of out-of-school children by age group and by country in 2012

	Dimension 2: Primary-age children		Dimension 3: Lower-secondary age children		Dimensions 2 and 3
	Number of OOSC in 2012	Share of OOSC in 2012	Number of OOSC in 2012	Share of OOSC in 2012	Number of OOSC in 2012
Algeria	25,337	1	220,743**	9**	246,080
Bahrain	...	...	4,505	10	...
Djibouti	38,735	42	44,135*	57*	82,870
Egypt	258,378*	3*	64,211*	1*	322,589
Iran	3,468	0	187,284	6	190,752
Iraq	373,276*	8*	575,274*	29*	948,550
Jordan	19,852	2	31,128	6	50,980
Kuwait	3,490	2	748	1	4,238
Lebanon	17,915*	4*	49,775*	20*	67,690
Morocco	43,220	1	462,798**	25**	506,018
Oman	7,054	3	13,403	9	20,457
Palestine	32,639	7	98,220	15	130,859
Qatar	...	...	574	2	...
Saudi Arabia	216,025*	6*	65,216*	5*	281,241
Sudan	2,810,907	48	610,279	35	3,421,186
Syria	18,600	1	255,433	10	274,033
Tunisia	510	0	49,380**	10**	49,890
UAE	5,761	2	...	...	...
Yemen	490,049	13	666,863*	37*	1,156,912
MENA	**4,301,431***	**9***	**2,911,355***	**12***	**7,212,786**

* UIS estimate

** National OOSCI study

Note: The UIS calculates MENA regional estimates, which are also based on the countries that are not included in the table. For Dimension 2, data for Djibouti and Morocco are from 2013, for Egypt, Jordan and Sudan from 2011, Syria from 2010 and Iraq and Kuwait from 2007. For Dimension 3, data for Iran, Jordan, Qatar and Sudan are from 2011, Djibouti from 2008 and Iraq and Kuwait from 2007.

Source: (UIS, 2014a; UIS, 2014c), draft national OOSCI studies from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

The policy context for reaching all children with education differs widely across countries. In Djibouti and Sudan, limited access to primary education is still very common and the systems in these countries struggle to extend the general coverage of primary education to the whole primary school age population. In such contexts, general and broad-based policy measures such as increasing the number of schools in rural areas or recruiting female teachers to get more girls to school are likely to further improve access. By contrast, today such countries as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have out-of-school populations representing below 3 per cent of the relevant age cohort. To reach this 'hard core' of children with education requires specific and well-targeted strategies that will make these groups of marginalized children come, and stay, in school.

Box 2.2 Dimension 2: Primary age children out of school in the national OOSCI studies

Key figures on Dimension 2 in the national OOSCI studies are compared with the most recent figures available from the UIS *(see Table 2.4)*. The notes below the table point to some of the factors that drive the discrepancies. Apart from the use of data from different years, another issue refers in some cases to the use of different sources for the population data.

Table 2.4 Comparison of the number and share of primary age children out of school in MENA national OOSCI studies and UIS data

	Dimension 2: Primary age children						
	Number not in school		Share not in school		Year of data		
	National OOSCI study	UIS	National OOSCI study	UIS	National OOSCI study	UIS	Note
Algeria	93,556	25,337	3%	1%	2013	2012	1
Djibouti	34,739	38,735	37%	42%	2013	2013	2
Egypt	319,126	258,378	3%	3%	2013	2011	3
Iraq	586,870	373,276	10%	8%	2012	2007	4
Jordan	...	19,852	1%	2%	2012	2011	5
Morocco	192,136	43,220	6%	1%	2011	2013	6
Sudan	1,965,068	2,810,907	36%	48%	2010	2011	7
Tunisia	15,033	510	2%	0%	2013	2012	8
Yemen	948,934	490,049	30%	13%	2012	2012	9

Note 1: The UIS and the national OOSCI study use different figures for the primary school age population. The national OOSCI study's primary school age population is based on 2.940 million children.

Note 2: The population data in the national OOSCI study is based on the 2012 UNPD revision.

Note 3: The UIS and the national OOSCI studies use different figures for the primary school age population. UIS bases the data on a primary school age population. The national OOSCI study's primary school age population is based on 9.451 million children.

Note 4: The UIS data are from 2007, while the national OOSCI study data are from 2012.

Note 5: The national OOSCI study uses data from the government Department of Statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education, while the UIS estimate uses UNPD projections. However, similar estimates to the UIS one were also derived using enrolment statistics from the MOE and recent population projections from DOS.

Note 6: The current draft of the Morocco national OOSCI study does not include the number of OOSC. This has been calculated by the author using population data from the 2012 UNPD revision.

Note 7: The source for the national OOSCI study is the 2010 EMIS and population projections from Central Bureau of Statistics. UIS data is not available.

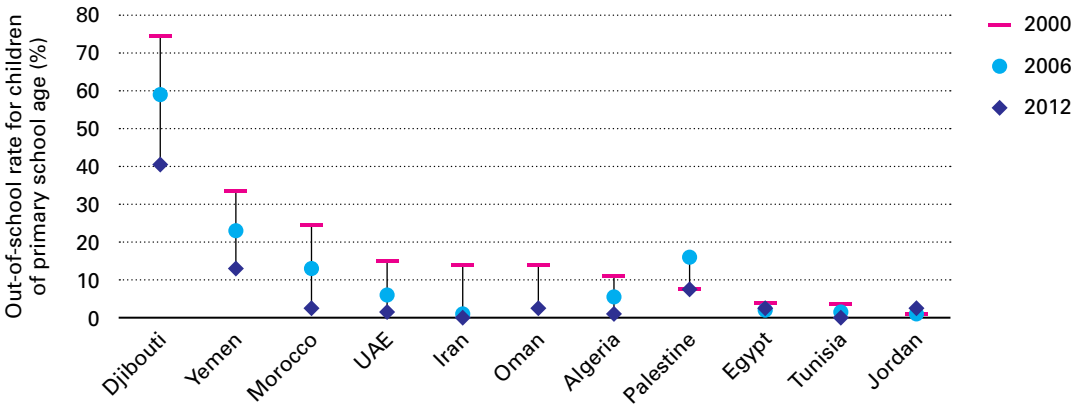
Note 8: Different years and different population data.

Note 9: National Social Protection Monitoring Survey in Yemen, Baseline 2012 (UNICEF and IPC, 2013). The national OOSCI study uses household survey data for its main estimates. The UIS estimates rely on projections from the UNPD population projections while the OOSCI study population estimates are informed by a 2012 relisting exercise or 'mini-census'.

The large majority of countries in the region have reduced the share of out-of-school children over the past decade *(see Figure 2.5)*. For Djibouti, Morocco and Yemen the progress has been rather exceptional. In 2000, one quarter of all primary school age children in Morocco did not go to school. In 2013, this figure was just 1 per cent.

For the MENA region as whole, progress was faster in the beginning of the decade than at the end *(see Figure 2.5)*. Nearly two thirds of the decline in the total number of out-of-school children occurred between 2000 and 2006. During this early period, the number of out-of-school children fell by close to 2.7 million. Between 2006 and 2012, the number declined by around 1.4 million. Several factors help to explain the slowdown in recent years. One group of countries that had high numbers of out-of-school children in 2000, including Algeria, Egypt and Iran, made particularly impressive progress during the first half of the decade. While this continued during the second half, the rate of progress was considerably slower. As the majority of countries in the MENA region get closer to reaching all children with primary schooling, it becomes more challenging to reach the most marginalized.

Figure 2.5 Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age by country, 2000, 2006 and 2012



Note: Data for Djibouti are from 2011 instead of 2012, Yemen from 2001 and 2005 instead of 2000 and 2006, UAE from 1999 instead of 2000, and Egypt and Jordan from 2011 instead of 2012.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

2.3.2 School exposure of out-of-school children of primary school age

Being out of school is not static, nor a homogenous, condition. Any group of children currently not in school hides different trajectories of school exposure. Some children have been to school in the past but have left, some have not yet been to school but are likely to start in the future and a last group are those who are unlikley to ever go to school. Data from household surveys from some countries in the MENA region can be used to estimate the following three sub-categories of out-of-school children:[5]

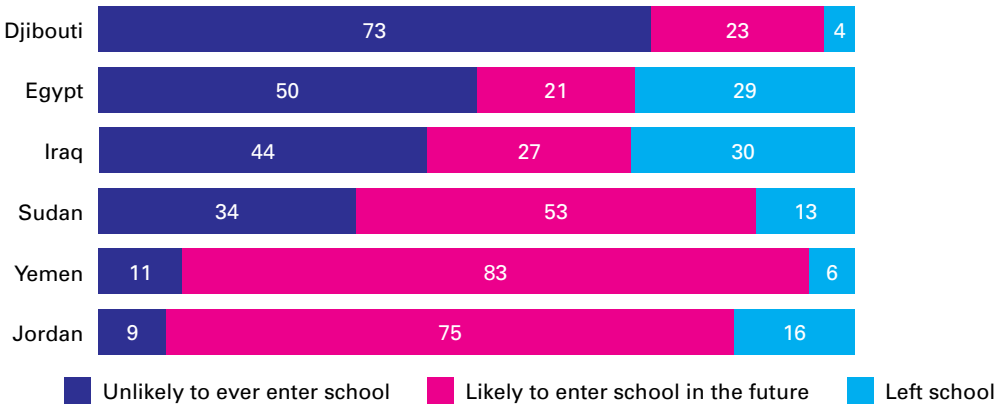
1. The share of the out-of-school children who have left school
2. The share of the out-of-school children who are likely to enter school in the future
3. The share of the out-of-school children who are unlikely to ever enter school

Some interesting findings emerge *(see Figure 2.6)*:

- In Djibouti, Egypt and Iraq, the largest category of out-of-school children is those children who are unlikely to ever enter primary school. In Djibouti, this concerns nearly three quarters of those who are not in school. This group of children is arguably the most challenging to reach, as they are not expected to have any exposure to schooling and therefore face the most serious education disadvantage.
- In Jordan, Sudan and Yemen, the largest problem is late entry into primary education. In these three countries, ensuring that children start school on time stands out as particularly important. In Yemen more than eight out of 10 out-of-school children are likely to enter primary school in the future.
- Dropping out remains an issue for out-of-school children in some countries, most notably in Egypt and Iraq. Both countries are characterized by relatively high access to primary schooling, but with high premature dropout rates. Education strategies in these two countries would gain from stronger policy measures to reduce the dropout rate. This is likely to include measures to improve the quality of education and increasing the supply by making education more accessible to marginalized groups.

[5] For a detailed description of the methodology used to estimate these three sub-categories of out-of-school children, see Annex 2 in the Conceptual and Methodological Framework of the Global Out-of-School Children Initiative.

Figure 2.6 Share of out-of-school children of primary age by school exposure, selected countries

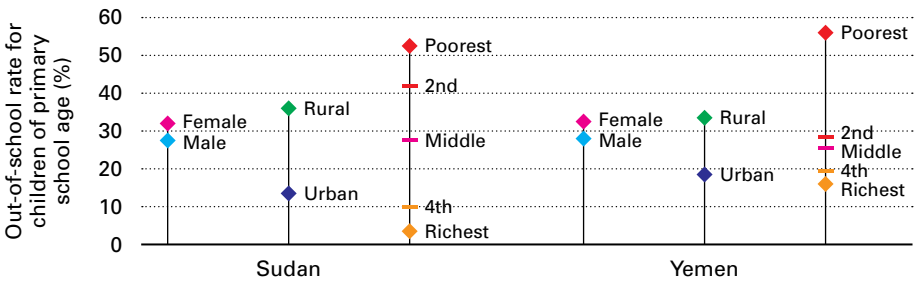


Source: UIS calculations based on Djibouti MICS 2006; Egypt DHS 2008; Iraq MICS 2011; Jordan DHS 2007; UNPD (2010); draft national OOSCI studies from Sudan and Yemen.

2.3.3 Disparities in exclusion from primary school

In many countries out-of-school children are disproportionately girls, children from rural rather than urban areas, and children from the poorer wealth quintiles. This can be seen vividly in the cases of Sudan and Yemen *(see Figure 2.7)*. Among the poorest quintile of households, over half of children at primary age are out of school in both countries. This contrasts sharply with the richest quintile, where less than 4 per cent are out of school in Sudan and 16 per cent in Yemen. The disparities between rural and urban areas are also large. Around one in three rural children, compared to fewer than one in five urban children are out of school in both countries. The gender gap is relatively small compared to these huge disparities across the wealth and rural-urban divide. However, gender gaps at the advantage of boys widen among older ages and in rural areas in Sudan and Yemen.

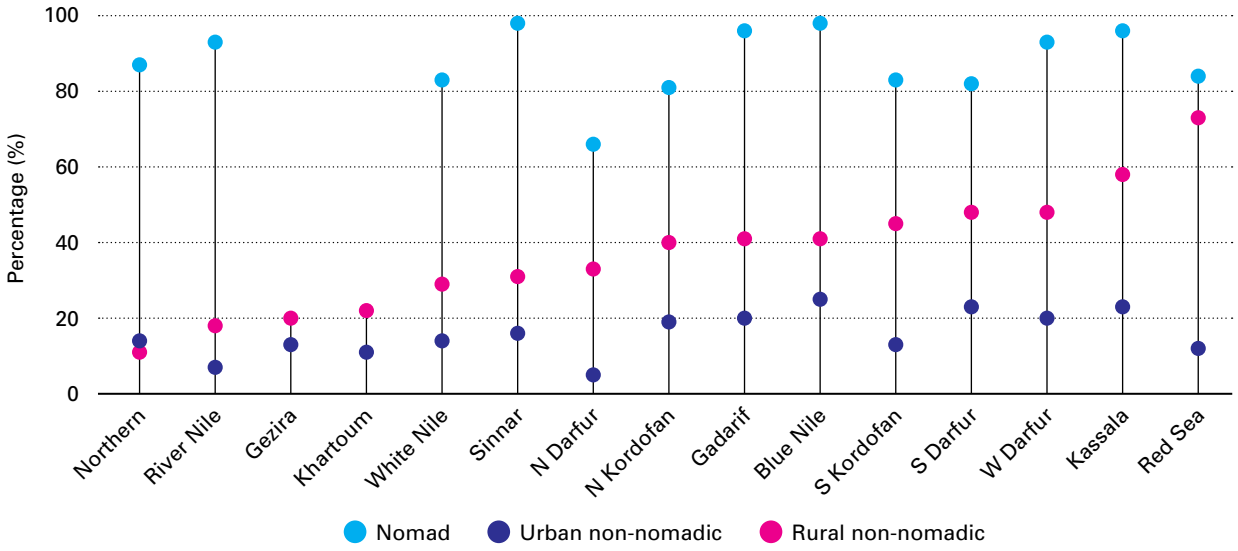
Figure 2.7 Disparities in the per cent of primary age out-of-school children, by sex, location and wealth quintile, in Sudan and Yemen



Source: Data presented in OOSCI national studies, based on Sudan Household Health Survey, 2010 and Yemen Social Protection Monitoring Survey, 2012.

The national OOSCI studies from the region also reveal a range of other factors that are highly correlated with exclusion. Notable examples of such factors include disability, child labour, low maternal education, belonging to the Muhamasheen social group in Yemen, living in a deprived region, and belonging to nomadic groups in Sudan and Djibouti. In Djibouti, the nomadic and 'particular' populations (a designation that includes refugees and homeless people) constitute nearly half of all the out-of-school children in the country (Djibouti OOSCI Country Report). In Sudan, the disparities between nomadic and non-nomadic groups are very pronounced, with nomadic children facing the highest rates of exclusion across all the states in the country. In four of the 15 states of Sudan, close to 100 per cent of nomadic children are out of school *(see Figure 2.8)*.

Figure 2.8 Share of primary age children in Sudan who are out of school by state and nomadic/rural/urban group



Source: Sudan OOSCI Country Report, using data from the Sudan 2008 Census.

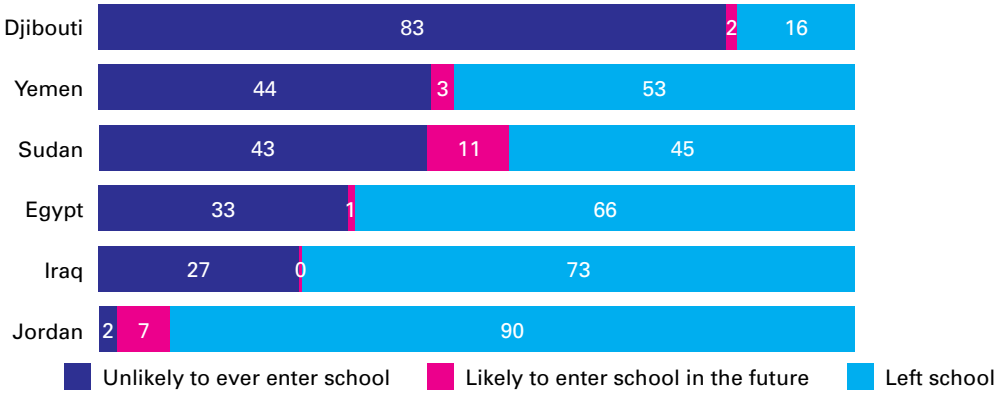
2.3.4 The scale of lower secondary age children's exclusion from school

Compared to the primary age group, the share of excluded children in the lower secondary age group tends to increase in most countries. Overall, approximately 2.9 million children of lower secondary age were not in school in the MENA region in 2012, representing 12 per cent of all children in that age group. Similar to the primary age group, the number of excluded children of lower secondary school age is driven by high out of school numbers in a few countries. Iraq, Sudan and Yemen together account for more than half of all out-of-school children of lower secondary age in the region. How the data from the national OOSCI studies compares with the data from UIS is also presented *(see Box 2.3)*.

The disparities in exclusion rates across countries are very large for children of lower secondary age. In Djibouti, as many as 57 per cent of lower secondary age children are excluded from school. The rates of exclusion are also stark in Iraq, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen, with exclusion rates ranging from 25 per cent to 37 per cent. By contrast, below 2 per cent of all lower secondary age children in Egypt, Kuwait and Qatar do not go to school.

The rise in school exclusion between the primary age and lower secondary age is sharpest in Morocco and Yemen, where it is estimated that 25 per cent and 37 per cent respectively of the lower secondary age groups are excluded from education, compared with 1 per cent and 13 per cent for the corresponding groups of primary age children in the two countries. The rise in exclusion between the two age groups is also sharp in Djibouti, Lebanon and Iraq, with the differences in exclusion rates between the first and the second age groups ranging from 15 to 21 percentage points. The exclusion patterns between the primary and lower secondary age groups in these countries point to major challenges in ensuring a smooth transition from the primary to the lower secondary level. For another group of countries, including Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the differences in exclusion rates between the two age groups are modest. These three countries are characterized by relatively low school exclusion rates overall.

Figure 2.9 Share of out-of-school children of lower secondary age by school exposure, selected countries



Source: UIS calculations based on Djibouti MICS 2006; Egypt DHS 2008; Iraq MICS 2011; Jordan DHS 2007; UNPD (2010 revision); draft national OOSCI studies Sudan and Yemen.

Box 2.3 Dimension 3: Out-of-school children of lower secondary age in the national OOSCI studies

The key figures on Dimension 3 in the national OOSCI studies are compared with the most recent figures available from the UIS *(see Table 2.5)*. The notes below the table point to some of the factors that drive the discrepancies.

Table 2.5 Comparison between the number and share of lower secondary age children out of school in MENA national OOSCI studies and UIS data

	Dimension 3: Lower-secondary age children						
	Number not in school		Share not in school		Year of data		
	National OOSCI study	UIS	National OOSCI study	UIS	National OOSCI study	UIS	Note
Algeria	220,743	...	9%	...	2013	...	1
Djibouti	33,652	44,135	48%	57%	2013	2008	2
Egypt	331,074	64,211	7%	1%	2013	2012	3
Iraq	629,900	575,274	27%	29%	2012	2007	4
Jordan	...	31,128	3%	6%	2012	2011	5
Morocco	462,798	...	25%	...	2011	...	6
Sudan	641,587	610,279	40%	35%	2010	2011	7
Tunisia	49,380	...	10%	...	2013	...	8
Yemen	402,284	666,863	22%	37%	2012	2012	9

Note 1: Calculations for the national OOSCI study based on national administrative data, with adjustments of population data using the 2012 UNPD revision and national data.

Note 2: Different years of data in the national OOSCI study and the UIS. The population data in the national OOSCI study is based on the 2012 UNPD revision.

Note 3: Calculations for the national OOSCI study based on national administrative data, with adjustments of population data using the 2012 UNPD revision and national data.

Note 4: The UIS data are from 2007, while the national OOSCI study data are from 2012.

Note 5: The national OOSCI study uses data from the government Department of Statistics compiled by the Ministry of Education, while the UIS estimate uses UNPD projections. However, similar estimates to the UIS one were also derived using enrolment statistics from the MOE and recent population projections from DOS.

Note 6: The current draft of the Morocco national OOSCI study does not include the number of OOSC. This has been calculated by the author using population data from the 2012 UNPD revision.

Note 7: The source is EMIS 2010 and population projections from Central Bureau of Statistics. UIS data is not available.

Note 8: Calculations for the national OOSCI study based on national administrative data, with adjustments of population data using the 2012 UNPD revision and national data.

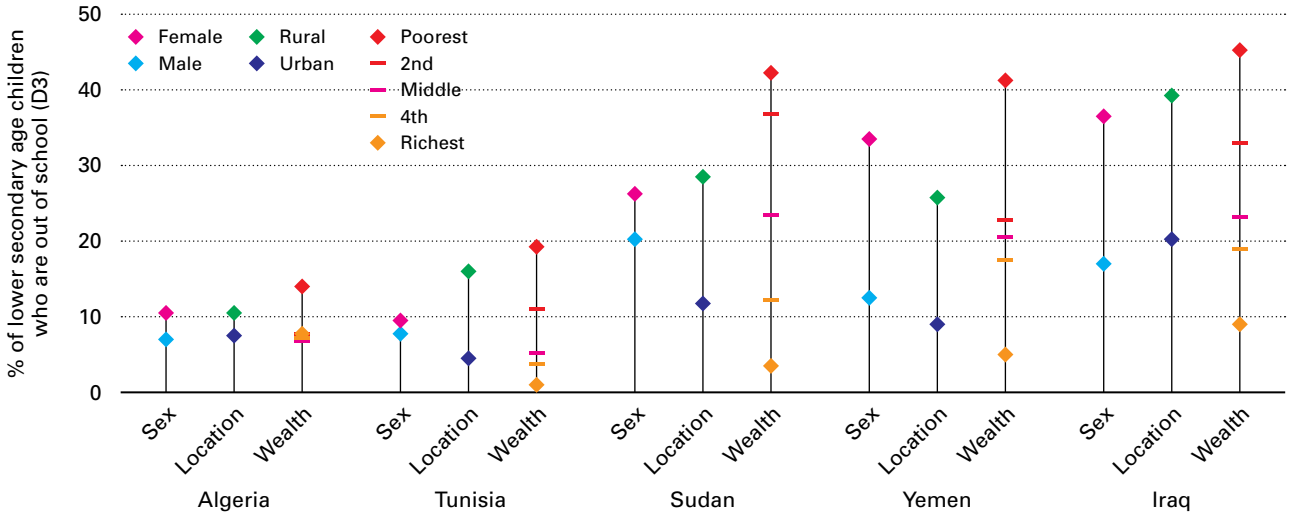
Note 9: National Social Protection Monitoring Survey in Yemen, Baseline 2012 (UNICEF and IPC, 2013). The national OOSCI study uses household survey data for its main estimates. The UIS estimates rely on projections from the UNPD population projections while the OOSCI study population estimates are informed by a 2012 relisting exercise or 'mini-census'.

The need for strong attention to school retention for lower secondary age children is underlined by the experience in several MENA countries. The findings indicate that the large majority of out-of-school children of lower secondary age in Jordan, Iraq and Egypt have attended, but left school *(see Figure 2.9)*. In Jordan, this is the case for nine out of 10 of lower secondary age out-of-school children. The figure also detects a pattern of school exposure where children of lower secondary age are either unlikely to ever enter school or have left school. The group of children who are likely to enter school in the future is small in all countries. Compared to primary age children, it is much harder for the out-of-school children in this older age group to enter school late. All countries except Jordan have a large group of children who are unlikely to ever enter school, ranging from about one in three in Egypt and Iraq, and up to more than eight in 10 in Djibouti.

The shares of the lower secondary age population who are out of school by wealth, gender and location in Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Yemen and Iraq have been charted *(see Figure 2.10)*. In these five countries, major inequalities emerge along one or several disparity dimensions:

- Wealth disparity is significant in all five countries. While the wealth disparity in Algeria is less pronounced than in the other four countries, an Algerian child from the poorest 20 per cent of households is still twice as likely to be out of school as a child from the richest 20 per cent. In the other four countries, the disparity between children from the poorest and richest households is huge. In Tunisia, 19 per cent of lower secondary age children from the poorest households are out-of-school compared to only 1 per cent from the richest households. In Sudan, 42 per cent of children from the poorest group of households are out of school, compared to only 3 per cent for the richest.
- Disparities between rural and urban areas figure prominently in the profiles of Tunisia, Sudan, Yemen and Iraq. While the absolute level of exclusion for rural children in Tunisia is considerably lower than in Sudan, Yemen and Iraq, the disparity between rural and urban areas in Tunisia are stark. A Tunisian lower secondary age child living in a rural area is four times more likely to be out of school than a child in an urban area. In Sudan and Yemen, that factor is reduced to two. The rural-urban divide interacts closely with poverty and gender disparities, together reinforcing patterns of education exclusion.

Figure 2.10 Share of lower secondary age children who are out of school, by wealth, gender and location, selected countries

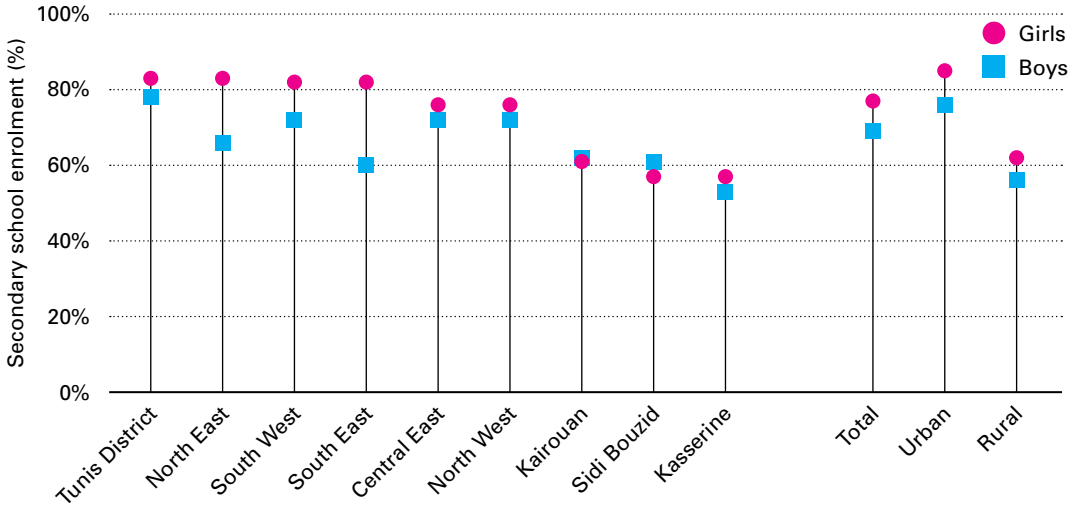


Source: Data presented in national OOSCI studies, Algeria MICS4, Tunisia MICS4, Iraq MICS4, Sudan Household Health Survey, 2010 and Yemen Social Protection Monitoring Survey, 2012.

- Gender disparity is particularly strong in the profiles of Yemen and Iraq. In both countries, a high proportion of girls of lower secondary age are out of school (34 per cent in Yemen and 36 per cent in Iraq). In Yemen, a girl is three times as likely to be excluded from education at lower secondary age compared to boys. In Iraq, because a relatively high proportion of boys are also out of school (17 per cent), the disparity between boys and girls is less strong. Still, girls in Iraq are twice as likely to be out of school.

In most countries there are additional disparities between regions, usually with high enrolments in the capital district and other urbanized areas, while more remote provinces or governorates fall behind. In Tunisia, close to 80 per cent of children are enrolled in secondary school in Tunis District, while in interior regions such as Kasserine and Kairouan, the enrolment rates are only 55 and 61 per cent, respectively *(see Figure 2.11).*

Figure 2.11 Secondary school enrolment, by gender and governorate, Tunisia



Note: Secondary education in this figure includes lower and upper secondary education.

Source: Adapted from Tunisia OOSCI study.

2.4 Dimensions 4 and 5: Children at risk of dropping out

Education exclusion is a moving target. Addressing the problem of out-of-school children requires not only the identification of those children who are not in school today, but also those who currently are in school but are at risk of leaving school. Dimensions 4 and 5 of the OOSCI's Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model are concerned with these groups of children. Dimension 4 represents children at risk of leaving school at the primary school level and Dimension 5 at the secondary school level. This section looks at dropout rates before the last grade of the primary and secondary education levels throughout the MENA region. It also explores three specific factors that tend to increase the risk of dropout: limited participation in pre-primary education, being overage and high rates of repetition.

2.4.1 The scale of the dropout problem in MENA

Many of countries in the MENA region face major problems with children leaving primary or lower secondary education before the end of the last grades. The problem is particularly acute at the lower secondary level. In half of the countries in MENA, at least one in 10 children leaves school before the last grade of the lower secondary level *(see Table 2.6).*

Table 2.6 Dimensions 4 and 5: Dropout rates before the last grade of primary and lower secondary in 2011, by country

	Dropout rate before last grade of primary (%)	Dropout rate before last grade of lower secondary (%)
	2011	2011
Algeria	7	25
Bahrain	2	2
Djibouti	24	14
Egypt	4	...
Iran	4	4
Jordan	2	9
Kuwait	6	9
Lebanon	7	17
Morocco	8	12
Oman	6	2
Palestine	1	13
Qatar	...	1
Saudi Arabia	1	0
Sudan	24	6
Syria	7	33
Tunisia	5	31
UAE	1	10

Note: The dropout rate before the last grade is defined as 100 per cent minus the survival rate to the last grade of the given level of education. Data for Djibouti for the primary level are from 2012, Egypt from 2009, Jordan from 2010 and Morocco from 2012. For the lower secondary level, data for Djibouti are from 2012, Jordan from 2010, Morocco from 2012, Qatar from 2010, Sudan from 2009 and Tunisia from 2009.

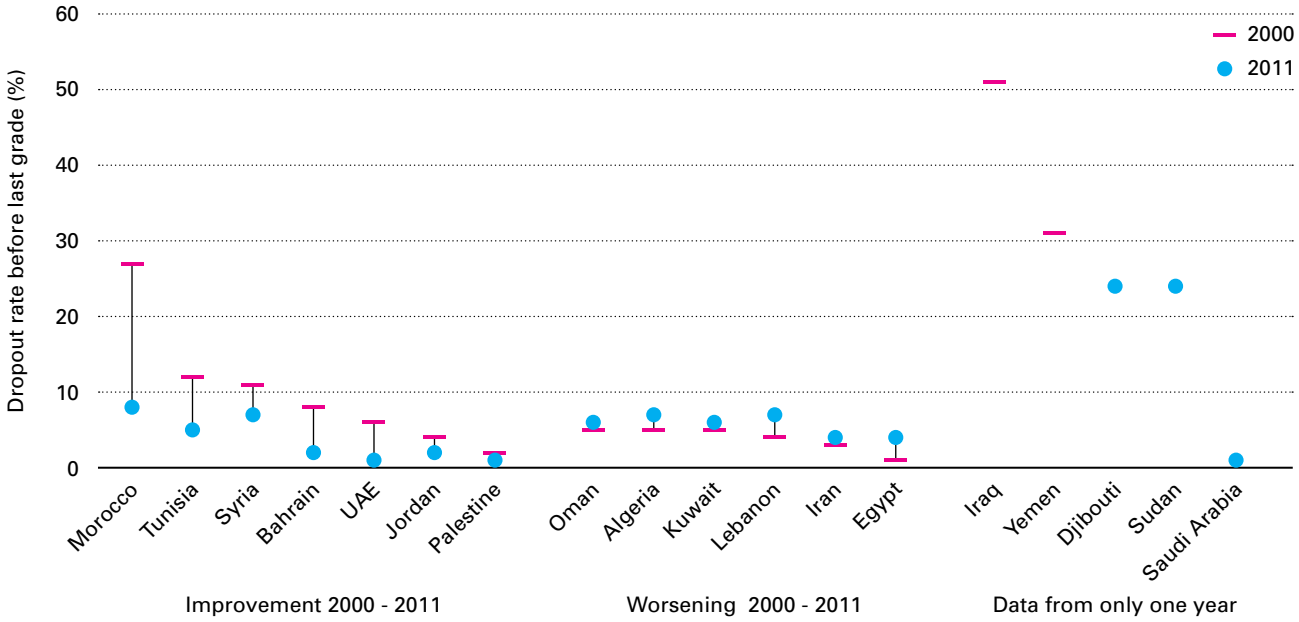
Source: UIS, 2014a.

An overview of the scope of the problem at the primary level and how it has evolved over time has been provided *(see Figure 2.12)*. At the primary level, early school leaving is a major concern in the region's poorest countries. Nearly one quarter of those children who entered Grade 1 in Djibouti and Sudan leave school before reaching the final grade of the primary cycle. But the figure also shows that early school leaving at the primary level is not only restricted to the poorest countries in the region. In Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Syria, between 7 and 8 per cent of children at the primary level leave school before the last grade.

In more than half of the countries with sufficient data, improvements have been made in reducing dropout rates at the primary level between 2000 and 2011, with Morocco making the greatest progress.

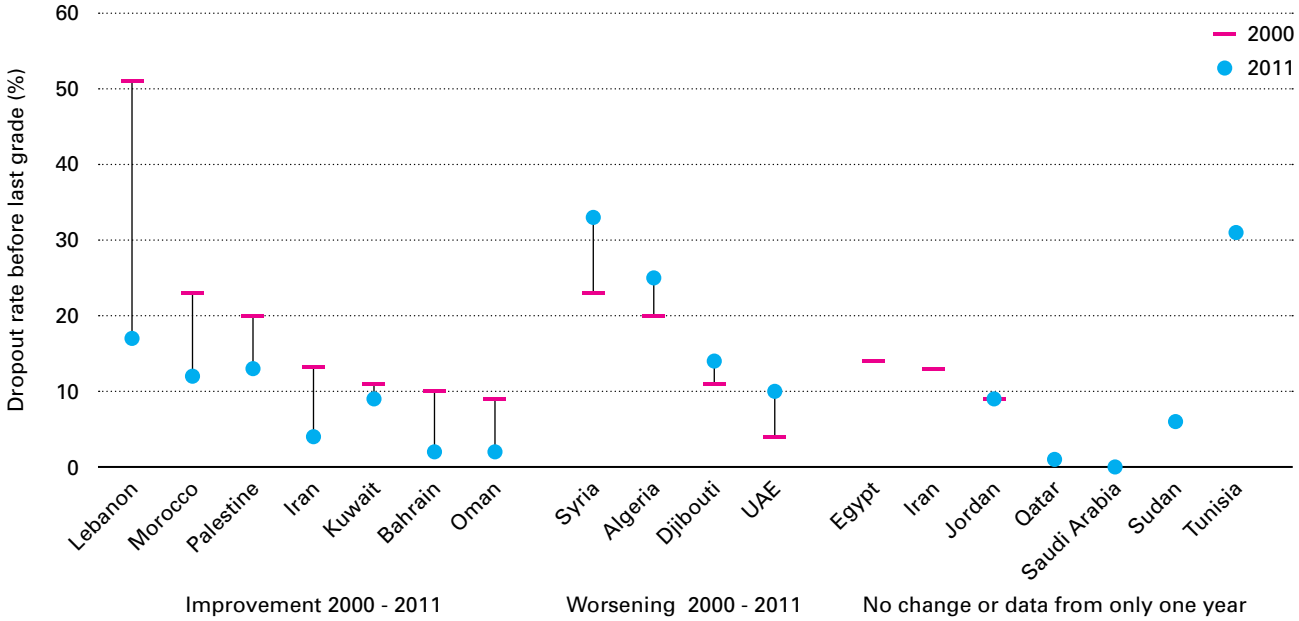
Early school leaving is a widespread and more serious problem at the lower secondary level than at the primary level *(see Figure 2.13)*. Half of the countries with data have dropout rates before the last grade of the lower secondary level of 10 per cent or more. In Algeria, Tunisia and Syria, the problem is even more serious, with dropout rates ranging from 25 per cent to 33 per cent. A number of countries have managed to diminish the problem since 2000, with a particularly strong reduction in Lebanon. At the same time, the situation has deteriorated in several countries, including Algeria, Syria and UAE.

Figure 2.12 Dropout rate before the last grade of primary education by country, 2000 and 2011



Source: UIS, 2014a.

Figure 2.13 Dropout rate before the last grade of lower secondary education by country, 2000 and 2011



Source: UIS, 2014a.

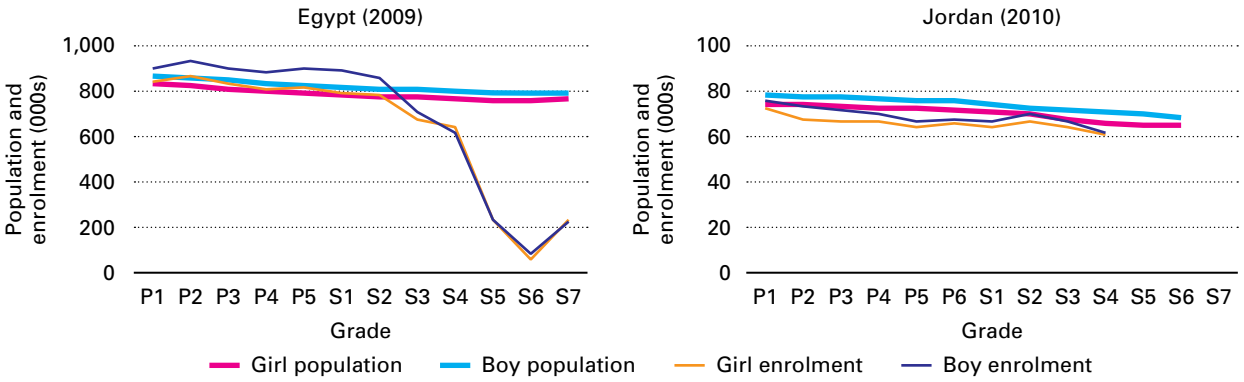
2.4.2 Structural characteristics of enrolment flows and dropout

Understanding what leads to children being out of school across the MENA region requires an appreciation of how children flow through the different education systems. The pattern of enrolment by grade shows the levels where leaving school is most likely to occur in each of nine recent OOSCI Country Reports in the region. Countries have been grouped by enrolment levels and patterns of dropout *(see Figures 2.14 through 2.16)*. The number of children by grade can be seen clearly using data available from the UIS. This can be compared with the number of children in each age group associated with each grade (i.e. six-year-olds for Grade 1; seven-year-olds for Grade 2 etc.).

If the age-grade line has a negative slope it means that the number of school age children is continuing to increase year on year. This puts pressure on school systems and can result in more children leaving school if school systems don't expand fast enough to absorb all the children in the age group. Where the age-grade line has a positive slope this indicates that a country has gone through demographic transition and that the number of six-year-olds entering school each year is falling. This makes it easier to keep pace with demand for school places and it should make it possible to invest more resources per child at the same level of cost to the national budget. This can create opportunities to improve quality.

The first group of countries include Egypt and Jordan *(see Figure 2.14)*. In both of these countries population growth rates are still an issue and the number of children in the six-year-old age group is larger than the 15-year-old group. In Egypt up to the second grade of the lower secondary level, there are more boys enrolled than there are in the age group for each grade. This suggests that there is considerable repetition among Egyptian boys at the primary level and the first year of the lower secondary level. Beyond the second grade of lower secondary education enrolments plummet in Egypt, with many pushed out from the education system. The comparison of enrolment and population patterns in Jordan shows that the country still struggles to enrol a core group of 'hard to reach' girls and boys. The population growth in Jordan does not make this task easier.

Figure 2.14 Group 1: Enrolment and population in Egypt and Jordan

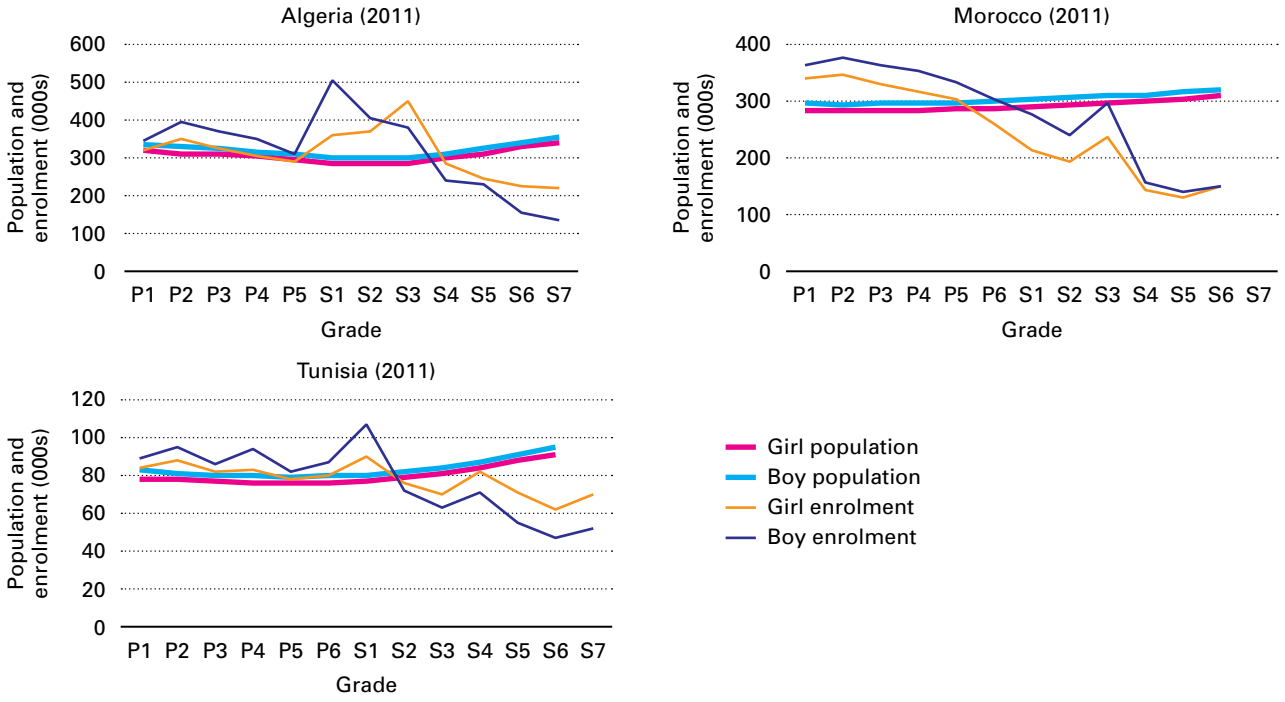


Source: Adapted from (Lewin and Cameron, forthcoming).

The second group includes Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia *(see Figure 2.15)*. These three countries have a decreasing school age population and are therefore experiencing demographic transition. In all three countries there is significant repetition during the whole primary cycle and this seems to be more of a problem for boys than for girls. Above this level there is likely to be some children leaving school. The three countries struggle with bottlenecks in the grades where they have to pass examinations to transfer to the next level. Enrolments peak in the grades where there are high-stake examinations. In Morocco, below Grade 3 many more children are enrolled than there are in the age group, signifying that access to school is likely to be near universal. Above Grade 4 it is clear there is substantial dropout as enrolments decline linearly until the high-stakes selection point at the end of the lower secondary level after which there is a considerable number of children leaving school.

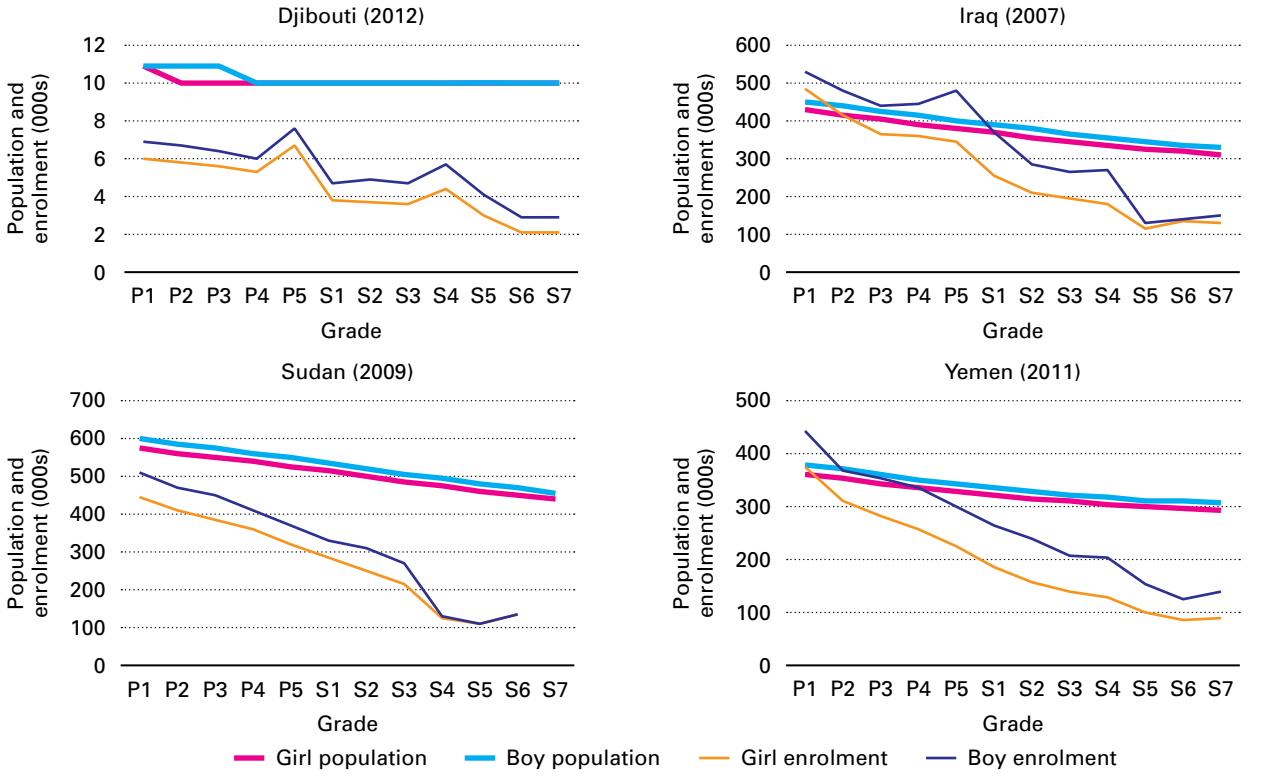
The third group includes Djibouti, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen *(see Figure 2.16)*. All of these countries have substantially fewer children in the education system than there are in the relevant age groups. Unlike the other countries where out-of-school children will be predominantly those who leave school from the higher grades, in these countries there will be many children who experience less than a full cycle of primary school. The largest differences in the number enrolled and the number in the age group can be found in Djibouti and Sudan. In both countries, it is clear that many children do not enter.

Figure 2.15 Group 2: Enrolment and population in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia



Source: Adapted from (Lewin and Cameron, forthcoming).

Figure 2.16 Group 3: Enrolment and population in Djibouti, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen



Source: Adapted from (Lewin and Cameron, forthcoming).

Grade 1, and many more do not complete primary school, leaving school and becoming out-of-school children. In both these countries very few children reach the lower secondary school level and even fewer complete. In Iraq about the same number of children are enrolled in Grade 1 as there are in the age group, but above Grade 5 the opposite is true and there is increasing dropout to the extent that by Grade 10 enrolments are only about one quarter of those in Grade 1. In Yemen, although it appears that there are about as many enrolled in Grade 1 as there are six-year-olds,

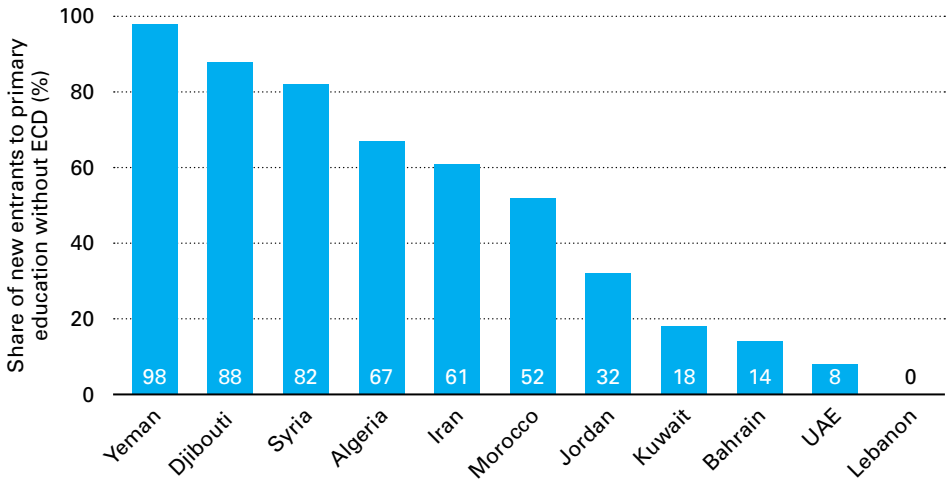
in every subsequent grade there is clearly substantial dropout such that by Grade 9 not much more than one third the number who enter are enrolled. Most children, therefore, have left school and become out-of-school children before they reach the age of 15 years.

2.4.3 Risk factors for early school leaving

Some common risk factors exist for predicting education exclusion. Today, it is well known that poor participation in pre-primary education, late entry to compulsory education and high rates of repetition are intimately linked to higher risks of early school leaving (Berlinski et al., 2008; Lewin, 2011). For policy makers with an interest in reducing dropout rates across the MENA region, addressing these risk factors is essential.

Limited participation in pre-primary education: Evidence from a steadily growing number of studies shows that children who lack exposure to pre-primary education or ECD programmes run a higher risk of leaving school early. Participation in pre-primary education has a positive effect on school retention and performance and these effects are particularly strong for children from poor families (Berlinski et al., 2009; UNESCO, 2012). The share of new entrants to primary education without any exposure to ECD is displayed below *(see Figure 2.17)*. The data confirm the very high levels of exclusion from education activities for young children in the MENA region discussed in the earlier section on Dimension 1.

Figure 2.17 Share of new entrants to primary education without exposure to ECD in 2012, by country



Note: Data from Algeria from 2009, Jordan from 2011, Kuwait 2007 and Yemen 2010.

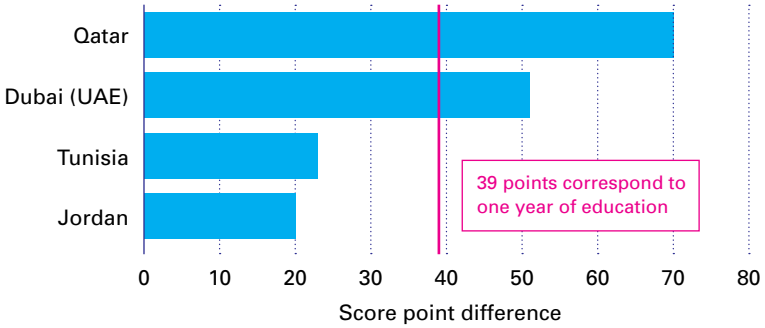
Source: UIS, 2014a.

Pre-school attendance also reduces the risk of exclusion by improving children's performance in school. Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that in nearly 90 per cent of the 65 countries participating in the 2009 PISA survey, students who had participated in pre-primary education performed significantly better in school than non-participants. These effects also hold after controlling for children's socio-economic background (OECD, 2010).

Four countries in the MENA region participated in the 2009 PISA survey. The results show large differences in performance between 15-year-old students in Dubai, Jordan, Qatar and Tunisia who had attended pre-primary school for more than one year and those who had not *(see Figure 2.18)*. The difference in Qatar is striking. After accounting for socio-economic background, the positive effect of attending pre-primary school corresponds to nearly two years of schooling.[6] In Tunisia and Jordan, the difference corresponds to about half a year.

[6] Thirty-nine (39) score point difference corresponds to one year of schooling.

Figure 2.18 Score point difference in school performance between students who had attended pre-primary school and those who had not, after controlling for socio-economic background, selected countries

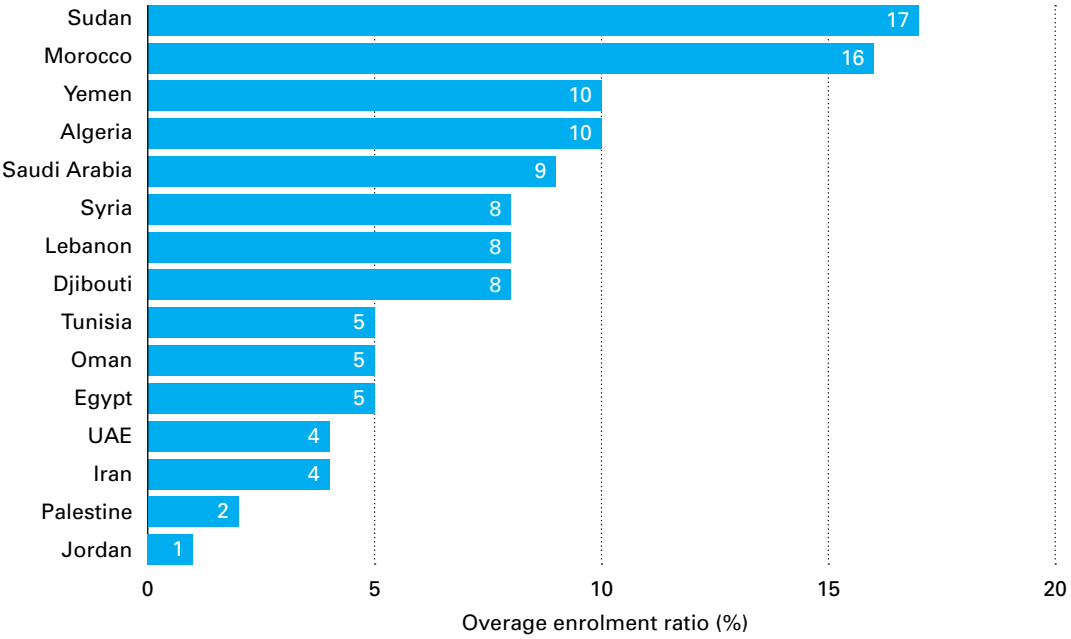


Source: OECD (2010).

Late entry to compulsory education: One common characteristic of children who leave school is that they are older than the official age for a particular grade. In Grade 1, this is in general a result of late entry. Later throughout the school cycle, overage can also be a result of repetition of one or several grades.

Being overage is relatively common in the MENA region. The share of children enrolled in primary education who are two or more years older than the official school age for the grades at the primary level has been highlighted *(see Figure 2.19)*. The scope of the overage problem is greatest in Morocco and Sudan, where 16 per cent and 17 per cent respectively of children enrolled in primary education are at least two years older than the official school age for the grade. The proportions of overage children are also substantial in Algeria and Yemen, where 10 per cent are two years or older than the age for the primary grade.

Figure 2.19 Overage enrolment ratio in primary education in 2012, by country

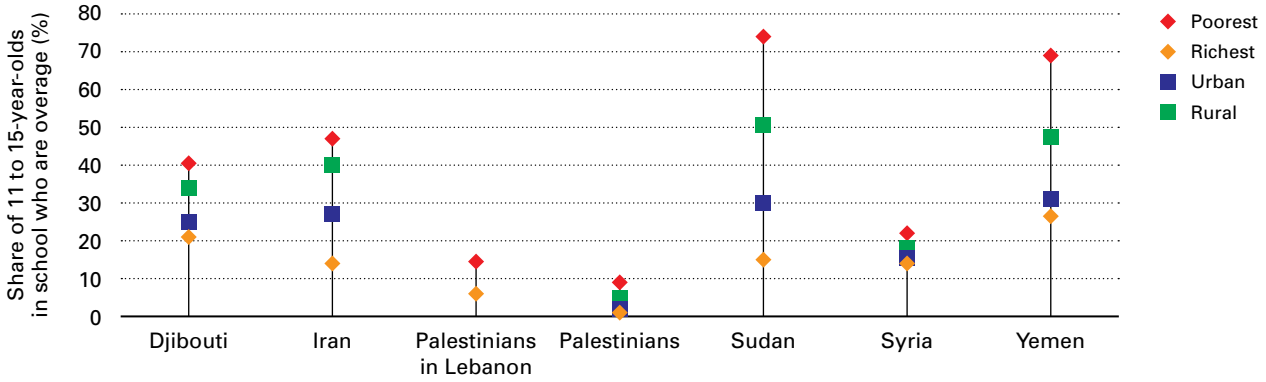


Note: The indicator covers the share of the primary school age population that is over the official primary school age (ISCED 1). It does not capture primary age children who are overage for their grade. Data for Djibouti, Jordan and Sudan are from 2011.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

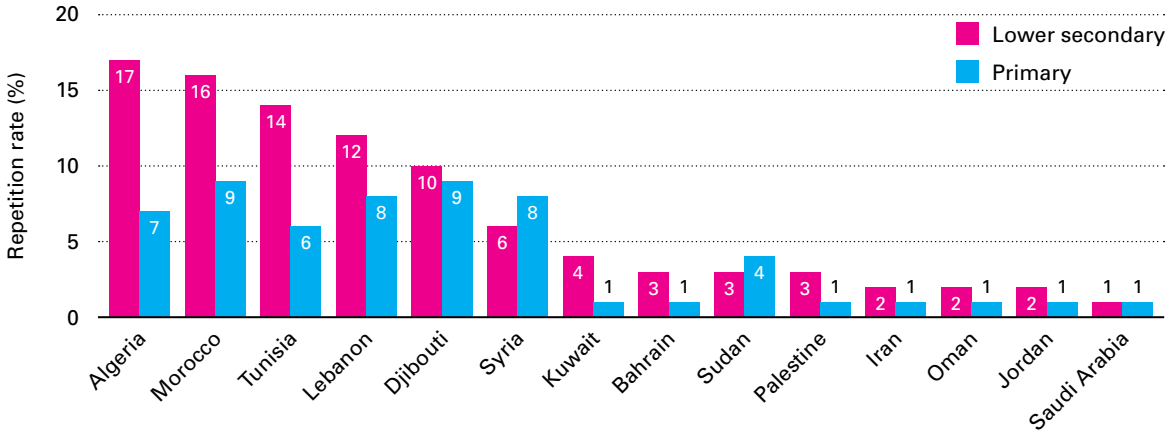
For a more detailed analysis of the overage problem, analysis of household survey data is useful. Survey data from a number of countries in the region detect how overage children are disproportionately from the poorest households and from rural areas *(see Figure 2.20)*. These disparities are particularly marked in Djibouti, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen. In Sudan, almost 80 per cent of enrolled children from the poorest quintile are overage, compared to fewer than 20 per cent from the richest quintile. Thus, children from poorer households are not only much less likely to reach lower secondary school in the first place, but also more likely to leave school as a result of being overage.

Figure 2.20 Share of 11 to 15-year-olds attending school who are at least one year older than the official school age for the grade, by wealth and location, selected countries



Source: MICS. Djibouti 2006; Iraq 2011; Palestinians in Lebanon 2011; Palestine 2010; Sudan 2010; Syria 2006; Yemen 2006.

Figure 2.21 Repetition rate by school level in 2011, by country



Note: Data for primary and lower secondary for Djibouti and Morocco are from 2012, for Jordan from 2010 and Sudan and Tunisia from 2009.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

Repetition: Children who have repeated grades are far more likely to leave school than children who have not repeated grades (Lewin, 2011). In the MENA region, grade repetition is a persistent problem. At the primary level, close to half of the countries in the region with data have repetition rates at 7 per cent or above *(see Figure 2.21)*. The repetition rates are highest in Djibouti and Morocco, where an average of 9 per cent of pupils were repeaters at the primary level in 2012. The pattern at the lower secondary level differs from that of the primary level in several ways:

- In all but two countries,[7] the repetition rates at the lower secondary levels are higher than at the primary level. Hence in most MENA countries, repetition is a much bigger problem at the lower secondary than at the primary level.

[7] Syria and Sudan.

- Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon face serious problems with repetition. The average proportion of children repeating grades at the lower secondary level ranged from 17 per cent in Algeria to 12 per cent in Lebanon in 2011.
- The repetition rates are rarely the same across different grades. In Algeria, Lebanon and Tunisia, repetition is much more frequent in the first grade of the lower secondary level than in subsequent grades.

2.5 Education exclusion by gender in MENA

This section examines the gender profile of children excluded from education in the MENA region. The concern with gender disparities in education has received significant attention over the past decade, not only because it is one of the most fundamental violations of human rights, but also because of the major benefits that come with investing in girls' education. Today, a large body of research points to a number of economic and social benefits of educating women, including benefits related to child nutrition and health, fertility, children's school participation and economic growth (Caldwell, 1986; Cochrane, 1979; Dollar and Gatti, 1999; Gakidou et al., 2010; Schultz, 2002).

Compared to other regions, MENA is lagging behind in terms of eliminating gender disparities *(see Table 2.7)*. Despite important progress over the past decade, in particular at the primary level, girls continue to be disadvantaged at the pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels. While the poorest countries in MENA face the greatest challenges in achieving gender parity, the issue is not only restricted to the poorest countries in the region.

Gender disparities among out-of-school children arise from different points in the schooling trajectory. A better understanding of the profile of gender disparities in relation to out-of-school girls' and boys' exposure to education is essential for the development of targeted policy responses.

Table 2.7 Overview of Gender Parity Index at pre-primary, primary and secondary education by region

	Pre-primary education	Primary education	Secondary education
	GPI of gross enrolment ratio	GPI of net enrolment ratio	GPI of net enrolment ratio
	2008-2011	2008-2011	2008-2011
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.00	0.95	0.91
Middle East and North Africa	0.92	0.95	0.93
South Asia	1.02	0.98	0.85
East Asia and the Pacific	1.00	1.00	1.06
Latin America & the Caribbean	1.00	0.99	1.07
CEE/CIS	0.98	1.00	0.99

Note: The GPI for secondary education for Sub-Saharan Africa only covers Eastern and Southern Africa.

Source: UNICEF (2013).

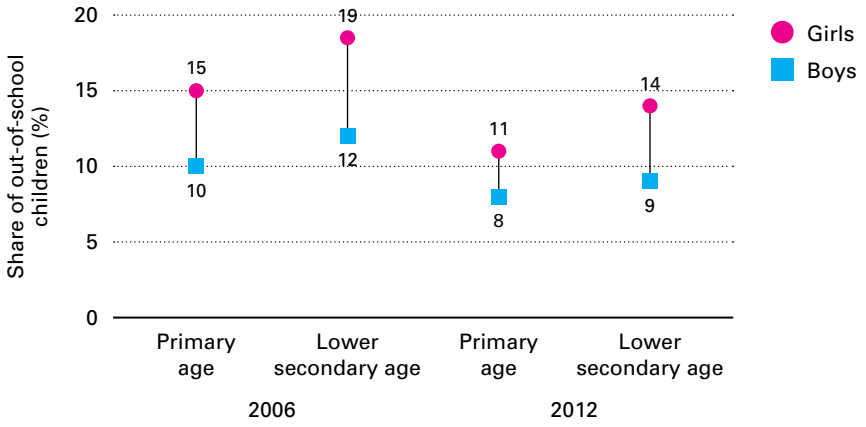
2.5.1 Overview of gender disparities in Dimensions 1, 2 and 3

More girls than boys are out of school in the MENA region and this is the case for primary age children, as well as lower secondary age children *(see Figure 2.22)*. The gender gap is wider for the older age group. In 2012, 14 per cent of all lower secondary age girls in MENA were not in school, compared to 9 per cent of boys. The data not only highlight that getting children of lower secondary age into school is still a major problem in the region, but also that girls dominate the group of out-of-school children.

However, some progress has been made since the mid-2000s. With higher rates of school participation overall, the education disadvantage for girls tend to decline.

By contrast, no gender disparities exist for children of pre-primary school age. While the overall exclusion rate is high for this age group, at 58 per cent in 2012, just as many girls as boys are excluded.

Figure 2.22 Share of out-of-school children for the MENA region by gender and school level in 2012

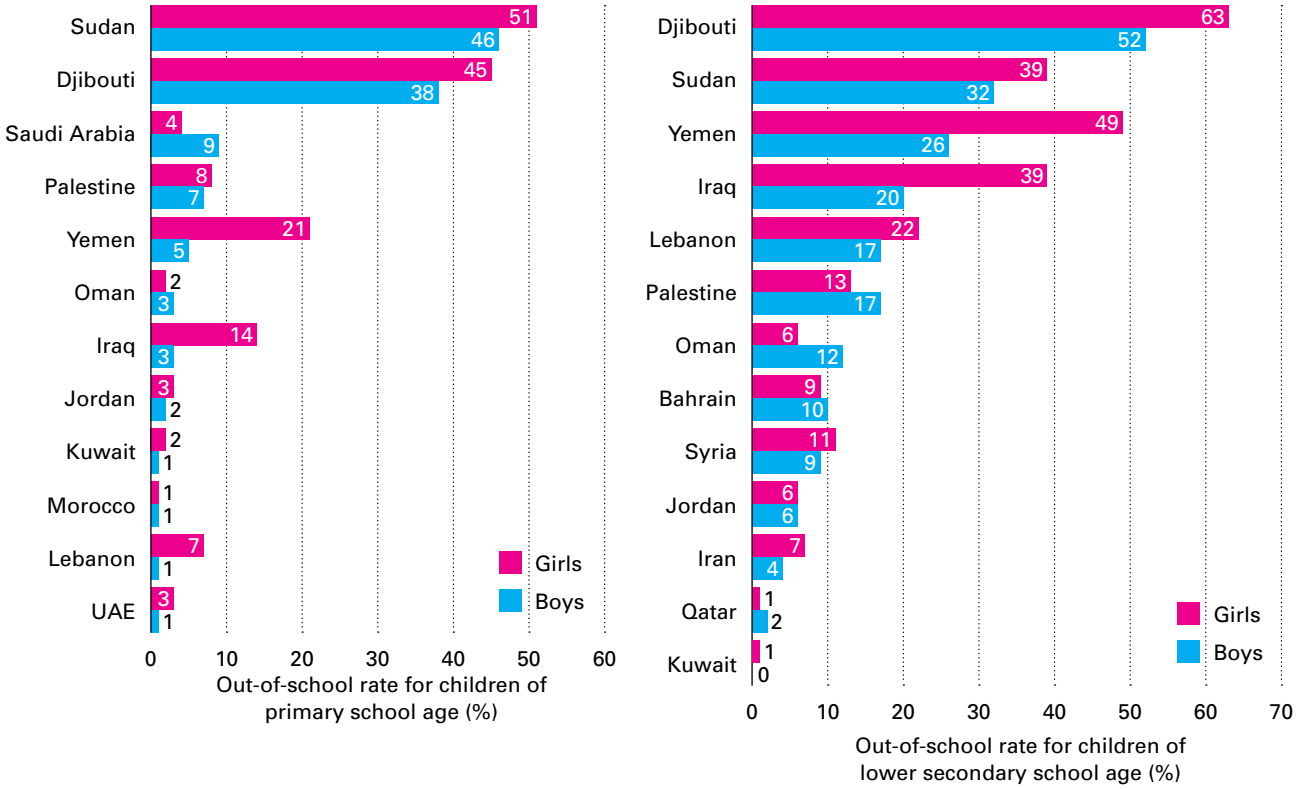


Source: UIS, 2014c.

There are immense differences across MENA in terms of disparities by gender, as shown by the out-of-school rates for girls and boys from countries for which data are available *(see Figure 2.23)*. A complicating factor is that a high number of countries in the region do not report gender-disaggregated data to the UIS. The figures below lack data from eight of the 20 countries in the region for the primary-age groups and seven out of 20 countries for the lower secondary age group. Despite these constraints, some interesting patterns can still be detected:

- For children of pre-primary school age, the gender disparities tend to be small in most countries. The notable exception is Morocco, where there is a major gender gap at the pre-primary level, with young girls being severely disadvantaged. In 2013, 34 per cent of girls in this age group did not go to pre-primary (or primary) school. The corresponding figure for boys was significantly lower, at 22 per cent.
- For primary-age children, the disadvantage of girls is mainly focused in the group of the poorest countries, including Djibouti, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen. The gender gap is particularly severe in Yemen, where 21 per cent of all girls are out of school, compared to 5 per cent of the boys. At the same time, Yemen has made some great strides over the past decade. In 1999, the gender gap was nearly double the size of today, when as many as 58 per cent of all girls were out of school, compared to 28 per cent of boys.
- Gender disparities tend to widen as children get older. This is evident in comparing the two figures below. Sharp rises in gender gaps between the primary age and lower secondary age groups of out-of-school children are noted in Iraq and Yemen. However, the case of Oman stands out in the analysis. While the gender gap is relatively small for the country's primary school age group, the situation is strikingly different for the group of lower secondary age children. For this group of boys in Oman, 12 per cent are out of school. For girls in the same age group, the corresponding figure is 6 per cent.
- Girls are not always disadvantaged. In addition to Oman, the out-of-school children rate for lower secondary age boys is also higher than that of girls in Bahrain, Palestine and Qatar. In Palestine, 17 per cent of boys in the older age group are out-of-school, compared to 13 per cent of girls.

Figure 2.23 Out-of-school rates for girls and boys of primary and lower secondary school age, by country in 2012



Note: For children of primary and lower secondary school age, data for Iraq and Kuwait are from 2007 and Jordan and Sudan from 2011. For children of primary school age, data for Djibouti and Morocco are from 2013 and for children of lower secondary school age data for Djibouti are from 2008 and for Iran and Qatar from 2011.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

2.5.2 School exposure by gender

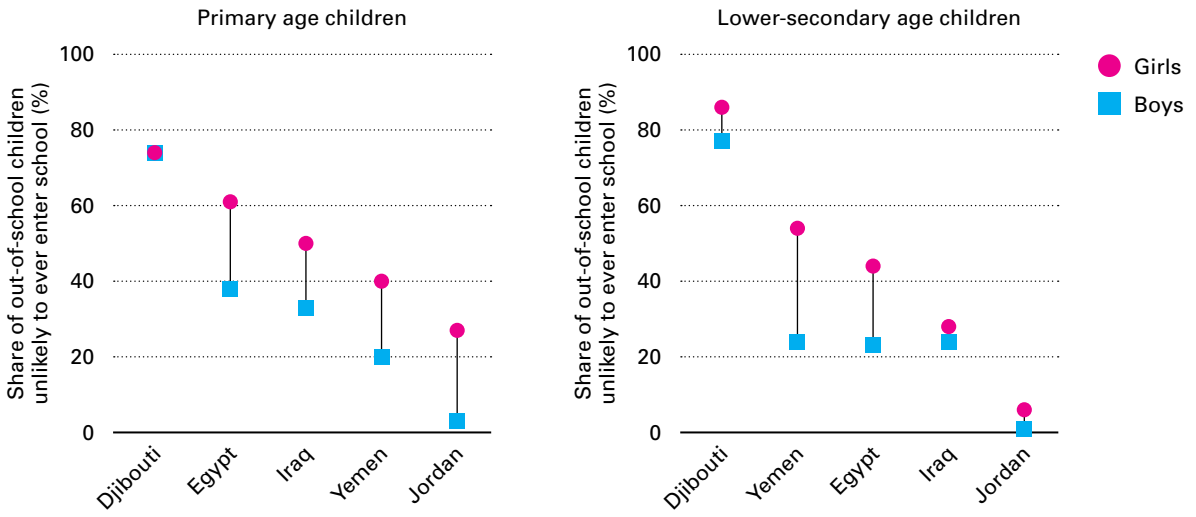
Data from a limited number of household surveys in the region show that girls face a double obstacle to schooling. Not only are girls more likely to be out of school, but those girls who are out of school are far less likely than boys to ever enter the door of a school *(see Figure 2.24)*.

Take the example of Iraq. Data point to girls being less likely to be in primary school in the first place.[8] In addition, almost 50 per cent of the out-of-school girls of primary school age in Iraq are unlikely to ever enter school. The corresponding figure for out-of-school boys is significantly lower, at 33 per cent. Egypt, Yemen and Jordan show similar patterns of such 'double-edged' disadvantage for primary age girls.

Although less sharp, the tendency is the same for the older age group in Iraq. Nearly 28 per cent of lower-secondary age girls who are not enrolled in school are unlikely to ever enter school, compared to 24 per cent for boys. This means that the biggest barrier to girls' participation is to enter school at all, rather than that girls start school late or that they do start but then leave school. For lower-secondary age children, girls' disadvantages are particularly pronounced in Yemen and Egypt. In Yemen, the gap between boys and girls is very large. While 24 per cent of out-of-school boys are unlikely to ever enter school, that figure rises to 54 per cent for Yemeni girls.

[8] Data from the UIS show that 14 per cent of girls of primary school age were out of school in 2007 and 3 per cent of boys in the same age group.

Figure 2.24 Share of out-of-school children unlikely to ever enter school by gender, selected countries



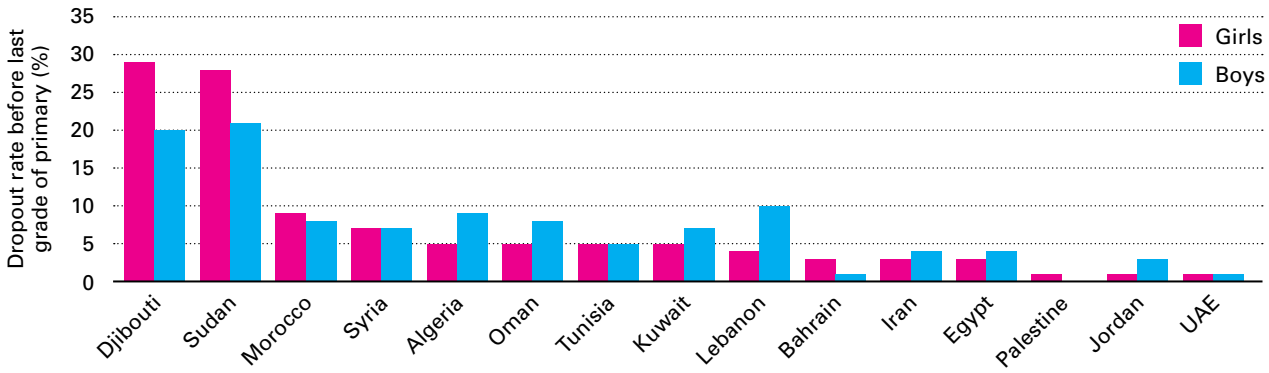
Source: Calculated by UIS based on Djibouti MICS 2006; Egypt DHS 2008; Iraq MICS 2011; Jordan DHS 2007; Yemen MICS 2006.

2.5.3 Overview of gender disparities in Dimensions 4 and 5

To achieve gender parity in education, equal access to primary school is a necessity. But advances towards gender parity also need to be accompanied by equal progression through the primary and secondary school cycles. In many countries in the MENA region, girls and boys do not face the same chances of reaching the final grades, with boys frequently more likely to leave school.

Gender disparities in the dropout rates before the last grade of primary and lower secondary education were documented *(see Figures 2.25 and 2.26)*. Overall, gender disparities are much sharper at the lower secondary level than at the primary level. At the primary level, about half of the countries record no or small disparities between girls' and boys' dropout rates. In the five countries where gender disparity is still a major issue at the primary level, girls are at a disadvantage in two countries (Djibouti and Sudan) and boys in three countries (Algeria, Oman and Lebanon).

Figure 2.25 Dropout rate before the last grade of primary education by gender and country in 2011

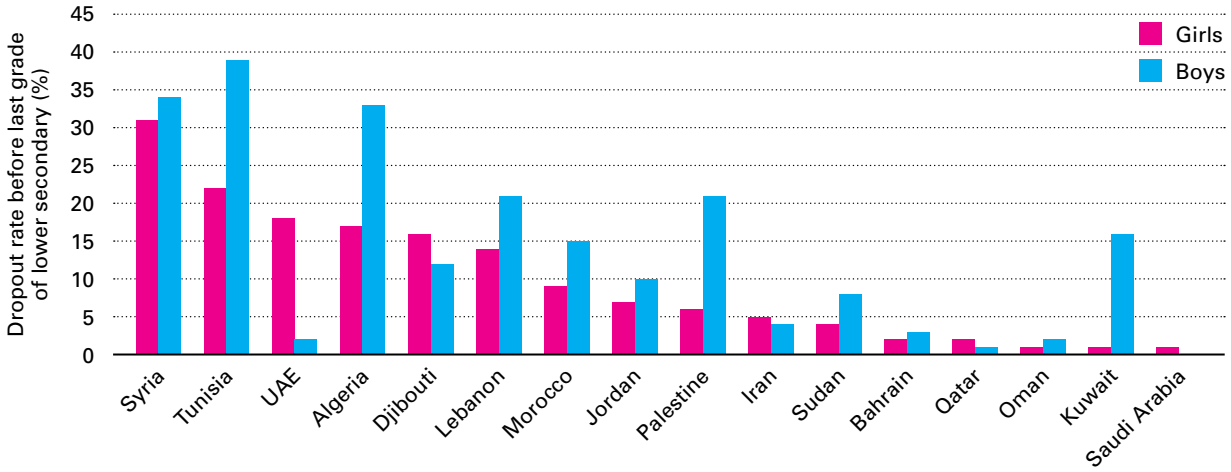


Note: The dropout rate before the last grade is defined as 100 per cent minus the survival rate to the last grade of the primary level. Data for Djibouti and Morocco are from 2012, Jordan from 2010 and Egypt, Sudan and Tunisia from 2009.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

At the lower-secondary level, the data show wide variation in dropout patterns between girls and boys. The sharpest gender disparities are found in Algeria, Kuwait, Palestine, Tunisia and UAE, with disparities ranging from 15 to 17 percentage points between girls and boys. In all of these countries except in the UAE, high dropout rates for boys constitute a major problem. In Tunisia, 39 per cent of boys leave school before the last grade of the lower secondary school cycle, compared to 22 per cent of Tunisian girls.

Figure 2.26 Dropout rate before the last grade of lower secondary education by gender and country in 2011



Note: The dropout rate before the last grade is defined as 100 per cent minus the survival rate to the last grade of the lower secondary level. Data for Djibouti and Morocco are from 2012, Jordan and Qatar from 2010, and Sudan and Tunisia from 2009.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

2.6 Education exclusion in emergencies

Armed conflict has deep negative impacts on children's' well-being. It exposes children to violence, death and stress, causes displacement and illness and interrupts education. With the collapse of education systems during conflict, country efforts to achieve education for all are reversed. At the same time, the provision of education during emergencies and the rebuilding of education systems is increasingly recognized as an important contribution for stability and for sustaining peace (UNESCO, 2011).

Protecting children in emergencies and fulfilling their right to education is one of the most fundamental development challenges for the countries in the MENA region. The issues involved are not new, and many lessons have been learned from the protracted crises in countries such as Iraq, Palestine and Sudan. In this section, we chart some of the severe effects of emergencies for children's participation in education. The section builds on several of the national OOSCI studies from the region, as well as a complementary review of humanitarian needs assessments.

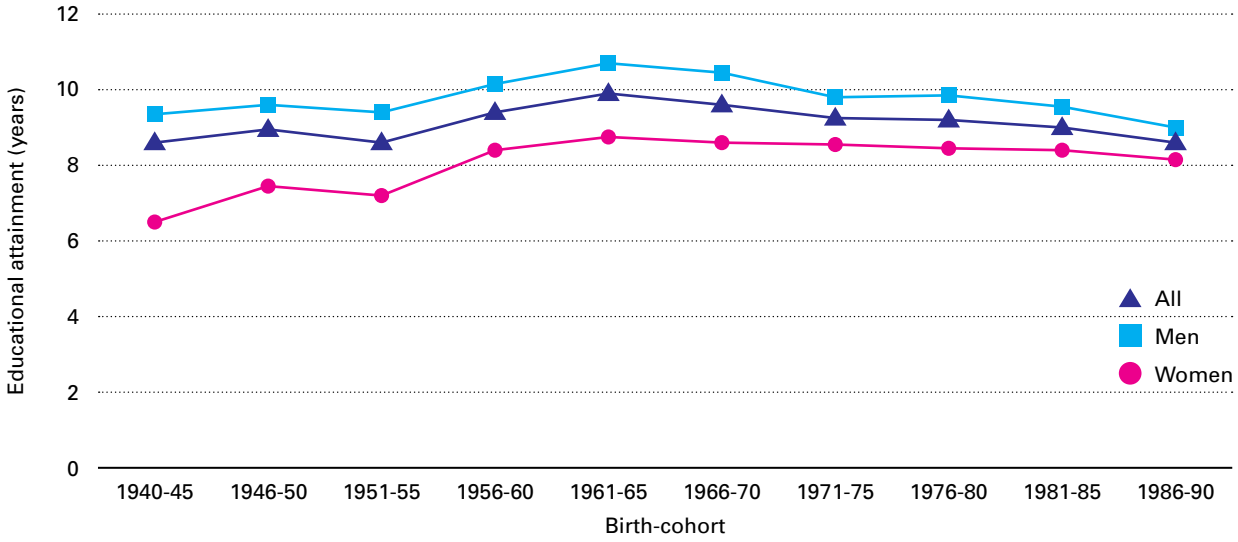
2.6.1 The damaging effect of conflict on education

Data constraints make it challenging to know the exact number of out-of-school children in conflict-affected areas. This is mainly due to the rapid displacement of children and limited access to reliable data. At the same time, as pointed out in the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report, there is an urgent need for greater attention to and identification of these groups of children. While establishing a good overall estimate of the number of out-of-school children in conflict-affected areas in MENA remains difficult, the global picture does show that children in conflict areas are less likely to be in school and more likely to leave school (Montjourides, 2013; UNESCO, 2011).

The recent history of Iraq provides a striking example of the damaging, yet complex, effects of armed conflict on education achievements. The country has experienced more than three decades of war. While the Iran-Iraq war (from 1980 to 1988) resulted in immense levels of destruction, the Iraqi education system continued to make progress during this period. The country's oil revenues were high and important investments were made in education. Education was free and the government provided students with materials and support, resulting in lower levels of education exclusion. At the end of the 1980s, the Iraqi education system was considered a 'jewel' in the Arab world. However, with the beginning of the Gulf War in 1990-1991, children's exclusion from education started to grow. Due to the economic sanctions, the oil revenues decreased and this in turn caused large reductions in public education investments.

The trend of reduced education participation continued during the country's third war in three decades, which started with the US led invasion in 2003 (Shafiq, 2013). Data from the 2007 Iraqi Household Socio-Economic Survey highlight the historical pattern of educational attainment for the Iraqi population *(see Figure 2.27)*. It shows a steady increase in the average number of years of education for Iraqis born from 1940 to 1966, with a peak of 9.8 years education reached for the 1961-66 birth-cohort. For Iraqis born later, the average years of education have declined, with a particularly strong decline for the male population. Due to its recent history, Iraq has lost its position as the jewel of education in the Arab world (Shafiq, 2013). In the region, only Sudan and Yemen have higher absolute numbers of children excluded from education.

Figure 2.27 Years of education across Iraqi birth-cohorts



Source: Shafiq, 2013.

Several recent cases from the region point to the severe impact of conflict on children's schooling. Based on some recent data and research from the region, this section highlights the destructive effects of the Syrian conflict on children's education access.

Syria: The Syrian conflict has devastating consequences for children's participation in education. While the estimates and figures on the precise effect differ widely across different sources, they all point in one direction; a large proportion of Syrian children lost up to two years of education between 2011 and 2013.

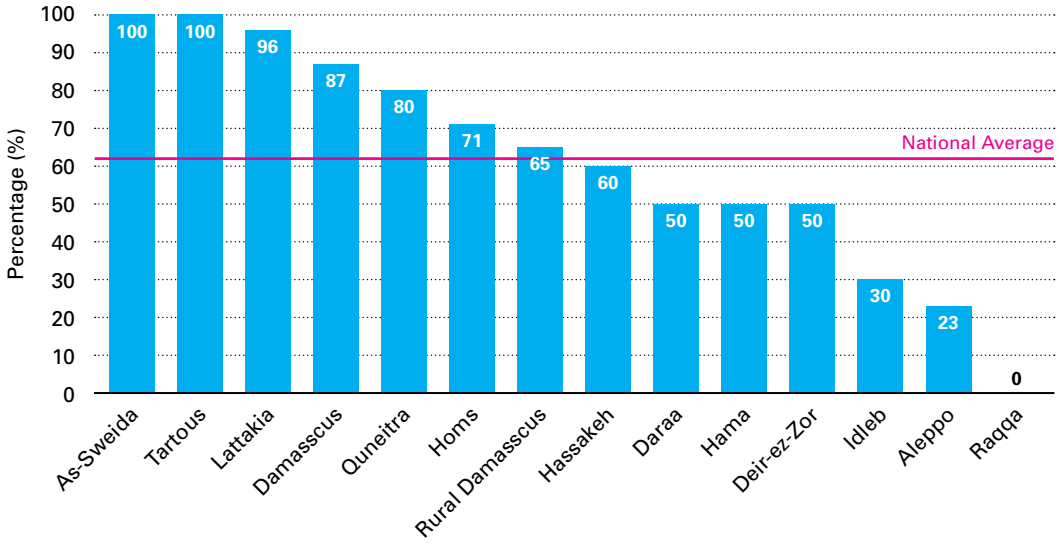
Data from the Syrian Ministry of Education (MoE) show that enrolments in Grades 1-12 decreased by around 1.9 million children between the 2011/12 and 2012/13 schools year, representing a 35 per cent decline. The MoE estimates that nearly half of those children have left the country while the other half are still in Syria but have left school. In addition, approximately 1.3 million children attend school irregularly and are at risk of leaving school (OCHA, 2013b).

Ministry data record significantly lower attendance rates in the most seriously affected parts of the country. The average attendance rate for the country as a whole was estimated at 62 per cent in May 2013 *(see Figure 2.28)*. In Aleppo and Idleb, two of the governorates where conflict has been most intense, less than one quarter and one third of children respectively were reported to attend school (UNICEF, 2013d).

Syrian refugees in Lebanon: Following the influx of Syrian refugee children, the Lebanese education system has come under immense pressure. The refugee crisis has led to an education crisis affecting Syrian, Palestinian and poor Lebanese children. Figures currently used to plan humanitarian responses detect that by the end of 2014, as many as 1.65 million Syrian refugees will be in Lebanon. This is in a country with a population of about 4.3 million people (No Lost Generation, 2014).

As of September 2013, around 270,000 Syrian children of school age were registered with UNHCR in Lebanon and best available assessments indicate that as many as four out of five of these children were out of school in 2013. In addition, once in school, Syrian refugee children face the major challenges of staying. UNHCR estimates that on average, one in five Syrian refugee children leave school in Lebanon, with the biggest problem among children over the age of 12 (UNHCR, 2013a).

Figure 2.28 Student attendance rates by governorate in Syria in May 2013



Note: Data for primary and lower secondary for Djibouti and Morocco are from 2012, for Jordan from 2010 and Sudan and Tunisia from 2009.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

Syrian refugees in Za'atari, Jordan: In early 2013, the Jordanian government estimated the number of Syrian refugees in the country to be at least 470,000. More than 100,000 of them live in the Za'atari refugee camp. Within a period of one year, Za'atari has become the fourth largest 'city' in Jordan and the second largest refugee camp in the world (behind Dadaab in Kenya) (UNICEF, 2013a).

A survey published in April 2013 detects that the large majority of the 36,000 children in the camp do not attend school and that leaving school is a frequent problem (Education Sector Working Group, 2013). The results of the survey show that, overall, 78 per cent of children aged 6-17 do not go to school. This high figure contrasts sharply with children's school exposure before arriving to the refugee camp. Three months before their arrival, 66 per cent of the same group of children did attend school. There are relatively small differences in levels of education exclusion between children of primary and secondary school age and the differences between girls and boys are also modest. The only marked difference is noted between girls and boys of secondary school age, with boys experiencing a slightly higher level of exclusion (80 per cent of boys not attending school compared to 76 per cent of the girls).

Table 2.8 Share of children not attending school in the Za'atari refugee camp by gender in early 2013

	Share of children not attending school (%)		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary school aged children	77%	77%	77%
Secondary school aged children	80%	76%	80%

Source: Education Sector Working Group (2013).

Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan region of Iraq: With the deteriorating security situation in Syria, the Kurdistan region of Iraq is experiencing a major inflow of refugees. By mid-2013, UNHCR had registered more than 150,000 Syrian refugees in the region. About two thirds of these refugees are found in the Dohuk governorate, followed by Erbil and Suleimaniyah. To assess education access for refugee children and youth in these three governorates, NRC and UNICEF conducted a survey of 3,422 households in May and June 2013 (NRC and UNICEF, 2013). The survey is based on a representative sample of refugee households with at least one child from non-camp settings in the Duhok, Erbil and Suleimaniyah governorates. The results point to very limited access to education:

- Only one in 10 refugee children and youth living outside camps attend school.
- Of the 90 per cent of those who do not attend school, 76 per cent of them attended school when they lived in Syria.
- A slightly lower share of girls than boys attend school. Of the 10 per cent attending, 48 per cent are girls.
- In all three governorates, children (age 5 to 14) attend school to a higher extent than youth (age 15-24). The difference is largest in Dohuk, where 17 per cent of children attend school compared to only 7 per cent of youth.

Table 2.9 Education participation of Syrian refugee children in non-camp settings in the Kurdistan region of Iraq by mid- 2013

	Governorate		
	Duhok	Erbil	Suleimaniyah
Share of children and youth attending school	15%	9%	5%
Children and youth school attendance by gender	50% (Girls) 50% (Boys)	54% (Girls) 46% (Boys)	56% (Girls) 44% (Boys)
Share of children (age 5-14) attending school	17%	10%	6%
Share of youth (age 15-24) attending school	7%	9%	0%

Source: NRC and UNICEF (2013).

3 Barriers to school participation and policy responses

3.1 Introduction

The political commitment to education is strong in MENA, with significant legal and financial backing from most governments in the region. Children's fundamental right to education is set out in national laws in all countries in the MENA region and all countries are also signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[9] (UNICEF, 2011). Overall, the governments in the region devote significant proportions of their national income to education and just over one third of the countries with data spent 5 per cent or more of their GNP on education in 2011. However, over the past decade, the Arab States as a whole has recorded a decline in the commitment to education, from 5.3 per cent in 1999 to 4.5 per cent in 2011.[10] This was just below the world median at 4.8 per cent in 2011 (UNESCO, 2014). An overview of the education systems in MENA is provided *(see Table 3.1)*.

The legal framework combined with relatively high financial investments in education have over the past decade contributed to significant improvements in school participation in MENA. In 2000, more than 14.9 million children of primary and lower secondary school age were excluded from education. In 2011, less than 8.4 million children were out of school. Despite the major improvements, however, this report shows that many children of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school age in MENA are still excluded from education. What are the factors and mechanisms behind this exclusion and how can these factors be explored? What policies and strategies have governments in the region put in place to address the barriers that exist for all children's participation in education?

There are multiple and overlapping causes of exclusion from education. One important contribution of OOSCI is to identify critical barriers in relation to the different profiles of education exclusion and analyse their related policies for each of the Five Dimensions. The analysis of barriers and policies builds on UNICEF's Monitoring of Results for Equity System Framework (MoRES), which identifies four broad categories of determinants as an analytical framework through the lens of the Five Dimensions of Exlusion Model. These four broad categories, with their sub-categories and explanations constitute the analytical framework of this chapter *(see Table 3.2)*.

[9] Many of the countries in the region have made general as well as article specific reservations to the CRC, mainly referring to incompatibility with religious law and/or national legislation. The large majority of countries have also signed the CRC optional protocols (UNICEF, 2011).

[10] Median for the UNESCO Arab States region, which differs slightly from the UNICEF MENA region.

Table 3.1 Education system information by country

	Compulsory education (age span)	Duration of primary education	Legal guarantee of free education	CRC (1989) Ratification	Total puplic expenditure on education as % of GNP
	2011	2011			2011
Algeria	6-10	5	Yes	1993	4.4
Bahrain	6-11	6	Yes	1992	3.1
Djibouti	6-10	5	No	2001	...
Egypt	6-11	6	Yes	1990	3.7
Iran	6-10	5	Yes	1994	4.7
Iraq	6-11	6	Yes	1994	...
Jordan	6-11	6	Yes	1991	...
Kuwait	6-10	5	Yes	1991	...
Lebanon	6-11	6	Yes	1991	1.7
Libya	6-11	6	Yes	1993	...
Morocco	6-11	6	Yes	1993	5.5
Oman	6-11	6	Yes	1994	4.6
Palestine	6-9	4	Yes	1991	...
Qatar	6-11	6	Yes	1995	2.4
Saudi Arabia	6-11	6	Yes	1996	5.5
Sudan (pre-secession)	6-11	6	Yes	1990	...
Syrian Arab Republic	6-9	4	Yes	1993	5.2
Tunisia	6-11	6	Yes	1992	6.6
United Arab Emirates	6-10	5	Yes	1997	1.0
Yemen	6-11	6	Yes	1991	5.5

Source: UNESCO, 2010; UNESCO, 2012; UNICEF, 2011; UNESCO, 2014.

Table 3.2 OOSCI framework for analysing barriers and policy responses to the out-of-school children problem

	Categories	Definitions
Enabling Environment	Social Norms	Social rules and pressures
	Legislation/Policy	Adequacy of laws and policies at national and sub-national levels
	Budget/Expenditure	Allocation and disbursement of required resources at national and sub-national levels
	Management/Coordination	Roles, accountability, governance, coordination, partnerships
Supply	Availability of Essential Commodities/ Inputs	Essential commodities and inputs required to deliver a service
	Access to Adequately Staffed Services, Facilities and Information	Physical access to services, facilities, and information
Demand	Financial Access	Ability to afford services, both direct and indirect costs
	Social and Cultural Practices and Beliefs	Individual beliefs and practices
	Timing and Continuity of Use	Completion/continuity in use of services
Quality	Quality	Adherence to required quality standards (national or international norms)

Source: UNICEF and UIS, 2013.

Educational access is a problem on both the supply and demand sides of educational development *(see Table 4.2)*. Many national strategies have concentrated on improving inputs especially where infrastructure is weak, buildings and classrooms inadequate or unavailable, learning materials are in short supply, and teacher qualification is low. These inputs are often greatly needed where enrolment growth is strong. They tend to assume that if enough school places are provided then fewer and fewer children will be out of school.

However, access problems also arise from failing demand, especially amongst older children and in communities where the opportunity costs of school attendance are high, and where school quality is low and children's achievement is very poor. Demand may decrease as enrolment rates rise and more and more marginalized groups are included. It may also soften if the utility (value and benefits) of continued attendance is perceived to be low. The problems of capturing and retaining the last 20 per cent, and increasing promotion, completion and transition, are inextricably linked to decisions to participate (demand), as well as the opportunities for access (supply). There may be gender and culturally-based factors to these decisions. Thus, how demand has been changing, and how supply interacts with demand, are central concerns.

Equity is also part of any worthwhile definition of access to education. Where access is very unevenly provided, such that, for example, the poorest children may have less than a fifth the chance of the richest of completing secondary schooling, then equitable access is compromised. To be worthwhile and have value, access must lead to transformations in capability that are linked to the knowledge and skills that can enhance the chances of mobility out of poverty. These need to be more rather than less equitably distributed if overall increases in access and participation are not to conceal the large differences within the groups who participate in terms of educational quality and achievement. Social norms, budget allocations and legislation are factors in the enabling environment that determine the extent to which equitable access is a priority at local as well as national levels.

The quality of education is central to determining some of the factors that result in children being out of school *(see Table 3.2)*. Some dropout might be more accurately described as 'push out' when children experience events that discourage them from attending. These can include low achievement, repetition and bullying. If schools are both child friendly and child seeking there is more chance they will retain students and generate fewer out-of-school children than schools that do not have these attributes.

The profiles of out-of-school children in MENA show that three of the most serious dimensions of exclusion are linked to:

- high levels of dropout, in particular at the lower secondary level;
- persisting gender inequalities; and
- the daunting challenge of protecting the right to education for conflict affected children.

This chapter focuses on these three broad dimensions of exclusion. Within each dimension, the study explores barriers that need to be addressed to reduce education exclusion. These barriers are linked to factors in the enabling environment in each country, in the existing supply of education services, in families' demand for education and in the quality of education.

In relation to each of the three dimensions of exclusion, the chapter discusses existing programmes and measures to overcome existing barriers. This is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of programmes and policy measures. Rather, it concentrates on examples that the national out-of-school children studies have identified as important. The chapter builds on the nine national studies from the region and is complemented by a review of relevant literature.

3.2 Causes of dropout and policy responses

3.2.1 Conceptualizing dropout

Most children in the MENA region who are below the age of 15 and are not in school are children who have enrolled in school but subsequently left school and failed to complete primary education or transfer successfully to secondary school. In the lowest enrolment countries there are substantial numbers who enter school late and remain overage throughout their school careers. If children do not enter school by the age of 10 years it is unlikely they ever will. The problems of those who are not enrolled and who are unlikely to ever enrol are generally different from those who leave school at the end of their school careers.

The *first point* in exploring dropout in the MENA region is to remember that it will take different forms at different levels. Whatever the causes and possible policy options may be, leaving school will vary with age and educational level. Early grade children who leave school are unlikely to have done so as a result of their own wishes and are unlikely to be old enough to survive economically as independent individuals. In all the MENA countries it is assumed that children below the age of 12 should be in school and that states have a responsibility to ensure this is true. For older children below the age of 15 it may not be the case that there is any legal obligation to ensure school attendance and those who choose to be out of school may well be on a pathway towards economic and social independence. It remains a policy issue across all countries in the MENA region as to what the minimum age of paid work should be for boys and girls, whether all boys and girls should be required to be in full time education up to the age of 15 years, and whether those who are qualified and wish to continue in education and training beyond the age of 15 years and who cannot should be regarded as out-of-school children.

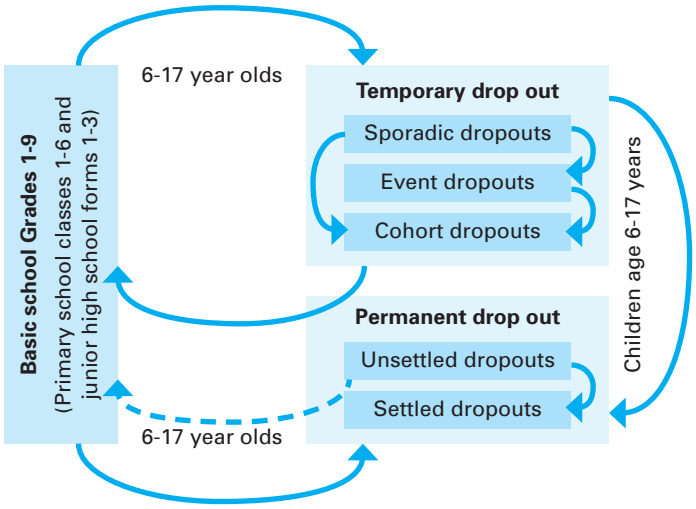
The *second point* is to remember that loss of access to schooling is likely to be the result of factors that are located in one or several different arenas. Being out of school will have causes that can be located in the characteristics of *individual children*, the behaviour of households and the decisions that are made about school attendance, the engagement of communities in ensuring that all children attend school regularly, the efficiency of *local district educational authorities* in mobilizing resources and managing effective schools, and in the *processes of schooling* which can generate worthwhile learning outcomes and ensure that dropouts are not 'push outs' from school. The causes of leaving school may be spread across more than one arena, and sometimes across all of them. Acting to reduce causes in one arena without awareness of the significance of causes in other arenas may not be very effective. The locus of control for each arena is different. Thus public agencies are generally responsible for schools (unless they are run privately), local authorities are charged with responsibilities to provide schooling and ensure that children attend, and communities to a greater or lesser degree share collective accountability for educational provision in different areas. Households' decision-making and action in relation to school attendance may not be subject to the same influences as public institutions. Cultural practices may be deeply embedded in attitudes towards schooling which result in decisions that lead to leaving school. And the characteristics of individual children are a product of their natural endowments and how they are socialized and educated, which has yet other causal pathways.

The *third point* is that it is useful to remember that leaving school is more often than not a process rather than a single event. Though there may be a single event that triggers leaving school – for example death in the household, loss of job or migration to a different area – for many children who leave school, it is the final event of ceasing to attend school that is preceded by characteristic signals. These may include short periods of non-attendance followed by normal attendance and longer periods of absence of weeks or months followed by returns to school. The causes can be varied and will include needs to earn income or help with domestic chores, illness, caring for other household members, temporary migration and many other reasons. If there are patterns of attendance or of achievement that prefigure leaving school this creates

opportunities for early diagnosis of risks of dropout. Where leaving school is precipitated largely by a single unpredictable event then this, too, is an invitation to identify why particular events are likely to result in dropout, and act to reduce their consequences. Temporary dropouts – children who wish to return to school but are not able to or are prevented from doing so – are different from children who permanently dropout and who have decided that they no longer wish to attend school.

Temporarily dropping out may include sporadic dropping out, when attendance is irregular; event dropping, when attendance ceases a as a result of a singular main cause; and cohort dropping, when dropping out between years and not captured in many calculations of dropout *(see Figure 3.1)*. If children register, enrol and attend for some of a school year but are not present at the end of the year, they may disappear from enrolment numbers the following year unless they return at the beginning of the next school year. Even if they do they may be asked to repeat a year and this can be another proximate cause of dropping out.

Figure 3.1 Dropout as a process



Source: Ananga, 2011.

The national OOSCI studies draw attention to some of the reasons given for leaving school and being at risk of exclusion from school in the region. This section collates some of the insights that arise from the studies completed so far. The section is complemented by material from a light review of the academic and grey literature from the region over the past 10 years. It should be noted that this is not a systematic review since the OOSCI studies do not address the same issues in the same depth and not all are completed. The information available on what interventions have been tried, implemented and evaluated is highly uneven across the different countries and suffers from important knowledge gaps. Despite these difficulties, the information reveals some of the major barriers for school retention that do arise. In relation to the OOSCI framework for analysing barriers and policy responses, the available material highlights particular factors related to education demand and quality as issues needing strong attention across many of the countries in MENA. For this reason, the section focuses on these two broad determinants of education exclusion.

Key issues to emerge on the dropout problem in MENA include:

- Low demand for education is intimately linked to low levels of household wealth and low perceived benefits of education. For children from the poorest quintile, direct and indirect costs of education are still linked to early school leaving, particularly at the lower secondary level. The scale of the impact of private tuition on leaving school remains largely hidden, but stands out as a serious concern in several MENA countries, including Egypt.

- Poverty and child labour reinforce each other and are associated with lower levels of school attendance in several countries, including in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Yemen. Although child labourers tend to have a lower demand for education, the issue is not solely a demand side problem. A large proportion of child labourers do combine work and school, making it necessary for the school to accommodate the individual needs of working children. In cases where the supply of education is too rigid and inflexible, child labourers can be pushed out of education.
- All the recent OOSCI studies from the region point to major weaknesses in the ability of schools to provide education structured around the individual needs of each student. Poverty, disability, emotional and behavioural issues and child work all complicate and diversify the needs among students. Some of the studies, most notably in Morocco and Tunisia, highlight existing interventions to track and support children at risk of dropping out, with some promising results.
- Large-scale interventions to directly offset economic barriers to education for vulnerable groups are not a strong theme in the recent OOSCI studies. One exception is the Taysir programme in Morocco, where cash transfers are conditional on school attendance.

Some reasons for leaving school are gendered and the next section of this chapter explores these in more detail. Early marriage, premature pregnancy, household and family responsibilities, and pressures to become economically and socially independent affect both girls and boys in different ways and to different degrees. Gender cross cuts reasons for dropping out and being out of school, and clearly has consequences for the development of pathways back into basic education up to the end of lower secondary and beyond.

3.2.2 Low demand for education as a dropout factor

Household wealth and perceptions about the benefits of education are intrinsically linked to schooling decisions. For children from poor households, the direct costs of education as well as opportunity costs from lost child wages or unpaid child work are important factors associated with leaving school. Equally important are social attitudes and perceptions of the usefulness of education for adulthood and for future employment opportunities.

Costs of education come in many different forms. According to national legislation, basic education should be free in all countries in the MENA region except Djibouti. Yet in practice education is not free and households face many costs related to transport, food, uniforms, books, private tuition charges, and entry examination fees. Numerous brief examples from the region detect that such costs are difficult for poor households to finance. At secondary level costs rise and in the poorer countries may exceed the capacity to pay of households that are not in the top two quintiles of household income. This is where a significant amount of schooling is privatized for profit and fee paying that results in exclusion by price is likely be most common. Both direct (e.g. entry and tuition fees) and indirect costs (e.g. transport and food) are important and either or both can be exclusionary.

The cost of private tuition stands out as a cause of leaving school for children from poor households in several countries in the region. While there seems to be no systematic research or data on its growth and impact, several of the national OOSCI studies, including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, highlight private tuition as an issue. In Egypt, it has developed into a widespread influence on educational institutions generating a social practice that strongly affects the lives of millions of Egyptians (Hartman, 2008).

While the cost of private tuition contributes to lowering the demand for education, the phenomenon itself is also driven by problems on the supply side. These include underfunded public school systems, in some countries saturated by the growing number of students with overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating facilities, and a dense

and rigid syllabus with an emphasis on rote learning and exam orientation. Teachers are "among the lowest paid employees in the public sector, are often unmotivated due to their low salaries and social status as well as their poor working conditions and, deliberately or not, fail to fulfil their duties during regular class hours" (Hartman, 2008). This results in requests from students and parents for private tuition to improve exam performance; coupled with large numbers of teachers depending on the additional income it generates to maintain middle-level incomes.

Opportunity costs are different to direct costs in the sense that they represent income foregone rather than a cash cost from current income. They can vary greatly between levels of education and between different communities. They include the value of domestic work and contributions to household production of goods and services, and they include the value of paid work that may be available to children below the age of 15 years. Not all such work can or should be regarded as child labour. That which is neither appropriate nor decent should be prohibited since it is likely to be related to non-attendance at school. Opportunity costs clearly do affect demand for education and need to be addressed with this in mind.

Data from six countries in the MENA region indicate that the incidence of child labour varies by age group and country *(see Table 3.3)*. In all countries except in Djibouti, the incidence rate is higher among the older age group. The share of child labourers in the older age group are highest in Egypt, Sudan and Yemen, where between one to two of every 10 children are reported to be engaged in child labour. The table also detects a clear gap in school attendance between children in child labour and other children of the same age. The difference in school attendance rates between those in child labour and other children are highest for 12 to 13-year-olds in Sudan. Whereas only about one quarter of children engaged in child labour in this age group in Sudan attend school, three quarters of those who are not in child labour attend school. For the older age group, the gap in school attendance rates between those children who are engaged in child labour and those who are not are also very high in Egypt, Iraq and Yemen. This is a sign of the low ability of the education system to adapt to the specific needs of working children.

Table 3.3 Share of children aged 6-14 in child labour and school attendance by child labour status, selected countries

	Age group	Share in child labour (%)	Children in child labour who are attending school (%)[1]	Children not in child labour who are attending school (%)[2]
Djibouti	6-11	12	69	70
	12-14	4	79	77
Egypt	6-11	8	83	88
	12-14	11	66	92
Iraq	6-11	7	80	87
	12-14	8	42	80
Jordan	6-11	1	97	99
	12-15	3	51	96
Sudan, north	6-11	12	28	74
	12-13	13	26	75
Yemen	6-11	11	65	73
	12-14	21	55	87

Source: UCW calculations based on Djibouti MICS 2007; Egypt DHS 2005; Iraq MICS 2011; Jordan Simpoc 2007; Sudan census 2008; Yemen Simpoc 2010.

The data in the table do not control for other determinant factors for school attendance. Most notably, it is well established that children from poor households have a higher incidence of child labour and are less likely to attend school than children from richer households. Poverty and child labour tend to reinforce each other and both contribute to leaving school. However, the findings are supported by the broader research

literature, with the overwhelming majority of empirical studies concluding that child labour, after controlling for other factors such as household wealth, is harmful for school attendance (Allais and Hagemann, 2008).

At the same time, child labour cannot be seen solely as a demand side issue. As the table shows, a large number of children pursue work and schooling concurrently. This is particularly the case for the younger age group. For instance in both Djibouti and Yemen, around two thirds of children in child labour are reported to attend school. This suggests that education quality and in particular the ability of schools to accommodate the individual needs of working children is a major issue. When the education system is too rigid and inflexible, children engaged in child labour can be pushed out of education.

Policy responses and strategies aimed at directly offsetting economic barriers to education for vulnerable groups, typically through large-scale cash transfers, do not come forward as a strong theme in the recently conducted OOSCI studies from the MENA region. While the majority of the countries in the region have different social assistance programmes in place, most such programmes appear to have a rather narrow focus on smoothing income and consumption and are generally not made conditional on school attendance. As such, most existing social protection programmes in MENA tend to focus on the symptoms of poverty, rather than addressing the structural causes of poverty and are not directly targeted at tackling social inequalities among children and youth (Bagash et al., 2012).

However, a large-scale conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme linked to school attendance exists in Morocco *(see Box 3.1)*. The programme has grown rapidly in recent years, with promising results for school attendance and reduced dropout. In Yemen, under the multi-donor funded Basic Education Development Project (BEDP), a pilot CCT scheme to promote girls' school attendance and retention was introduced in 2007.

Box 3.1 The Taysir programme in Morocco

To reduce the unequal access to social services, the government of Morocco launched a cash transfer programme where financial support is conditional on the presence of children in school. The programme, called Taysir, began in 2009 with a pilot phase involving the most vulnerable households, especially in rural areas and schools with high dropout rates. This first step involved some 88,000 primary age children in more than 47,000 households. Its extension in 2010 marks the satisfactory results noted at the school attendance of targeted students and lower dropout rates in schools concerned. More than 300,000 students from 160,000 households benefited from the programme in 2010, representing almost a tenth of the primary school age population. The cash transfers represent a preventive action against school dropout and are part of a broader effort to enhance Morocco's national social policy for inclusion of vulnerable groups in society.

Besides economic costs – whether direct costs such as private tuition or indirect costs – children and parents' demands for education are also influenced by social attitudes to education and perceived benefits (or harm) of modern forms of schooling. In several of the recent OOSCI studies from the region, perceived low value of education is mentioned as a reason for early school leaving. A recent survey in Yemen found that nearly two thirds of households identified 'attitudes of people' as the primary obstacle to school attendance. Negative attitudes or indifference to formal schooling can be attributed to low parental education levels, low returns on schooling and high rates of unemployment among graduates (Maas, 2012; UN-HABITAT, 2011). Maas' recent doctoral thesis in Yemen identifies a complex socio-cultural explanation for both the decision to start and to stop school:

> The issue of 'being ready' for school or 'being big/mature enough' brings in an individual aspect of the child. Children are judged individually as being ready (or not) for school, based on their behaviour or size, not because they are part of a certain age group. Regarding stopping school, my research suggests that the idea of 'readiness' is even more important, but here it is linked to being ready to start the transition towards adulthood. School is not seen to play a role in this transition. The child's 'readiness' to stop school is viewed in terms of the ability to do certain tasks and demonstrate mature behaviour, rather than by age in years or completion of a certain number of grades. (Maas, 84)

3.2.3 Quality of education

Household demand for continued investments in education is intimately linked with issues of education quality and low quality of education can push girls as well as boys out of school. In the long run, households are only ready to invest in education if they are satisfied with the kind of schooling their children receive. Low levels of learning are cause for concern in most MENA countries and the national OOSCI studies from Algeria, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia all point to factors related to teachers behaviours, the school environment and the presence of violence as influential for children's early school leaving. The Jordan national OOSCI study refers to another study that found that the most important reasons for working children to leave school are the bad behaviour of teachers, teaching methods and the use of severe punishment.

This section presents three themes of education quality that are decisive for households' schooling decisions:

- The relevance of education
- The ability of the school to respond to diversity among pupils
- The school climate (environment)

Relevance is a broad term that includes judgements about the perceived benefits of continuing to attend school. These benefits are related not only to labour market opportunities for which successfully completing different years of schooling may be an advantage. They are also related to interest and motivation, and to whether or not school curricula inspire curiosity and commitment to learning, or lead to a lack of interest, low commitment and low achievement. 'Relevance' is unlikely to mean the same thing for every child in every household. Its characteristics are likely to vary at different levels of education, for boys and girls, urban and rural children, and for those from communities with different cultural traditions.

Lack of relevance and dissatisfaction with the perceived benefits of schooling are root causes of indiscipline and disrupted schooling. Case study material from Tunisia indicates that "children who adopt violent attitudes have difficulties in learning and they just do not see an interest in learning. Action research on school violence and its impact on the dropout process highlights how the behaviour of indiscipline in schools – such as delays and class absences are the apparent expression of a deeper malaise: difficulty learning" (Madiouni and Ahmed, 2008). In a sample from lower secondary schools, students whose violent behaviour was reported were almost all (96 per cent) repeating a grade, and of these over 40 per cent had repeated twice. These students were also children from low socio-economic backgrounds and were low achievers. The argument of the case study is that "spirals of indiscipline" develop whereby perceived irrelevance, low achievement, repetition and becoming more overage lead to challenging behaviour. This creates pathways towards temporary and ultimately permanent dropping out of school (Tunisia OOSCI Country Report, OPM team translation).

In East Jerusalem, the idiosyncrasies of the local labour market have an impact on perceived relevance. Some groups may be precluded from professional jobs requiring a high level of education. Where this is true the incentives to dropout and seek cash-based employment in the unskilled or low-skill labour force can be strong and this may encourage dropout. This may in turn reinforce reasons related to low achievement.

Respondents in a recent study cited several factors. "I used to be a relatively good student, but my performance worsened." "When I started receiving low grades, for fear of being humiliated, I started skipping classes. This only made my grades worse." And "the main reason for my leaving school was poor academic performance, especially in English and maths. Most teachers were not interested in really making us improve. They would explain and if we did not understand they would ignore us. I think most teachers only come to school for the money" (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2013).

A few studies from the region show the nuanced detail of the relationships between school performance, leaving school and entry into employment and livelihoods (UN-HABITAT, 2011; Dyer, 2007). These studies indicate that many working children, often with the support of their parents, attempt to continue schooling alongside their work, but are effectively 'pushed out' when the formal schooling system cannot accommodate their situation and needs. For example, families of working children in Egypt cited maltreatment, physical punishment, poor quality supervision and management of learning, *followed by* costs and scholastic failure as reasons for dropping out. The relationship between these causes is explored in the example of private tuition in Egypt:

> 'Children who perform poorly in school suffer from teacher's maltreatment and increased pressure by teachers to take up private tutoring. This pressure in turn increases children's resentful attitude towards school and exacerbates their poor scholastic achievement. Failure to join the extracurricular *majmu-at* (organized and run by the teachers themselves) carries high risks of educational failure and prejudice. With the tight economic conditions experienced by many poor urban boys, the magic cure for maltreatment and pressure – private tutoring – is not possible, and the end result is their dropping out and going into the labour market, which for poor urban males is predominantly informal' (UN-HABITAT, 2011).

The role of the teacher is at the centre of efforts for reducing dropout. The large majority of countries in the MENA region have over the past two decades given strong emphasis to increasing the supply of qualified teachers through adequate hiring, pre-service and (more recently) in-service training (Chapman, 2009). However, these investments have overall not translated into improved education quality. It has been suggested that part of the problem is teacher's attitudes and social construction of their role within the education system. In the Yemeni context, the recent research by Maas found that many teachers did not think their practices had any impact on the decision to stop schooling or that they even had a role in preventing dropout. In fact, teachers sometimes actively contributed to 'push outs', by targeting certain students so that the child felt the pressure to leave school. While teachers recognized children's completion of education as desirable for society, this was not necessarily seen as important for all children. Teachers also questioned children's capacity to complete schooling, with the lack of proper support functions frequently mentioned as a reason (Maas, 2012). Further, Dyer found problematic teacher attitudes towards working children, which increased the risk of their educational exclusion in Yemen:

> …there [was not] a perception that their own teaching and children's experiences of these schools were tools by which to address the problematic issue of working children. Underlying these perceptions is an idea of school as an orderly place which should not be disrupted by the demands of those who do not conduct themselves according to its implicit rules (Dyer 521-522).

The capacity of teachers and schools to respond to the individual circumstances and needs of children is an important component of educational quality. Poverty, physical disability and illness, mental health issues, emotional and behavioural issues and child labour all complicate and diversify the individual needs of each pupil. All the recent OOSCI studies from the region show that schools tend to be poorly placed to provide education structured around the individual student.

Some of the OOSCI studies highlight existing strategies and targeted interventions to track and support children at risk of dropping out. In Tunisia, three national programmes specifically aimed at preventing early school leaving in primary and lower secondary education have been put in place *(see Box 3.2)*. In Morocco, the 2009-2012 'Urgency Programme' includes specific interventions to address the country's problem with dropout and repetition at the primary and lower secondary level. The government has introduced a system of *cellule de veille* (support units) in schools. These units, including the head teacher, teachers, local associations and parents, are responsible for detecting pupils at risk of dropping out and providing pedagogical support. Support units exist in more than one thousand schools and provide pedagogical support to 38 thousand pupils and catch up classes for 450 thousand pupils (Morocco OOSCI study).

Box 3.2 Tracking and supporting Tunisian children at risk of dropping out from school

The government of Tunisia has established three major school-based programmes to promote education access for all children and for supporting those at risk of dropping out. The programmes include:

Le Programme d'Action Sociale en Milieu Scolaire (PASS): Since 2000, the programme has established social action units in schools, composed of a social worker, a psychologist, a doctor and the school director. On the one hand, the programme intervenes to identify pupils' difficulties in school and social adjustment problems linked to school failure behaviours. On the other hand, the programme provides support for pupils with schooling and living situations that may impede their educational performance. The total number of social action units has increased over time, to reach nearly 2,300 in 2006-2007 and covering nearly four out of 10 schools, although with large regional disparities.

Le Programme à Priorité Educative (PEP): Since 2001, Tunisia has put in place a system of positive discrimination for weaker schools. These schools, 696 in total, have been identified based on a set of socio-economic and education performance indicators and are situated in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. Nine out of 10 schools are located in rural areas. Within the framework of the PEP, a series of special measures have been adopted, including additional human and material resources, additional financial resources for school construction, pedagogical materials and special teacher training efforts. In recent years, several evaluations have pointed to the challenges involved in the effective implementation of the programme. One major challenge is that the PEP schools continue to have the less experienced teachers.

La Stratégie d'Intégration Scolaire des Enfants Handicapés: Tunisia launched a national strategy for the progressive integration of children with disabilities in ordinary schools in 2003. Several measures have been taken to facilitate this process, including reduced class sizes for classes with children with disabilities, additional resources and attempts to better gather the different partners around each child's individual needs. A recent assessment of the implementation of the national strategy brought forward several areas in need of further enhancement. Three major areas for improvement include the still too limited coordination between partners, lack of trained education staff and insufficient resources for monitoring.

Bad school climate stands out as an important factor for children's school failure. The use of physical and psychological violence in schools, including corporal punishment, abuse, verbal humiliation and harassment, affects the quality of education and can result in children dropping out. Data on the incidence of violence in schools in the MENA region are scarce. Yet the limited data and studies that exist on the topic point to a high prevalence of violence in schools in several countries and this is identified as a reason for leaving school:

- According to a Moroccan study conducted by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and the School of Psychology in 2005, 87 per cent of the 5,349 surveyed primary school students reported that they had been victims of physical violence at school. The most commonly stated reasons for physical violence were misbehaviour and academic weakness. Other reasons included that children had not done their homework, arrived late, been absent or talked during class. Female teachers were found to be less violent than their male colleagues. Teachers expressed a belief that children need to fear them in order to perform better and that corporal punishment is a necessary pedagogical tool. At the same time, teachers expressed regret for hitting students and would, with more support and in closer collaboration with parents, be open to finding other means of discipline (Save the Children, 2011).

Table 3.4 Overview of prohibition of corporal punishment in schools in MENA, 2011

	Corporal punishment prohibited in all schools	Corporal punishment not prohibited in all schools
Algeria	Prohibited in Law No. 08-04 (2008)	
Bahrain	Prohibited in Code of School Discipline (1992)	
Egypt		Ministerial directive states corporal punishment should not be used but no prohibition in law (information unconfirmed)
Iraq		Reportedly prohibited in regulations, but Penal Code confirms right to discipline
Jordan	Prohibited in School Discipline Regulation, Instruction No. 4 on School Discipline (1981)	
Lebanon		Lawful under Penal Code; Ministerial guidance against corporal punishment but no prohibition in law
Libya	Prohibited in School Discipline Ordinance for Schools, Regulations concerning Primary and Preparatory Education, Regulations concerning Secondary Education (1979), and Regulation concerning Student Discipline (1983)	
Morocco		Ministerial direction advises against corporal punishment, but no prohibition in law
Oman	X Prohibited in Organisational Statutes of the General Education Schools	
Qatar		Ministerial Decree states corporal punishment should not be used, but no explicit prohibition in law
Saudi Arabia		Ministerial circulars advise against corporal punishment but no prohibition in law
Sudan		2010 Child Act prohibits cruel punishment but not explicitly all corporal punishment
Syrian Arab Rep.		Lawful under Penal Code; Ministry of Education advises against corporal punishment but no prohibition in law
Tunisia		
UA Emirates	Prohibited in Ministerial Decision No. 454 (1998), but no explicit prohibition in private schools	
Yemen	Prohibited in Regulations governing School Punishment (2001)	

Source: Global Initiatives to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2011.

- In a study by the Yemeni Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood, hitting with a stick was found to be the most widespread form of corporal punishment and was more frequently used on boys than on girls. At the same time, girls from rural areas were found to be punished more often for not doing their homework than girls living in urban areas. The report concluded that this is likely because girls in rural areas have a heavier workload with household tasks and in agriculture than girls in urban areas. The study noted that physical punishments in school are generally accepted and perceived as an effective way of raising children (Save the Children, 2011).

- A recent study on education in Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem, commissioned by UNICEF and UNESCO, points to violence in school as a strong determinant for leaving school. Focus group interviews detected that boys were particularly affected by their treatment at school. As one student who left school put it: 'The reason for skipping classes lies in the school environment itself. The teachers beat us, they shout at us, we do not have a chance to express ourselves, we are not listened to'. Half of the surveyed students agreed with the statement that 'there is a lot of violence' in their school, but interestingly with some marked differences between boys and girls. Boys were found to be more exposed to physical violence, while girls were mainly subject to psychological and verbal abuse and marginalization (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2013).

The subject of sexual violence in schools is sensitive and taboo in many countries. The sensitivity surrounding the topic makes reporting extremely rare. Girls are disproportionately the victims of sexual abuse and harassment but are often afraid or too embarrassed to report their perpetrators. However, Lebanon is one country in the region where sexual violence against children has received some attention in the media and in the public debate in recent years. In 2008, a study on child sexual abuse led by the national non-governmental organization (NGO) KAFA helped to raise awareness about the issue. The study, which included a representative sample of 1,025 children with the average age of 10 years, showed that 16 per cent of the surveyed children had experienced some form of sexual abuse either before or following the war in the country in July 2006.[11] Most incidents occurred at home while 6 per cent of the reported cases occurred at school. The study found that those children who had experienced some form of sexual abuse were more likely to fail in school and had a more fragile psychological profile than children who had not been abused. The ratio of girl to boy victims was as high as 12:1 (Usta et al., 2008).

Adequate legislation against corporal punishment is valuable not only as a statement of national intent, but also as a foundation for national efforts to improve school climate and combat education exclusion. Half of the countries in the MENA region included in the assessment by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment have yet to adopt laws prohibiting corporal punishment in schools *(see Table 3.4)*. In some countries, including Qatar and Saudi Arabia, corporal punishment is not prohibited in laws, but Ministerial decrees advise against it. In other countries, including Iraq, the use of corporal punishment is explicitly authorized. Tunisia is the only country in the region where corporal punishment is prohibited in schools, at home and in all other settings.

3.3 Barriers to gender equality and policy responses

3.3.1 Introduction

Gender equality in education means that, throughout the whole education cycle, girls and boys are given the same opportunities to go to school and that they benefit from teaching and learning methods and curricula that are free from gender bias and stereotypes. It means equality in terms of years of schooling and equal opportunities to learn followed by equal chances to participate in the public domain and labour market.

Gender parity in education participation is an important step towards gender equality. As shown in the Profiles Chapter, the MENA region has made significant progress in reducing disparities between girls and boys in education exclusion over the past decade. Expanded access to primary and lower secondary education has gone hand in hand with reduced gender gaps in most countries, with the notable exceptions of Djibouti, Iraq and Yemen, and approximately as many girls as boys of primary school age were out of school in the region in 2011. Yet MENA is still lagging behind other

[11] The study defined child sexual abuse as one of three forms: Subjection to direct sexual acts such as kissing and touching; subjection to indirect sexual acts such as watching pornographic films; and attempts at one of these two forms.

regions in the world. For the lower secondary age group, gender disparity in favour of boys still persists and is severe in the poorest countries. On the other hand, boys' dropout rates before the last grade of the lower secondary level are significantly higher than those of girls in Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine. Why is this so?

This section looks at some of the barriers girls and boys face in accessing school on equal terms. Beyond parity, the section also looks at some of the underlying causes of gender inequality in education and a selection of policies and strategies from the region. Key messages from the section include:

- Social norms and traditions continue to be major barriers for girls' education participation in MENA. The practice of early marriage is one of the most extreme causes of early school leaving in Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Yemen.
- Mixed or separated schooling for boys and girls is a significant indicator of the state of social norms with implications for education policy. Over time, different pathways have been pursued by the countries in the region. Data analysis from Iraq and Egypt show that the move towards segregated schooling has not been favourable to girls' education participation.
- Education is in itself a powerful strategy for increasing girls' autonomy and social mobility. The Ishraq programme in Egypt, targeted at girls who have dropped out of school, has improved literacy skills, improved girls self-confidence and led to greater mobility and participation of girls in the local community.
- Boys in Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia have particularly high levels of dropout at the lower secondary level. Part of the explanation of this phenomenon is linked to boys' lack of motivation, in turn driven by uncertainty with respect to future employment opportunities. Girls, on the other hand, express a desire for liberation and education is seen as the only way for social advancement.

3.3.2 Enabling environment: Social norms and values

"I finished seventh grade and left school because of marriage. I didn't want to get married, but my father forced me to. He told me that education won't do anything for me...I had no choice."

Sultana, married at age 16 in 2009, Yemen (Brown, 2012)

Achieving gender equality in education is a formidable challenge. As in other regions of the world, unequal education participation and learning in MENA is a reflection of broader gender inequalities in society. Social norms and values guide the interaction between people in every society and determine the power relations between women and men. In the MENA region, perceptions of what role women and men should play in the family and in broader society continue to contribute to girls and boys being valued differently (World Bank, 2013b).

Parents' different attitudes to girls and boys play an important role in explaining how gender differentiation in education occurs. Expectations about what children will do when they become adults vary by gender and by social group, and shape families' schooling decisions (UNESCO, 2003).

One of the most extreme barriers to girls schooling in the MENA region is the practice of early marriage. Girls' education is nearly always interrupted when they marry at an early age. Even though the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines the legal age of marriage as 18, it is estimated that worldwide one in three women aged 20-24 still marries before the age of 18 (Brown 2012). Counter to popular belief in some societies, the age of marriage is not specified in Islamic jurisprudence. Islam makes a distinction between coming of age as a biological fact and maturity in terms of the ability to judge with reason. As it is the ability to judge things reasonably that rules when a person can accept responsibility for marriage, this undoubtedly makes child marriage inadmissible in Islam (UNICEF, 2011).

Early marriage is still relatively common in several countries in the MENA region and it is one of the reasons for girls missing out on their education. In Yemen, just over half of the girls are married by the age of 18 (Brown 2012). In Sudan, 9.5 per cent of young women are married before the age of 15 and early marriage remains common, especially in nomadic communities (Yemen OOSCI Country Report). In Djibouti, less than 3 per cent of the girls are married before turning 15 years old and less than 10 per cent before turning 18 years old. Early marriage and pregnancy were mentioned among the current reasons for the out-of-school children problem in a recent household survey in Djibouti's national OOSCI study (UNICEF, 2009b). In Egypt, close to 20 per cent of all girls were married at the age of 18 in 2005 (UNICEF, 2005). In Jordan and Iraq, early marriage also causes children to leave school (OOSCI Country Reports).

Girls who are married before they turn 18 are more commonly from poor families and from rural areas. They are generally less educated, have more children, and are more likely to experience domestic violence (UNICEF, 2005). Many girls give birth within the first year of marriage, when their bodies are not fully mature, which causes increased maternal and child mortality and serious health problems such as obstetric fistula (IYWG 2011). Poor girls living in rural areas are also more likely to start primary school late. Hence, the problem of overage school participation interacts in a highly negative way with the practice of early marriage and causes a pattern where parents withdraw their girls to get married before they have even completed the primary school cycle. The educational status of women influences the incidence of early marriage. In Sudan, 16 per cent of women with no formal education were married by the age of 15, while the corresponding figure for women with some primary education was 9 per cent and only 1 per cent for women who had a secondary or higher level of education (Sudan OOSCI Country Report).

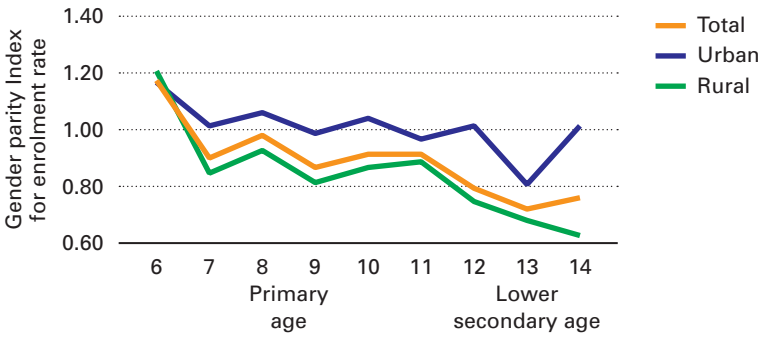
In conservative communities where family and community life is characterized by patriarchal authority, girls' autonomy and mobility can be restricted. In those communities, educating girls and women can in itself be seen as a threat to patriarchal social structures. An insightful case study from the city of Yazd in central Iran shows that such beliefs about the negative influence of excessive years of education for girls remain deeply anchored among the city's conservative families. As one key informant in the study expressed it: 'too much education jeopardizes the harmony of family life, since women will not submit to their husbands'. The case study also refers to a widely reported tragedy where a women who had completed her engineering studies returned home and in the absence of her father was controlled by her six-year-old brother. This drove her to set fire to herself (Tremayne, 2006).

Most countries in the MENA region have over the past two decades adopted legislation for the minimum age of marriage, which is between 18-21 years in the majority of countries. However, a few exceptions are still found in the region. In Iran, the minimum age of marriage is 13 for girls and 15 for boys. In Bahrain, it is 15 for girls and 18 for boys (UNICEF, 2011). At the same time, in most MENA countries marriage below the minimum age can be authorized by a judge or Shari'a court (UNICEF, 2011). In Morocco, although the country's family law was reformed in 2004 and the minimum age for women was then raised from 15 to 18, judges are allowed to authorize marriage below the minimum age. Between 2009 and 2010, Morocco recorded an increase in the number of child marriages by three thousand, to reach 33,253 in 2010 (Abdul-Hamid, 2011).

In Yemen, the tradition of early marriage has long been accepted and efforts to change the national legislation have been challenging. While the school system approaches parity in enrolling equal numbers of girls and boys in urban areas, in rural areas there are large gender gaps especially at ages 12 to 14 *(see Figure 3.2)*. One of the primary causes is early marriage; 14 per cent of Yemeni girls are married before the age of 15 (Yemen OOSCI Country Report).

In 1999, the Yemeni parliament abolished a law where the minimum age for marriage was 15. A decade later, the parliament successfully voted for a minimum age of 17. However, a small group of conservative parliamentarians have managed to block the law claiming that it will lead to 'the spread of immorality', weakening of 'family values' and violation of Shari'a (Brown, 2012). Child marriage used to be a taboo subject but is nowadays discussed more openly. UNICEF, together with international NGOs such as Oxfam and Human Rights Watch and local NGOs have advocated for effective legislative prohibition of early marriage. Several forums have brought religious, political and education leaders together to discuss the issue. Yemen has also provided training for the judiciary to sensitize judges about the dangers of early and forced marriage. The media has been involved and proven a strong ally in combatting early marriage (UN, 2007; UNGEI, 2013).

Figure 3.2 Gender parity index by age and location in Yemen



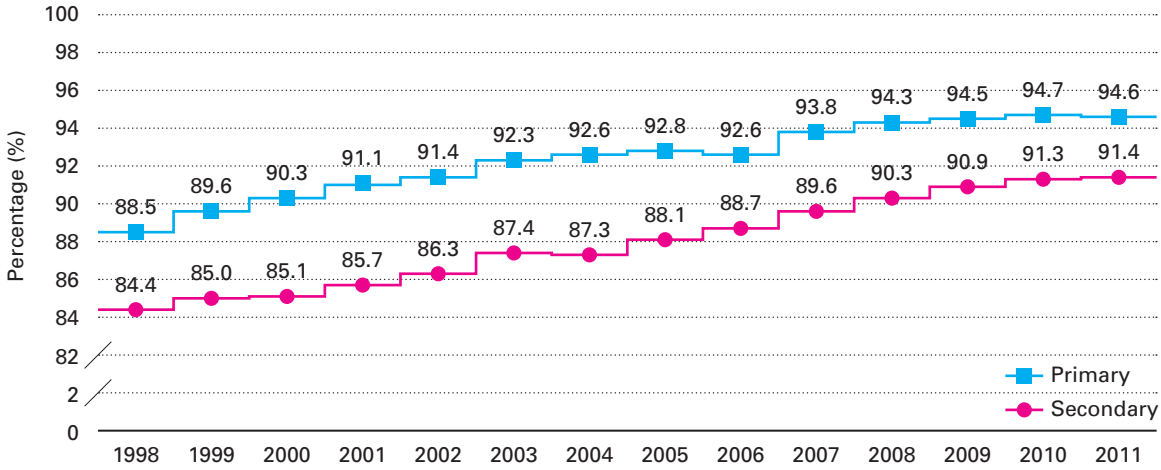
Source: Yemen OOSCI Country Report, using data from Social Protection Monitoring Survey in Yemen, Baseline, 2012 (UNICEF and IPC, 2013).

Norms and traditions that cause education exclusion are deeply rooted in society. However, social norms that affect education can and do change over time, in reaction to broader political, social and economic developments. Often, such changes result from actions from civil society groups and political initiatives leading to legal and policy reforms.

Evidence shows that education is in itself a powerful strategy to increase girls' autonomy and social mobility. In Egypt, the Ishraq (Sunrise) programme is a two-year programme targeted at 12 to 15-year-old girls who have left school at an early age. The programme, which was launched in 2001 by the Population Council in collaboration with several international and national NGOs, combines traditional education programme components including literacy, life skills and nutrition, with more innovative components such as sports and financial education. Classes are normally held in youth centres, which traditionally were male only spaces. Over the past decade, more than 5,000 children in Upper Egypt have been reached by the programme, of which two thirds have been girls. Evaluations have shown that programme participation has had a strong positive effect. For girls, participation has improved literacy skills, improved self-confidence and led to greater mobility and participation in the local community. More than 80 per cent of the participants who took the national literacy test passed the exam and more than half of those girls re-entered the formal education system (Brady et al., 2007; Selim et al., 2013).

Girls' school enrolment and retention in MENA are a reflection of the institutional context and the set of norms and social attitudes that determine the role of girls and women in society. Have the social evolutions that have taken place in the region in recent years favoured girls' education participation? Although the global indicators point to a marked increase in girls' enrolment and a reduction in disparities over time (as shown in the gender index for net enrolment rates in primary and secondary), the examples cited above concerning early marriage show that the responses in the region have been mixed and that the changes are not necessarily fulfilled in a linear, positive and progressive direction *(see Figure 3.3)*.

Figure 3.3 Trend in gender parity index, primary and secondary NER, Arab States average, 1998-2011



Source: UIS, 2014a.

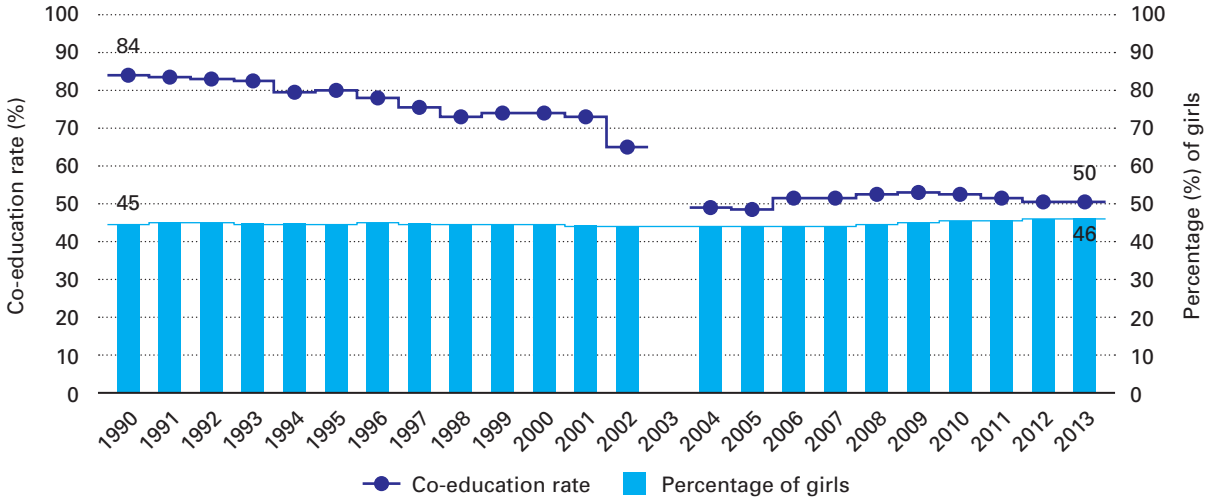
The recent debates in Tunisia on defining women's rights in the new constitution are very instructive and illustrate the tendencies that co-exist in the societies of the region. These debates showed, firstly, that despite the gains made over half a century, a regression is possible (conservative parties question some achievements by considering the woman to be 'complementary' to the man in the draft text of the Constitution) and, secondly, that progress cannot be achieved without a mobilization of a vigilant civil society (despite their minority, progressive parties supported by civil society succeeded in the adoption of articles in the constitution that promote equality between women and men).

It is difficult to track the evolution over time of social norms and attitudes through education indicators. However, one analysis that seems interesting in this regard is the degree of mixed schooling and how it has evolved over time. Indeed, mixed or separated schooling for boys and girls can be a significant indicator of the state of social norms affecting education policy at a given point in time.

The available data show that different pathways have been pursued by the countries in the region, reflecting changes in social norms and in institutional contexts. As with other tendencies, such as early marriage and threats to the achievements of women's rights, the trends with regard to mixed schooling have not been the same across the region. In some countries, as in Tunisia, diversity at all levels of education was an irrevocable political choice. In other countries, mixed schooling is strictly prohibited. This is the case in Saudi Arabia. Several other countries in the region are in an intermediate position, with changes over time reflecting political power relations between progressive and conservative forces. This is how, for instance, mixed schooling was banned in the West Bank in 2013 for students from the age of 9 and women teachers were generalized in girls' schools.

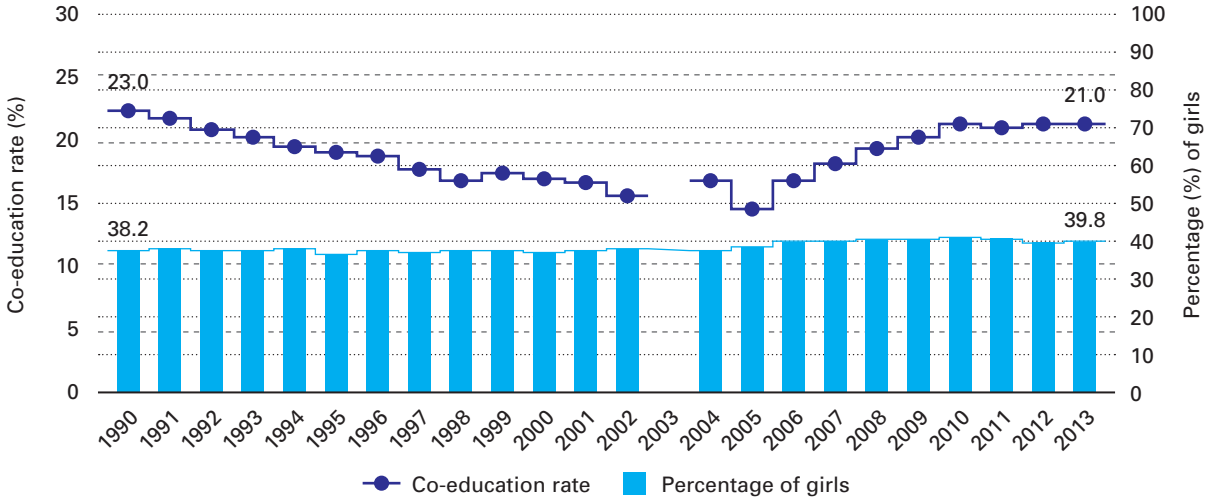
Has the separation between girls and boys been an effective response for improving girls' education participation in the region? Without considering aspects of pedagogy and education quality, available data show that in terms of quantitative indicators, the separation has not favoured girls' participation in education. The example of Iraq is instructive. It shows that the separation between girls and boys in school through a reduction in mixed schooling has not improved girls' participation in education over time *(see Figures 3.4 and 3.5)*. The co-education rate (calculated as the share of mixed schools in relation to all schools) diminished from 83 per cent in the early 1990s to 50 per cent in 2013. Over the same period, the share of girls in primary education has stagnated at 45 per cent. Similarly at the secondary level, the low level of mixed schooling and its slight decrease over time (the co-education rate decreased from 23 per cent in 1990 to 21 per cent in 2013) have not generated a significantly stronger presence of girls at the secondary level. Girls' proportion of the total has remained at less than 40 per cent.

Figure 3.4 Primary education enrolment rate and share of girls in Iraq, 1990-2013



Source: Calculations by the author based on data from the Ministry of Education in Iraq.

Figure 3.5 Secondary education enrolment rate and share of girls in Iraq, 1990-2013

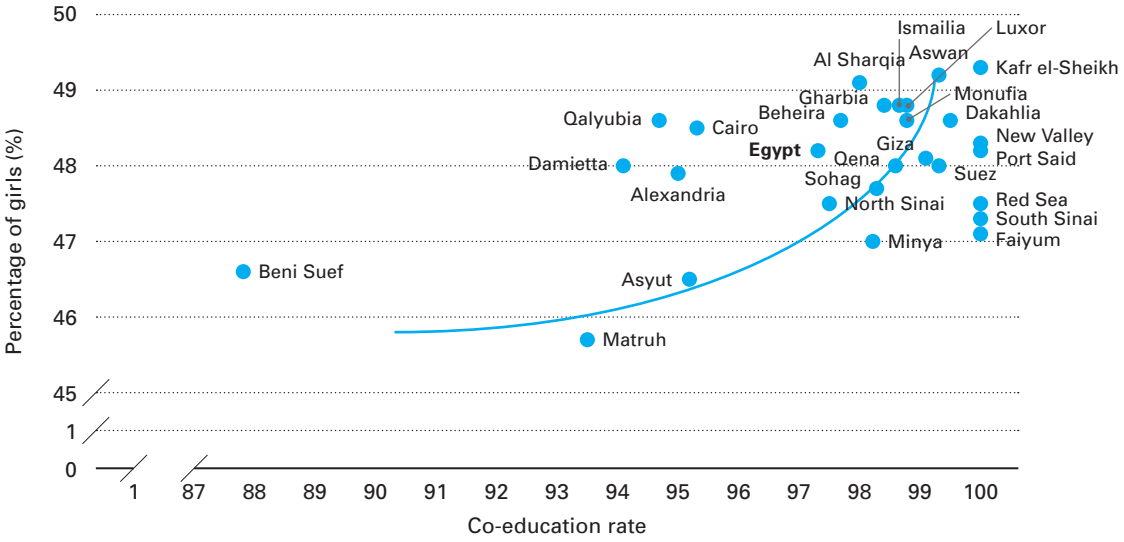


Source: Calculations by the author based on data from the Ministry of Education in Iraq.

The example of Egypt provides another illustration of the limits of separate schooling as a strategy for improving girls' education participation. In fact, the data point in the opposite direction for primary education and seem to have no effect at the secondary level. Higher rates of mixed schooling are associated with a stronger presence of girls in primary schools in Egypt *(see Figure 3.6)*. For lower secondary education, co-education rates vary between Mohafazat, from 12 per cent to 100 per cent. But the level of mixing does not affect the presence of girls, whose share of the total is around 50 per cent at the lower secondary level *(see Figure 3.7)*.

This investigation would gain from more thorough and detailed analysis, and eventually could be extended to other countries in the region. At the same time, the presented indicators provide a contrast to those who promote the separation between girls and boys in school as the solution for a greater enrolment of girls. The illustrated cases show another story: mixed schooling can be favourable to girls' education participation in the region.

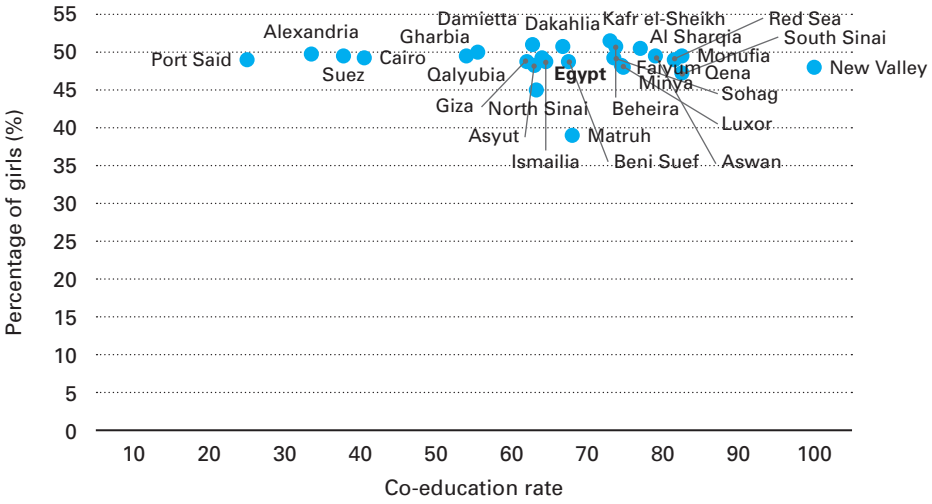
Figure 3.6 Co-education rate and share of girls in primary education by Muhafazat in Egypt in 2013



Note: The co-education rate is calculated as the number of mixed pedagogical divisions in relation to the total number of pedagogical divisions.

Source: Calculated by the author based on data from the Ministry of Education in Egypt.

Figure 3.7 Co-education rate and share of girls in lower secondary education by Muhafazat in Egypt in 2013



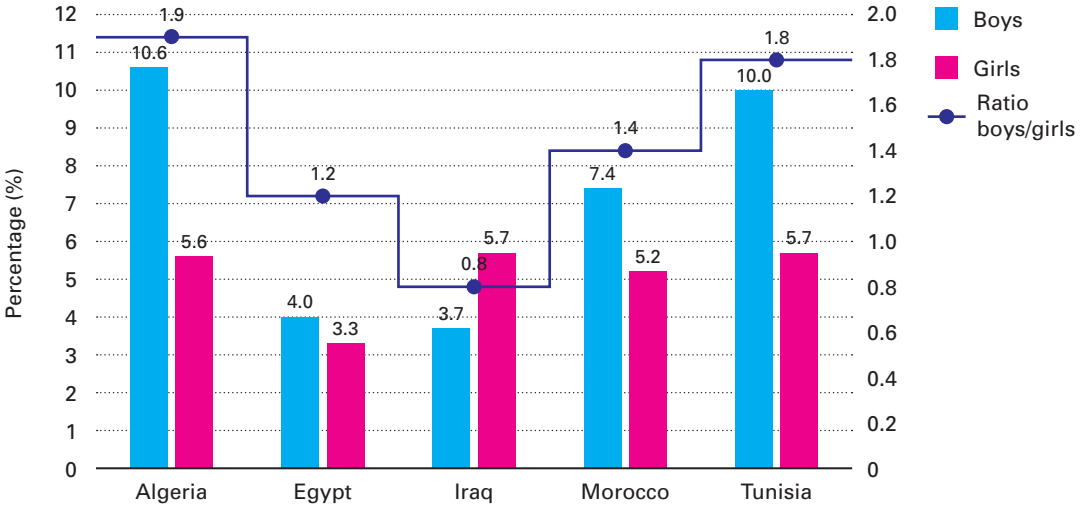
Note: The co-education rate is calculated as the number of mixed pedagogical divisions in relation to the total number of pedagogical divisions.

Source: Calculations by the author based on data from the Ministry of Education in Egypt.

3.3.3 Demand for education

There are important gender dimensions to the dropout patterns found in the MENA region and part of the explanation appears to be linked to boys' lower demand for education. In some countries in the MENA region, a particularly strong dropout phenomenon is noted for boys during the first years of the secondary school cycle. This is especially the case in Algeria and Tunisia, where the boys' dropout rate is nearly twice as big as the one for girls, such a pattern is also present, but less marked, in Egypt and Morocco, while the phenomenon is the opposite in Iraq *(see Figure 3.8)*.
The analysis that follows focuses on the Algeria and Tunisia cases. The aim is to present some explanatory elements, as well as some of the existing (or non-existing) policy measure in these two countries.

Figure 3.8 Average dropout rate for the first two years of secondary education (annual average for the 2011 and 2012 school years)



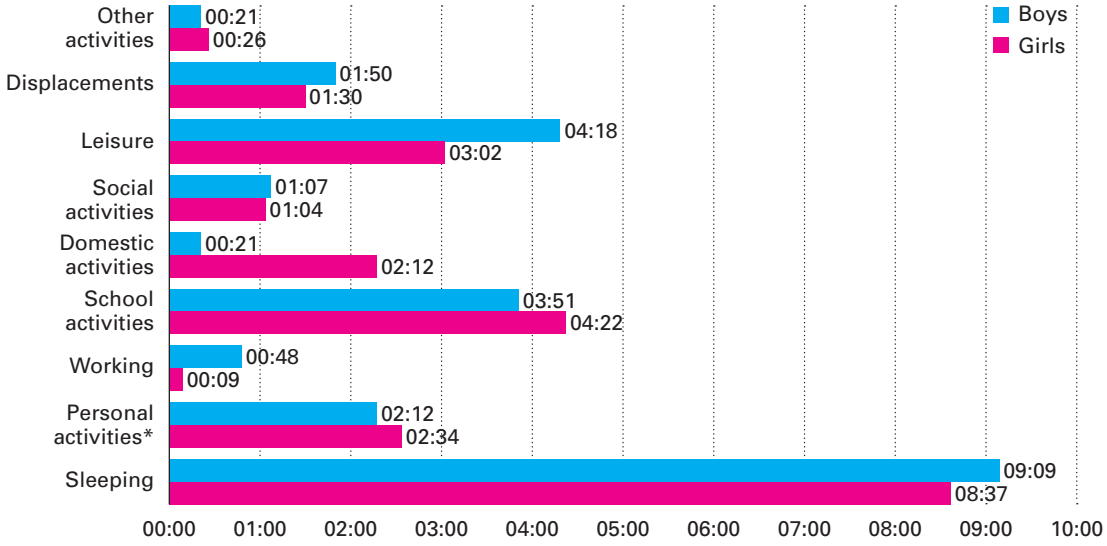
Source: Calculated by the author based on national EMIS data.

The similarities in the situations in Algeria and Tunisia are striking. The origins of the dropout phenomenon go back to the same period, the beginning of the 2000s. Primary dropout rates are near zero and average dropout rates during the first two years of secondary education are above 10 per cent for boys and below 6 per cent for girls in both countries. The explanations put forward in the two cases and the responses in terms of education policy are also similar.

First, it is worth underlining that the phenomenon is widely and unanimously recognized by all major stakeholders in the sector, including students, teachers, responsible officials at the Ministry of Education and parents. Teachers have a tendency to throw the responsibility on the boys themselves because of their lack of attendance and limited engagement in their studies. Teachers also hold families responsible because they are said to look after boys less and are less demanding in terms of accompanying the school work of boys. Students, parents and some persons in charge in the sector recognize the 'lack of attractiveness' of the school and point to internal factors in the school, as well as (and even more importantly) external factors as crucial for explaining why more boys than girls leave school.

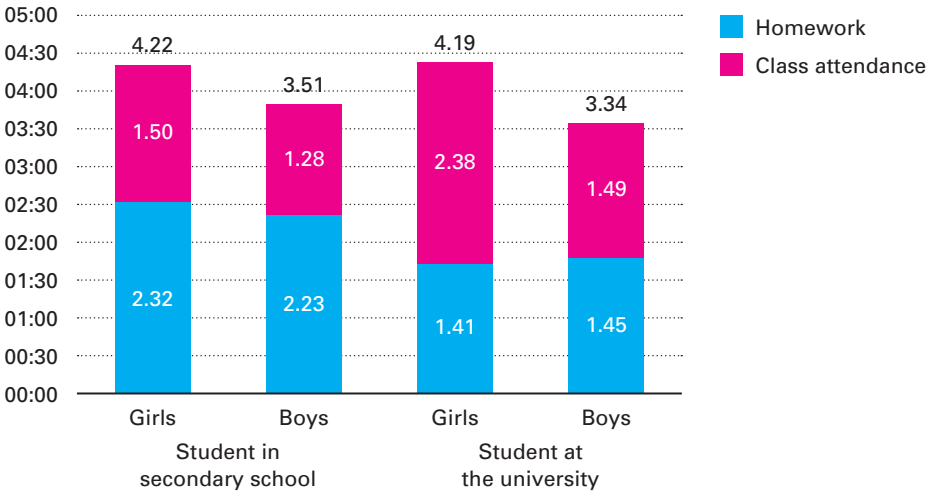
Second, it is worth noting that despite the importance of the phenomenon, there has been no specific research on the issue in either Algeria or Tunisia. Very little statistical data are available. However, one survey conducted in Tunisia in 2006 on how girls and boys spend their time provides some interesting indications that help to explain the issue. The survey shows that girls who are enrolled in secondary or tertiary education spend more time reviewing and preparing lessons at home, surpassing by 25 per cent at the secondary level and 45 per cent at the tertiary level the time spent by boys. The same survey also showed that girls enrolled in secondary education spend 2 hours and 12 minutes daily on household chores against 21 minutes for boys, who have more hours of rest and sleep and more leisure time (4 hours and 18 minutes for boys and 3 hours and 2 minutes for girls).

Figure 3.9 Average time spent by students in secondary education, by gender



Source: l'Enquête Budget temps 2005-06.

Figure 3.10 Average daily time spent in class and on homework in secondary and tertiary education, by gender

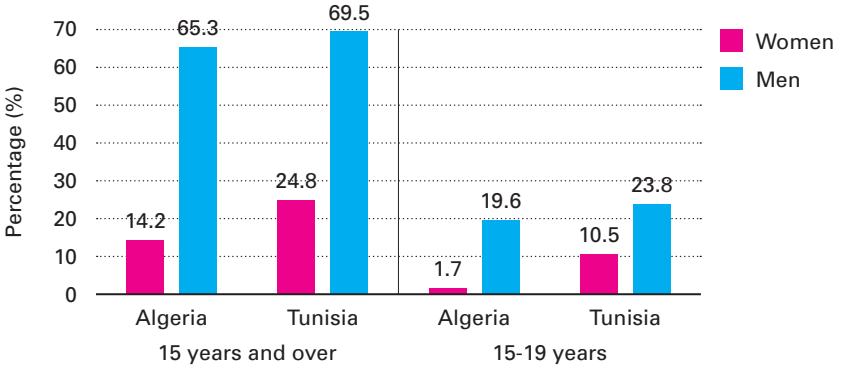


Source: l'Enquête Budget temps 2005-06.

In addition to the difficult adjustment in transitioning from primary to lower secondary school, which is common for girls and boys, school failure during the first years of lower secondary school play out differently for girls and boys. Certainly, school factors are involved, but factors external to the school and most notably related to the socio-economic dimension have a greater influence on young boys' failure than that of young girls.

The MENA region is characterized by low economic integration of women: the employment rate of women is about 20 per cent against a global average of over 51 per cent. In this area, the disparities between women and men are especially important in Algeria *(see Figure 3.11)*. Even if this reflects a combination of several region-specific socio-economic factors, it is interesting to note that the difference in economic participation among young people aged 15-19 years is mainly explained by the different retention rates in education between girls and boys: In Algeria nearly one in five young boys work, while for girls the share is less than 2 per cent. Girls are motivated by a clear desire for liberation and this necessarily involves studies, which is almost the only way for social advancement.

Figure 3.11 Activity level by gender, Algeria and Tunisia for 15 years and older, and for 15 to 19-years-old



Source: Calculated by the author based on l'Enquête nationale sur la population et l'emploi, 2010 (Tunisia) and l'Enquête emploi auprès des ménages, 2011 (Algeria).

Girls often lack alternatives; they simply face a choice of school or home. However, boys face a different choice: between school and a job (activity), or in the worst case, between school and the street (inactivity). A few surveys in Tunisia also show that many young boys are attracted by the idea of immigration: more than 41 per cent of youth express that they want to immigrate. This proportion is higher among boys (53 per cent) than among girls (30 per cent). For young people aged 15-19 years, 20 per cent of boys wish to immigrate illegally. This proportion is 9 per cent for girls. This shows that the desire to immigrate and to immigrate illegally is a reality among boys in Tunisia. It is particularly worrying that the most cited motivation behind the desire to immigrate is the view that there is no future in Tunisia. Thus, lack of motivation for studies is mainly found among boys and is mainly due to uncertainty about future employment opportunities, which in some cases leads to leaving school.

Discussions with key stakeholders in Algeria and in Tunisia make it possible to draw two overall conclusions about the boys' dropout rate:

1. There is an awareness of this phenomenon, more present in Tunisia than in Algeria, which may, according to some, lead to social imbalance (currently, boys account for only about a third of students at the tertiary level).
2. This awareness has not (yet) resulted in any specific research and even less in targeted educational policy measures to address the dropout phenomenon.

To address this dropout phenomenon, appropriate policy measures that consider both social and education dimensions will be needed. For such purposes, it is of value to learn from small-scale experiences that have been able to tailor appropriate responses to retain girls and boys in school. Elsewhere in the region, several initiatives point to the importance of linking school improvement efforts to broader strategies to strengthen children's rights and reducing the cost of education:

- In response to the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), Egypt's Girls Education Initiative (EGEI) was launched in 2003 to address girls' exclusion from primary education in remote and disadvantaged areas. The EGEI has been implemented alongside a few other child-rights programmes, coordinated by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) that target female genital mutilation and early marriage. Close to 1,200 girl-friendly schools (GFS) have been established in seven target governorates, enrolling some 34,000 students, with the majority being girls. The schools provide high-quality education and active learning for children in safe environments (UNGEI, 2011). Moreover, GFS provide financial incentives to encourage girls' education: parents are not responsible for any costs (such as school fees, uniforms or stationary) and the World Food Programme (WFP) has provided daily meals for children in schools as well as dry meals (rice and oil)

for students' families on the condition that the students' regular attendance is not less than 80 per cent per month. According to a recent evaluation of the initiative, the GFS has increased girls' enrolment rates and reduced the number of early marriages in the communities where the Initiative was established (UNGEI, 2011).[12] Although EGEI has been successful and has reduced gender gaps at the primary level, the project has been implemented only on a small scale in targeted communities.

- The Community Schools Project (CSP) is another successful, albeit small-scale, project in Egypt. The establishment of community schools began in 1992. Remote communities in Upper Egypt were targeted with a special focus on girls who had dropped out of school. The CSP is implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Education, NGOs, local communities, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNICEF and WFP. Best practices and lessons learned from the 227 early pilot schools of CSP (mainly in terms of curricula and teaching methods) have been extended to EGEI's girl-friendly schools and other education projects throughout the country. The CSP has promoted multi-grade, child-centred and active teaching techniques. Community mobilization and sensitization have been crucial for increasing enrolment and for reducing gender gaps. According to a recent evaluation of the project, the community schools have overall been effective in increasing access and in improving learning outcomes. The objectives of improved completion and increased popularity of education have been successfully attained with completion rates in community schools at around 90 per cent. Furthermore, early marriages and incidences of child labour have diminished in communities served by CSP schools. However, the evaluation of the project notes that CSP schools have not always succeeded in enrolling the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach children in remote and disadvantaged communities (UNICEF, 2010b).

3.3.4 Supply side barriers

A long distance to school is a significant barrier to girls' participation. The shortage of nearby schools is often more frequent in rural areas and is amplified as girls get older. Not only are secondary schools less present than primary schools in rural villages, but family restrictions on girls' mobility also tend to increase when girls enter puberty. In Morocco, the distance between home and school is reported to have a negative impact on girls' attendance, reflecting parental security concerns. Also, girls' transition to secondary schools is negatively affected by the lack of secondary schools in rural areas (Morocco OOSCI study). In Yemen, the dropout rates for girls living in rural areas start rising in Grade 6 and increase with every higher grade. In many cases, this is due to the lack of a secondary school in the village where the girl lives. Boys do not face the same situation, as families allow them to walk to the closest village with a secondary school. Yet parents find this daily commute unsafe or inappropriate for their daughters (Yemen OOSCI study).

The lack of female teachers is another reason why some girls are excluded from education. The presence of female teachers at schools provides positive role models for girls, as well as opportunities for female guidance and counselling. Again, the shortage of female teachers is often more acute in rural than in urban areas. In Morocco, female teachers in rural schools represent only about one third of all public school teachers (Morocco OOSCI study). In Yemen, female teachers account for only 22 per cent of all primary school teachers, with the share in rural areas as low as 9 per cent (Yemen OOSCI study). In Djibouti, out of 380 teachers in 71 rural government schools, only 39 (10 per cent) are women (Djibouti OOSCI study).

[12] NCCM declared that the gender gap in primary enrolment rates decreased by 60 per cent between 2002 and 2007 in the targeted villages of the initiative. However, the evaluator of EGEI could not review the documentations that proved this due to poor record keeping of the initiative.

In Yemen, sex-segregated schools are common in some areas, with existing schools applying double shifts with boys attending in the morning and girls in the afternoon. To enhance girls' participation, efforts have been made to recruit more female teachers to the girls' shifts. However, this has proven challenging as female teachers do not necessarily live in the same village as where the schools are located. Since traditional norms do not permit a women to live in another village without her husband or a brother, recruitment of enough female teachers has been limited. In villages where teachers have been recruited but live elsewhere, absenteeism is common due to difficulties in commuting.

The case of Yemen also highlights how the policy objectives of recruiting better qualified teachers and more female teachers have in reality contradicted each other. In an attempt to improve the quality of education, the Yemeni government in 2006 mandated that the minimum qualification to become a teacher is a university degree. While exceptions to this rule are permitted in isolated areas, the government has through this policy made it even more difficult for women to be recruited as teachers (Yemen OOSCI study).

Experiences from the roll-out of Egypt's Education Enhancement Program (EEP) that started in the late 1990s show how constraints in the supply of schools can be 'disguised' by common beliefs that girls do not go to school because of cultural traditions. Before the programme started, the big gender gap between girls and boys was commonly dismissed as a cultural issue. However, the research conducted for the EEP revealed that often traditions were not the main obstacle to girls schooling. Rather, bottlenecks were traced to practical problems such as the distance girls had to travel to school and overcrowded classrooms. Girls were found to be disproportionately affected by regional differences, in particular in rural areas. As a response, the major school construction component of the EEP targeted the areas with low enrolment rates for girls. For the Ministry of Education, the planning of the school construction also meant a significant breakthrough in terms of using data and research findings to plan the programme. The selection criteria for new schools were explicitly designed to get more girls to come to school. In rural areas, new schools were built in areas where girls enrolment rates were less than 45 per cent. It was a requirement that the school to home distance should not exceed 1km for primary, and 2km for lower secondary. Alongside school construction, the EEP also invested in community mobilization, awareness campaigns to reduce dropout and provision of subsidies to cover for school uniforms and supplies for deprived families. Between 1996 and 2004, a total of 428 schools were built and most of the quantitative enrolment targets were achieved. Programme results point to significant increases in girls' enrolment and that girls' enrolment increased faster than that of boys over the 1996-2003 period (Iqbal and Riad, 2004).

3.4 How emergencies impact on education and strategies to protect the right to education

3.4.1 Introduction

The destructive impact of armed conflicts on education participation is evident across many countries in the MENA region. But how do conflicts interrupt schooling? What are the pathways and mechanisms through which violence and instability cause education exclusion? And what can be done to combat such exclusion? Understanding and documenting these pathways and mechanisms is critical for improving children's opportunities for learning in conflict settings. This section looks at two common, and often mutually reinforcing causes of education exclusion due to armed conflicts, along with a review of some education responses from the region in recent years:

- Attacks on education and what can be done to make education safer
- Forced displacement and strategies for addressing education exclusion for displaced children

Key messages to emerge are:

- The security situation for students and teachers in a large group of conflict-affected countries in the region is appalling. Direct attacks on schools, abductions, looting and military use of school buildings undermine children's right to education and is a major cause of education exclusion in Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Sudan and Yemen.
- Children displaced by conflict, either internally in their home country or as refugees, face particularly severe barriers to education. Examples include the high cost of schooling, language of instruction, insecurity and bureaucracy.
- Numerous experiences from the region show that even in very challenging environments, flexible and innovative measures can keep education going. A recent example is catch up education for more than a quarter of a million children in Syria.
- Low levels of funding stand out as the most critical bottlenecks for reaching conflict affected children with education in MENA. It is estimated that in 2012, about 2.2 million children in Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen were not reached by emergency education responses due to funding shortfalls.

3.4.2 Protecting education from attack[13]

During armed conflicts, children's lives come under threat and going to school can suddenly become a dangerous activity. Common threats to children's education include direct attacks on schools, students and teachers, abductions, forced recruitment and sexual violence. Looting and military use of school buildings are other ways in which conflicts undermine children's right to education.

Attacks on education in the MENA region figure prominently in reporting from the United Nations. The 2013 Report of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict pays special attention to the escalating conflict in Syria and the inflow of refugees in neighbouring countries, as well as the protracted crisis in Yemen. The Special Representative stresses that attacks on schools and hospitals remain widespread and alarming. She urges parties in conflict to fully comply with the obligation under International Humanitarian Law which prohibits armed forces from using schools for any purpose in support of their military efforts (UN, 2013b).

Despite major progress by the international community in monitoring attacks on education in recent years, the reporting of such attacks remains fragmented and probably underestimates the real scale of violence. Yet existing reporting from the region provides stark reminders of the appalling security situation for students and teachers in MENA. The following are some examples:

- In Iraq, bombing attacks and gunfire continue to be common threats to students and teachers. Although the security situation improved in 2009, gunfire and explosive devices caused the death of some 106 students and wounded at least another 200 between 2009 and 2012. Over the same period, a total of 56 attacks against school buildings were documented (GCPEA, 2014). Frequently, car bombs or suicide bombers directly target schools or government buildings located close to schools. Behind several of the threats against schools are demands from insurgent groups for changes to the curriculum or control over other school elements. In early October 2013, a suicide bomber drove a truck with explosives into a primary school in the Mosul province in northern Iraq, killing 14 school children and their headmaster (Reuters, 2013).
- In Syria, the 2014 Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan reports that the Ministry of Education estimate between 4,100 and 4,500 schools cannot be used as they are damaged, have been destroyed, are in use by internally displaced persons, or are unreachable. This represents up to one fifth of all schools in Syria (OCHA, 2013d;

[13] This section builds largely on work and materials from the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), including most notably GCPEA (2014) Education Under Attack 2014, GPCEA, New York.

OCHA, 2013b). Evidence shows that some schools were deliberately targeted by forces on both sides of the conflict. In mid-2013, Human Rights Watch reported that Syrian armed forces attacked schools although these were not being used by the combating side of the conflict and while classes were ongoing (GCPEA, 2014).

- In Sudan, decades of conflict in different parts of the country have caused the death of hundreds of thousands and displaced millions. In recent years, children's opportunities to go to school in the South Kordofan province have been particularly constrained. As of December 2011, the UN estimated that close to 138,000 children in the province were prevented from going to school. The most common reasons were insecurity, damaged schools, schools being used by armed forces or schools being frequently inhabited by internally displaced persons (GCPEA, 2014).
- In Yemen, the UN Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict report that between 2009 and 2012, at least 720 incidents occurred against schools, including direct attacks, looting, threats and military use of school buildings. From mid 2009 to early 2010, the number of attacks increased in the far north of the country during the conflict between the army and the Houthis in the Sa'ada governorate. During the war, all schools had to close. Once the security situation improved, the Sa'ada education office reported that nearly one third (215 out of 725 schools) of the governorate's schools had been completely or partially destroyed or looted (GCPEA, 2014).
- Recent conflict in Israel and Palestine has killed students and teachers, and damaged and destroyed a number of schools. The most serious period was from December 2008 to January 2009, when the fighting during Israeli Operation Caset Lead destroyed 18 schools and kindergartens and damaged another 262 in Palestine. Nine schools were damaged by Hamas during the same period (GCPEA, 2011).

To reduce the risks of attacks on students, teachers and schools, a range of protection measures have been developed and employed in areas affected by conflict throughout the MENA region. Thanks to these efforts, children's schooling can continue in some capacity even in areas hit hard by conflict. Based on experiences in the MENA region and elsewhere, such protection measures include:[14]

Physical protection: To make it safer to go to school, numerous examples exist on how physical protection for children can be enhanced. Often, this includes the use of guards to protect schools, provision of housing for children close to schools, accompanying children to and from school and reinforcing the safety of modes of transportation.

Depending on the context, responses for better physical protection can be led by local communities, by humanitarian aid workers or by national governments. In 2009 in Iraq, an increase in the number of threats and abductions of children from some ethnic and religious groups made it difficult for children from these groups to go to school. While the exact figure remains uncertain, the Iraq Ministry of Interior estimated that 265 children were abducted in 2009. As a response, the Ministry of Education issued instructions to schools to increase the number of security patrols and ensure checkpoints in and around schools.

Several other examples of physical protection measures are found in Palestine, where fighting and tensions put children at risk daily. This is not only due to direct attacks of school buildings, but also through the constant risks children face on their way to and from school. To protect Palestinian children from harassment and attacks by Israeli soldiers and settlers, a system of so-called protective presence groups exists, whereby international volunteers accompany children en route to school. In the Gaza Access Restricted Areas, special safety measures exist to facilitate communication between parents and teachers. To avoid dangerous routes, parents can call teachers to get advice on which routes to take to school. An alert system has also been introduced to ensure

[14] This section is based on GCPEA (2011) Study on Field-Based Programmatic Measures to Protect Education from Attack, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, New York.

children's safety. Due to the serious challenges school children face in getting to and from school, the Education Cluster has in recent years put high priority on the provision of safe transportation. In 2012, school transportation was included as a humanitarian intervention in the UN Consolidated Appeals Process.

Alternative ways of delivering education: When it is too dangerous for children to attend their normal school sites, other modes of delivery are frequently developed. This can include organizing temporary schools in such locations as religious buildings or at home, holding summer sessions or providing distance learning programmes. The United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) has a long tradition of organizing summer camps. In 2010, nearly a quarter of a million students participated in 1,200 summer camps. While not replacing formal education, it provides a valuable opportunity for enhanced life skills. The summer camps include a wide range of activities, such as sports, art classes, trips to museums and life skills lessons including human rights education. Distance education is another example of an alternative delivery mode of education for Palestinian students. In the K-12 setting, a joint effort between UNICEF, Palestinian teachers and the local community resulted in a distance remedial learning programme during the Second Intifada. To make it possible for primary and secondary students to continue to study during periods of school disruption, lessons were broadcast on television.

Raising awareness and better information: Advocacy and monitoring of attacks are two indirect, yet powerful measures through which the protection of education from attack can be enhanced. Advocacy efforts in the MENA region are frequently linked to NGO or UN programmes that, through the media, aim at building awareness of human rights issues. In Iraq, a coalition of 56 NGOs work together through the Iraqi Child Rights Network (ICRN). The aim of the coalition is to raise the profile and status of children's rights. Awareness building is one major component of its work, another is to work in collaboration with official bodies to set laws in motion which are critical for children's' well-being.

The systematic collection of information on attacks on education has improved in recent years. Examples from the MENA region include the Israel/oPt Working Group on Grave Violations Against Children, created in 2007. The Working Group has established a database for the standardized recording of grave violations against children and submits, on a voluntary basis, bi-monthly reports to the Office of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, in line with the UN 1612 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM).[15] In Iraq, the MRM Task Force was established in 2010 and was followed by the creation of an intergovernmental committee in 2011. The committee is chaired by the Ministry of Human Rights and includes representatives from core ministries, including Defence, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Labour, Social Affairs, Education and the Interior.

3.4.3 Overcoming education barriers for displaced children

My father went to 10 schools. Finally, I was registered. They referred us to one school with all the Syrian children. Now they want to move us to another school farther away. When we go to school, no one respects us. My father wanted to cry because the principal doesn't respect us.

Syrian boy, refugee, age 14, in Irbid, Jordan

Education brings stability and hope to displaced families. Numerous statements from refugee mothers, fathers and children in the MENA region show that the provision of schooling is a top priority for families in disarray. Examples from the region also point to major efforts by host communities, governments and humanitarian aid organizations to expand the provision of education for displaced families. The government of Jordan

[15] UN Security Council Resolution 1612 sets up a formal MRM for six grave violations against children. Currently the UN 1612 MRM is active in four countries in the MENA region: Iraq, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Recently, through UN Security Council Resolution 1998, the trigger for initiating the MRM process in a country was expanded to include attacks on schools and requires monitoring of the military use of schools.

hosts the largest Iraqi refugee population and after a period of mixed announcements as to whether or not Iraqi children were allowed to attend public schools, a royal decree in 2007 allowed Iraqi refugee children access to public schools on the same basis as Jordanian children regardless of their legal status (Human Rights Watch, 2006; Ferris and Winthrop, 2010). The government of Lebanon has issued an internal memorandum requesting all public schools to register children from Syria whatever their legal status. UNRWA has provided basic education for Palestinian refugee children for over 60 years and as of 2013, it enrols nearly half a million students.

Despite these efforts, displaced children continue to face a range of challenges in accessing education. To enable evidence-based programming in relation to the influx of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, the UN, NGOs and host governments have over the past year conducted a number of needs assessments. While the scale, scope and methodology used in these assessments vary widely, they provide a useful testimony of the barriers displaced Syrian children face in accessing education in host communities (UNHCR et al., 2012; UNICEF and Save the Children, 2012; NRC and UNICEF, 2013; UNCHR and UNICEF, 2013; Education Sector Working Group, 2013):[16]

Economic constraint is cited as an important barrier to sending children to school in all but one of the reviewed needs assessments.[17] The financial barrier seems particularly strong in the Kurdish region of Iraq, where one in five families in a statistically representative sample identified the economic cost of schooling as a main reason for non-attendance. Costs associated with transport, learning materials and uniforms were stated as unaffordable expenditures to these families. In Lebanon, transport and tuition fees are frequently too costly for Syrian families. As a result, schools are in most cases only attended by children who reside within walking distance from school. Some schools in Lebanon offer a waiver on school fees for Syrian refugee children. At the same time, school principals report that due to the delays in receiving compensation for the missing tuition fees from the Ministry of Education, many principals hesitate to introduce waivers in their schools. The average monthly tuition fee per child is 100,000L.L, approximately US$66, an amount that is well beyond the financial means of most Syrian refugee families in Lebanon.

Language of instruction is identified as a major barrier for Syrian children in Lebanon, the Kurdish region of Iraq and in Egypt. In Lebanon, foreign languages (French or English) stand out as the main cause of exclusion from education for Syrian children and a common reason for leaving school. In Lebanon, French or English are used as the language of instruction while in Syria they were only studied as foreign languages. In focus group discussions, teachers expressed that Syrian school children were 'like a deaf person in a wedding', pointing to major difficulties for them to understand or participate in class. Interestingly, findings from a large number of focus group discussions with children and parents show that Syrians do not wish to study solely in Arabic. They see foreign languages as a means for upward social mobility. What they request is support through intensive language courses to learn French and/or English quickly. In the Kurdish region of Iraq, Syrian refugee children face major difficulties in attending schools that have Kurdish as language of instruction. This is also the case for Syrian children with a Kurdish ethnic background. In Egypt, although Arabic is the language of instruction, children have major difficulties understanding teachers' accents. As a response, in some host communities, Syrian teachers are identified and brought in to teach Syrian children.[18]

[16] This analysis is based on findings from five needs assessments from the MENA region conducted between July 2012 and August 2013, including two in Lebanon, one in the Kurdish region of Iraq, one in the Za'atari camp in Jordan and one needs assessment from Egypt.

[17] The cost of education, either direct or indirect, does not emerge as a major barrier to education access in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan.

[18] This is the case in a limited number of community-based schools. Syrian teachers do not teach in government public schools.

Insecurity is reported to contribute to education exclusion for displaced Syrian children in all the assessed settings, except the Kurdish region of Iraq. In Egypt, mothers and children stressed that children were subject to violence in schools. Violence at school, including examples of verbal abuse and corporal punishment was a common concern among parents and children in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. For children in Za'atari, violence and harassment on the way to and from school was highlighted as a critical reason for not going to school in several focus group discussions of children who had left school. This problem is also reported to be a major issue in Lebanon.

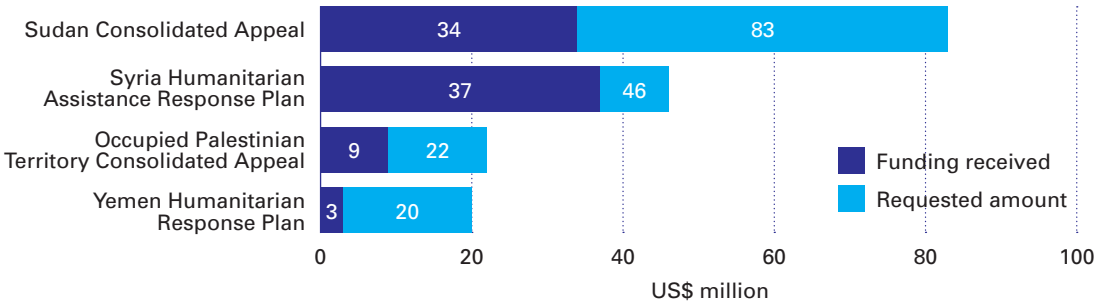
Bureaucracy is a common bottleneck for school enrolment. Government officials and school managements frequently request documents that Syrians are unable to provide. Complicated paperwork and long waiting periods are seen as discriminating and humiliating (Egypt). In focus group discussions, Syrian adolescents in Duhok and Erbil (Iraq) shared their deep frustration with the education bureaucracy as they had made numerous unsuccessful attempts to enrol in schooling. For some of them, these attempts had been going on for two years. Beyond bureaucracy, there are also legal barriers involved. In Lebanon, the majority of displaced Syrians in North Lebanon has entered the country illegally. School administrations have received ministerial instructions to allow students without legal papers to register in schools. Yet the Lebanese needs assessment detected hesitation and caution among some school principals in registering Syrian children. Given the uncertain legal status of these children, principal shared that they were afraid to 'get stuck' with these students in terms of financial and procedural issues.

Addressing displaced children's education exclusion

Reaching displaced children with education is not easy. In zones of violence and limited access, the operational environment for local partners and international agencies is complex and requires a high degree of flexibility and innovation if children are to be reached. For host governments and communities, the influx of refugee children put great strains on already stretched education systems. Yet numerous experiences from the MENA region show that even in very challenging environments, there are response measures and initiatives that can keep education going. Essential building blocks for successful responses include the following elements.

Adequate levels of financing: The critical role of education for displaced children is gaining recognition in the humanitarian aid community. Today, there is a much broader acceptance and inclusion of emergency education in international humanitarian responses (Anderson and Hodgkin, 2010). UNICEF, together with UNHCR, UNRWA and a number of NGOs play an important role in advocating for and mobilizing resources for displaced children in the MENA region. Yet education face serious underfunding.

Figure 3.12 Consolidated appeal requests and funding for education in MENA in 2013



Source: OCHA, 2013c.

The Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) is the most important mechanism for mobilizing humanitarian aid for complex emergencies.[19] A financial overview of those Consolidated Appeals from the MENA region in 2013 that included specified requests for education is provided *(see Figure 3.12)*. Out of the five consolidated appeals in the region, four included specific requests and funding for education responses.[20] Djibouti was the exception. Taken together, the requests for education in Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen amounted to US$83 million, representing 5 per cent of MENA's total Consolidated Appeal requests. Overall, an average of 61 per cent of the MENA Consolidated Appeals was funded in 2013. For education, only 49 per cent of education funding requests were met (OCHA, 2013c).

On the whole, the amounts available to meet conflict affected childrens' learning needs in MENA remain very modest. While education over the past decade has gained a seat at the humanitarian aid table, financial shortfalls keep excluding many children in emergencies from education. Recent analysis by the Global Education Cluster Unit signals the major scale of the problem and how the lack of education funding is failing children in MENA *(see Table 3.5)*. The analysis is based on the total number of identified beneficiaries by project for the education sector in each of the 2012 CAPs and Flash Appeals, and levels of requested and received funding. The central emerging message is that, in 2012, only 1.3 million of those targeted by education in emergency responses in Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen received that support, while nearly 2.2 million did not (Global Education Cluster, 2013).

Table 3.5 Projected number of reached and not reached education beneficiaries in MENA consolidated appeals in 2012

	Education funding received (%)	Target number of education beneficiaries"	Estimated reached	Estimated not reached
Syria	9%	204,500	19,103	185,397
Yemen	26%	1,030,000	271,156	758,844
Sudan	43%	1,745,628	742,221	1,003,407
Palestine	55%	459,728	251,404	208,324
Total		**3,439,856**	**1,283,884**	**2,155,972**

Source: Global Education Cluster (2013).

Coordination among key actors: To respond effectively to emergencies, it is essential that key education providers collaborate closely. UN agencies, with UNICEF in the forefront, and NGOs have developed a range of standardized education responses to facilitate education access for displaced children. Notable and well established examples include school-in-a-box, child friendly spaces and school feeding. In very direct ways, these response measures help NGOs and community groups to maintain access to education for displaced children in the MENA region. Table 3.6 highlights Efforts in Syria and Sudan in response to the humanitarian crisis in the two countries during 2013 have been highlighted *(see Table 3.6)*.

[19] It is acknowledged that other humanitarian funding is provided.

[20] The analysis excludes the 2013 Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP), as the reporting of the RRP funds in OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS) is not specified by sector. The RRP was the world's largest in 2013, with 71 per cent of the US$3 billion of the requested funds received.

Table 3.6 Examples of education responses for displaced children in MENA in 2013

Country and Appeal	Displacement	Education responses included in the 2013 appeal
Syria: Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan Education request: US$46 million, of which 82% met	An estimated 6.5 million displaced by end 2013, of which nearly 3 million are children. The figure includes at least 270,000 Palestinian refugees within Syria. As of end 2013, an estimated 1.1 million Syrian children had left Syria.	• Remedial/catch up education for 260,000 children • Psycho-social support (PSS) services to 270,000 children • Train 12,000 teachers/education staff on PSS and the INEE minimum standards • Accelerated learning through media for 400,000 children • Learning spaces and education supplies benefitting 326,000 students • Strengthen capacity of vocational training services benefitting 10,000 adolescent boys and girls
Sudan: UN and Partners Work Plan Education request: US$83 million, of which 41% met	By the end of 2013, an estimated 6.1 million people in need of assistance, including 2.5 million IDPs. It is estimated that Sudan hosts 354,000 refugees.	• Education for 150,000 children through education partner support, school meals and classroom construction/rehabilitation • Improved education quality for 350,000 children through learning materials and education supplies • Training for 5,500 teachers • Alternative learning programmes benefitting 40,000 children and youth • Training and support to 1,700 PTAs and 15 NGOs for involvement in community-based education responses • Training of 30 government officials

Source: OCHA, 2013g; OCHA, 2012; UNICEF, 2013c; OCHA, 2013a; OCHA, 2013b; OCHA, 2013f; OCHA, 2013c.

Flexibility in the provision of learning opportunities: Where conflict disrupts learning, the formal education system tends to struggle with major capacity constraints in providing sufficient learning opportunities for displaced children. In these contexts, flexibility and willingness to innovate become paramount. Some common response measures to overcome education exclusion for internally displaced persons and refugees include the hiring of teachers among displaced populations, advocacy and negotiations with host governments and schools to let refugee children attend school, the issuing of temporary documentation for those who have lost or do not possess key documentation, and the provision of non-formal catch up programmes for youth.

In Djibouti, many children lack birth certificates and this has been identified as a major administrative bottleneck that keeps children out of school. The challenge is particularly acute for children who are not originally from Djibouti and for those who are internally displaced. A joint initiative by the government and UNICEF in 2007 shows how flexibility in terms of documentation for school registration can pay off in terms of increased school participation. Before the start of the 2007/2008 school year, the Ministry of Education sent instructions to school inspectors and directors and asked them to register children even if they did not have birth certificates. This was accompanied with a social mobilization campaign and the distribution of school materials. The opening of schools for refugees and internally displaced children without birth certificates resulted in a tangible increase in education participation. The effect was greatest in the part of the capital where many internally displaced children live. For Djibouti as a whole, the 2007/2008 school year recorded a nearly 15 per cent increase in new school inscriptions, the highest increase recorded in the past decade. For Balbala, the part of the capital with a large proportion of internally displaced children without birth certificates, the increase in that same year was as high as 65 per cent. The recent Djibouti study on out-of-school children notes that more than one in four children still do not go to school. The study recommends the government to renew the initiative from 2007 and that the international community provides the necessary financial support to the initiative (Djibouti OOSCI study).

Several NGOs and UN agencies in the region support non-formal alternative education programmes as a flexible way to respond to education exclusion. Typically, these programmes give students the possibility to progress faster than in the mainstream system. Experiences from Iraq and Sudan show that such programmes play a particularly important function in protracted crises, where very large numbers of children have missed years of schooling. Due to the long period of conflict in Iraq, the country has accumulated substantial experience of accelerated education programmes. To provide non-formal learning for children who have dropped out of school, UNICEF has in recent years intensified its support to the accelerated learning programmes (ALP). The number of ALP students has increased from around 17,000 in the 2007/2008 school year to more than 60,000 in 2010/2011 (UNICEF Iraq, 2010; UNICEF Iraq, 2011). Implemented in close collaboration with national authorities and local communities, the programme has developed a special ALP methodology and pedagogy. Most notably, this includes adapting the content of textbooks to fit with the older age group and to train teachers to work with this age group. The ALP in Iraq offers several pathways to its students, including transfer to the formal education system or vocational training.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has developed a second chance programme called the Youth Education Programme (YEP) which is now organized in 10 countries, including in Sudan. The YEP targets internally displaced persons, returnees and other vulnerable youth aged 14 and older through a one-year programme. A five country review of the YEP has pointed to the programme's uniqueness and ability to successfully combine literacy training with life skills and practical skills for employability. The review also showed that the principal barrier for implementing the programme at scale was the availability of trained teachers. Sudan was one of the few countries where the government seconded teachers to the programme and paid teacher salaries (UNICEF, 2009a; Lind Petersen, 2013).

Adolescents who have missed out on education are a group of special concern. The aspiration and capacity of youth form the basis for sustainable peace building and inclusive economic growth in conflict-ridden societies. ALPs are relatively well established in several of the conflict-affected countries in the MENA region and routine monitoring and reporting point to promising results. Yet their number of students these programmes reach appear limited and questions remain about how to keep ALP students enrolled once they join mainstream education. A major global evaluation of UNICEF's support to education in emergencies concluded a few years ago that ALPs are 'an effective and impactful resilience building practice that could be taken to scale' (UNICEF, 2010a).

4 Conclusions and recommendations

This regional report bears witness to important progress in reducing education exclusion in MENA over the past decade. The large majority of countries in the region have reduced the share of out-of-school children of primary school age and in two thirds of the countries with data, the number of out-of-school children has been reduced by at least 50 per cent since the year 2000. The education opportunities for lower secondary age children have also been considerably expanded, with the share of lower secondary school age out-of-school children decreased from 18 per cent in 2003 to 12 per cent in 2012.

The report further demonstrates strong political and financial commitment to education from most national governments and children's fundamental right to education is set out in national laws in all countries in MENA. Moreover, all countries are signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

However, the report also highlights that:

Children's exclusion from education remains a significant problem in the region. Data from the UIS show that in 2012, an estimated 7.2 million children in MENA were out of school. The total number of out-of-school children is comprised of 4.3 million children of primary school age (Dimension 2) and 2.9 million of lower secondary age (Dimension 3). A further 5.1 million children of pre-primary school age (Dimension 1) were not enrolled in pre-primary or primary education in 2012.

Education exclusion is intimately linked to the region's major challenge of early school leaving. A large number of countries in MENA face problems with children leaving primary and lower secondary education and the need for stronger attention to school retention is underlined by exclusion patterns in most countries. The problem is particularly severe at the lower secondary level, where half of the countries struggle with dropout rates at or above 10 per cent before the last grade of the lower secondary school cycle. It is not an understatement to say that several countries in the region face a dropout crisis at the lower secondary level. In Algeria, Syria and Tunisia, a range from one quarter to one third of all enrolled children leave school before the last grade of the cycle.

Persisting inequalities in education participation based on household wealth, location and gender exist and are widespread in MENA. In countries where a substantial group of children remain out of school, they are predominantly from the poorest households in rural areas, with poor rural girls often the most disadvantaged; only countries with very high enrolment rates escape these mutually reinforcing forms of disparity. The increased supply of education infrastructure has over the past decade helped to reduce disparities, in particular for girls of primary school age. Yet a stronger focus on

addressing inequalities rooted in gender and social discrimination is needed across the whole region. Such efforts should start early in children's lives through public investments in poor families' access to good quality pre-school.

Armed conflict continues to hold back progress in education in MENA, with devastating consequences for children's learning opportunities. Forced displacement, insecurity and poverty act as powerful barriers to education participation for children affected by conflict. Numerous experiences from the region show that overcoming these barriers is possible, but that low funding levels from the international community undermine current efforts. In 2012 alone, more than 2 million children in Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen where not reached by education in emergency responses due to funding shortfalls.

This concluding chapter provides a brief summary of the study's key findings, along with a set of recommendations and some suggestions for further areas of research.

4.1 The profiles of MENA's out-of-school children

Dimension 1: Pre-primary children not in school

- Nearly half of the countries in the region with data have not made much progress in reducing exclusion from pre-primary education over the past decade. Exclusion is particularly severe in Djibouti, Iraq and Yemen, where more than 8 out of 10 children of pre-primary school age are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary education.
- Close to 60 per cent of the pre-primary age children in MENA do not participate in pre-primary nor primary education, pointing to very high levels of exclusion for this age group. Across all countries with data, children from poor families are far more likely to be excluded from preschool, although they have the most to gain from participation. In Djibouti, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, attendance in early childhood education programmes among four-year-olds from the richest wealth quintile is at least four times higher than for children from the poorest wealth quintile.

Dimensions 2 and 3: Out-of-school children of primary and lower secondary age

- Over the past decade, the large majority of countries in the region have reduced the share of children who are out of school, with particularly remarkable progress in Djibouti, Morocco and Yemen. In the year 2000, one quarter of all primary school age children in Morocco did not go to school. In 2013, this figure had been reduced to 1 per cent. However, progress in reducing exclusion rates has slowed down since 2006, with more rapid progress in most countries during the first part of the decade.
- The share of the primary school age population that is excluded from education differs widely across the MENA countries, ranging from nearly half in Sudan to close to zero in Iran and Tunisia. In Djibouti and Sudan, limited access to primary education is still very common and the systems in these countries struggle to extend the general coverage of primary education to the whole primary school age population. By contrast, today more than half of the countries in the region have out-of-school populations representing at or below 3 per cent of the relevant age cohort. To reach this 'hard core' of children with education requires specific and well-targeted strategies that will make these groups of marginalized children come to and stay in school.
- The share of excluded children in the lower secondary age group is substantially higher than for the primary age group in most countries. In one quarter of the countries in MENA, at least one out of every four lower secondary aged children is out of school, with the highest levels of exclusion recorded in Djibouti, Sudan and Yemen. The rise in exclusion is particularly pronounced in Morocco and Yemen, where it is estimated that 25 per cent and 37 per cent of the lower secondary age groups are excluded from education respectively, compared with 13 per cent and 1 per cent for the corresponding groups of primary age children in the two countries.

- In many countries, out-of-school children are disproportionally girls, from rural rather than urban areas, and from the poorest wealth quintile. In Tunisia, 19 per cent of lower secondary age children from the poorest group are out of school, compared to only 1 per cent for children from the richest group. In Sudan, 42 per cent of children from the poorest group are out of school, compared to 3 per cent for the richest.

Dimensions 4 and 5: Children at risk of dropping out

- At the primary level, early school leaving remains a major concern in the region's poorest countries. Nearly one quarter of those children who entered Grade 1 in Yemen and Djibouti leave school before reaching the final grade of the primary cycle.
- Early school leaving is a much bigger problem at the lower secondary school level. In half of the countries in MENA, 1 in 10 children or more leave school before the last grade of the lower secondary level. Yet, more than half of the countries with data have managed to reduce the dropout problem at the lower secondary level since the year 2000, with a particularly big reduction in the dropout rate in Lebanon.
- Several countries in the region, most notably Algeria, Syria and Tunisia, face a severe dropout crisis at the lower secondary level. In Syria, one third of students left school before the last grade of the lower secondary school cycle in 2011.
- One common characteristic of children who leave school is that they are older than the official age for a particular grade. The scope of the overage problem is greatest in Morocco and Sudan, where 16 per cent and 17 per cent respectively of the children enrolled in primary education are at least two years older than the official school age for the grade.
- Overage children are disproportionally from the poorest households and from rural areas. These disparities are particularly marked in Djibouti, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen. In Sudan, almost 80 per cent of children who attend school from the poorest wealth quintile are overage, compared to fewer than 20 per cent from the richest quintile.

Education exclusion by gender

- Gender disparities for children of pre-primary school age tend to be small in most countries. One notable exception is Morocco. In 2013, 34 per cent of pre-primary age girls did not go to pre-primary or primary school. The corresponding figure for boys was considerably lower, at 22 per cent.
- Girls make up the majority of children who are out of school. For the MENA region as a whole, 11 per cent of primary school age girls were out of school in 2012 while the corresponding figure for boys was 8 per cent. The gender gap is wider for lower secondary age children, with out-of-school rates at 14 per cent of girls and 9 per cent of boys in 2012. At the same time, progress has been made in recent years. With higher rates of school participation overall, the education disadvantage against girls has declined. The remaining disparities are primarily driven by persisting gender gaps in Iraq and Yemen, favouring boys' participation.
- The gender profiles on children who have left school show considerable heterogeneity across countries, in particular at the lower secondary level. The sharpest gender disparities are found in Algeria, Kuwait, Palestine, Tunisia and UAE, with disparities ranging from 15 to 17 percentage points between girls and boys. In all of these countries except in the UAE, high dropout rates for boys constitute a major problem. In Tunisia, 39 per cent of boys' leave school before the last grade of the lower secondary school cycle, compared to 22 per cent of Tunisian girls.

Education exclusion in emergencies

- The challenges in the countries in the region affected by conflict are particularly daunting. The Syrian conflict has devastating consequences for children's participation in education. While the estimates and figures on the precise effect differ widely across different sources, they all point in one direction; a significant proportion of Syrian children lost up to two years of education between 2011 and 2013.
- School attendance rates for internally displaced persons and refugee children are frequently low. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, survey results show that only 1 in 10 Syrian refugee children living outside camps attend school. Of those who do not attend, three quarters of those did attend school before leaving Syria.

4.2 Barriers to school participation and policy responses

The profiles of out-of-school children in MENA detect that three of the most serious areas of exclusion are linked to:

- high levels of dropout, in particular at the lower secondary level;
- persisting inequalities by gender; and
- limited protection of the right to education for conflict affected children.

In each of these three areas, the study explores barriers that need to be addressed to reduce education exclusion. These barriers are linked to factors in the enabling environment in each country, in the existing supply of education services, in families demand for education and in the quality of education. Based on a review of relevant literature and building on the recent national OOSCI studies from the region, the study explores existing programmes and measures to overcome existing barriers linked to school dropout, persisting gender inequalities and restrained access to education for children affected by conflict.

Tackling dropout by addressing low demand and quality of education

- Household wealth and social perceptions about the benefits of education are closely linked to schooling decisions, affecting the demand for continued education. The high cost of private tuition emerges as an important barrier for school retention and is highlighted as an issue for children from poorer households in several of the recent national OOSCI studies, including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. In Egypt, the high cost has developed into a widespread influence on educational institutions generating a social practice that affects the lives of millions of Egyptians.

  Policy responses to directly offset economic barriers to education for vulnerable groups, typically through cash transfers, do not come forward as a strong theme in the OOSCI studies from the region. While the majority of the countries in the region have social assistance programmes in place, most of these seem to have a narrow focus on smoothing family income and consumption rather than directly addressing social inequalities among children and youth. One exception, however, is found in Morocco, where the large-scale conditional cash transfer 'Taysir Programme' is linked to school attendance.
- Poverty and child labour reinforce each other and are associated with lower school attendance. In most countries with data, child labour is more frequent for 12 to 14-year-olds than 6 to 11-year-olds. Data from six countries in the region detect that the share of children from the older age group who are engaged in child labour are highest in Egypt, Sudan and Yemen. In these three countries, between one to two of every 10 children are reported to be engaged in child labour. The difference in school attendance rate between those in child labour and other children are highest for 12 to 13-year-olds in Sudan. Whereas only about one quarter of children engaged in child labour in this age group in Sudan attend school, three quarters of those who are not in child labour attend school.

- Low quality of education pushes children out of school. Some of the OOSCI Country Reports highlight existing interventions to track and support children at risk of dropping out. In Tunisia, three national programmes specifically aimed at preventing early school leaving in primary and lower secondary education have been put in place. In Morocco, the 2009-2012 Urgency Programme includes the expansion of a system of support units in schools that are responsible for detecting pupils at risk of dropping out and provide pedagogical support.
- Bad school climate is identified as an important factor for school failure. The limited data available point to high prevalence of violence in schools in several countries, often playing out differently for girls and boys. Findings show that boys tend to be more exposed to corporal punishment, while psychological and verbal abuse appears more common for girls. Girls are also disproportionately the victims of sexual abuse and harassment but are often afraid or too embarrassed to report their perpetrators. Adequate legislation against corporal punishment in schools, at home and all other settings is a necessary foundation for efforts to improve school climate and combat education exclusion. Half of the countries in the region have yet to adopt laws prohibiting corporal punishment in schools.

Addressing gender discrimination by working on social norms, demand and supply

- Social norms and traditions continue to be major barriers for girls' education in MENA. Perceptions and expectations on the role of women and men in the family, in the labour market and in the broader society contribute to girls and boys being valued differently, with implications for families schooling decisions. The practice of early marriage is one of the most extreme barriers for girls' schooling and is an important cause of early school leaving in Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Yemen. Analysis for this report shows that mixed schooling can be favourable to girls' education participation in the region. This contrasts sharply with the move towards segregated schooling in several countries in the region. Country examples show that education has been, and continues to be a powerful strategy for increasing girls autonomy and social mobility. The innovative Ishraq Programme in Egypt, targeted at girls who have left school, has improved literacy skills, improved girls self-confidence and led to greater mobility and participation of girls in the local community.
- The study points to particularly high levels of dropout for boys from lower secondary education in Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Analysis for this study points to boys' lack of motivation for studies in Algeria and Tunisia as driven by uncertainty with respect to future employment opportunities and that this leads to leaving school. In Tunisia, a recent survey showed that more than 41 per cent of young boys wish to immigrate and the most cited motivation behind the desire to immigrate was the view that there is no future in Tunisia. Girls, on the other hand, express a desire for liberation and this necessarily involves education, which is seen as the only way for social advancement. As a result, girls are far more motivated and show stronger demand for secondary and higher education. In Tunisia, young women account for two thirds of the students in higher education.
- Long distances to school and a lack of female teachers stand out as two of the most critical supply side barriers hindering girls' participation in education on equal terms. The problem is particularly acute for girls of lower secondary age in rural areas. While parents may allow older sons to walk long distances to access secondary education, parents often find this daily routine too dangerous or inappropriate for their daughters. Over the past two decades, all countries in the region have undertaken massive school construction to expand the supply of primary, as well as lower secondary schools. These efforts have favoured girls participation, with girls enrolment increasing faster than that of boys across most countries in MENA at both the primary and lower secondary level since the year 2000.

Responding to the impact of conflict on education through protection, policy reforms and sustained funding

While armed conflicts cause many children in the region to be excluded from education, the exact scale of the impact remains largely hidden. To summarize the findings from the study, the following three issues emerge as particularly important:

- The security situation for students and teachers in a large group of conflict-affected countries in the region is appalling. Direct attacks on schools, abductions, looting and military use of school buildings undermine children's right to education and is a major cause of education exclusion. On a daily basis, a range of protection measures are used in insecure areas in Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Sudan and Yemen and make it possible for children to attend school. Physical protection is enhanced through the use of guards, safety clearance for school transportation and the arrangement of facilities so that children can live closer to schools. In extreme risk settings, alternative modes of delivering education have frequently been developed. Examples include temporary schools in homes or religious buildings in Syria, UNWRA's summer classes and distance education for Palestinian children.
- Children displaced by conflict, either within their home country or as refugees, face particularly severe barriers to education. A number of recent needs assessments for the education response to the Syrian war point to major barriers and bottlenecks for Syrian refugee children's education access. The most notable barriers include high cost of schooling, language of instruction, insecurity, bureaucratic procedures and lack of legal papers for school registration.
- Low levels of funding emerge as the most critical bottleneck for reaching conflict affected children with education. Numerous experiences show that even in very challenging environments, flexible and innovative measures can keep education going. A recent example from the region is catch-up education for more than quarter of a million children in Syria. UNICEF, together with UNHCR, UNWRA and a wide range of NGOs play a crucial role in advocating for and mobilizing resources for emergency education in the MENA region. Yet limited resources undermine coverage and exclude many displaced children from education. The Global Education Cluster estimates that in 2012, due to funding shortfalls, only 1.3 million of those targeted for education in emergency responses in Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen received support, while nearly 2.2 million did not.

4.3 Looking ahead and recommendations

Taking stock of the profiles of excluded children and the efforts made to combat exclusion, the core message emerging from this study is that overcoming education exclusion will require public policies and investments to be better geared towards the narrowing of disparities in MENA. Throughout the region since the year 2000, national policies and strategies have developed and strengthened efforts to combat education exclusion. Above all, these efforts have focused on expanding the supply of education infrastructure and resources by hiring more teachers, building schools closer to children's home and providing textbooks and school materials. This has had notable positive effects, in particular in terms of reduced exclusion for children of primary school age.

Yet firmer action will be needed to achieve a real breakthrough. Building on the conclusions and recommendations from the recently conducted OOSCI country studies, decisive actions for eliminating education exclusion will have to address barriers at two levels – national-level delivery of education targeted at marginalized groups and school-level learning.

The studies highlight a number of opportunities and areas that will require attention for reducing education exclusion in MENA. As pointed out in the Yemen OOSCI Country Report, this will often require a change in mindset among education stakeholders in the

region. The focus needs to be on education performance rather than on administrative rules, and stakeholders need to constantly consider how to improve the education sector within its existing constraints. Looking ahead, three broad recommendations for taking such efforts forward include:

1. To scale up ECD programmes and pre-primary education as part of wider poverty reduction programmes. The governments in the region should ensure that appropriate attention is paid and measures taken to expand the provision of ECD. The current patterns across MENA, where poor children's participation in ECD is consistently lower than that of richer children, is one of the most striking signs of deep inequality in the region. Levelling the playing field in terms of equal access to ECD is a matter of urgency and an area highlighted as a top priority in the OOSCI Country Reports from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

For countries such as Sudan and Yemen, where the governments still struggle to provide full access to primary and lower secondary education, better coverage of ECD and pre-primary education is obviously a further challenge and will have to be negotiated within the existing resource envelope. At the same time, a stronger recognition of the major benefits of investing early in children as a way of addressing inefficiencies as well as inequalities later on is needed across the whole of MENA.

2. To enhance cross-sectoral efforts to address multiple barriers to schooling. Children who are out of school rarely face one single barrier to schooling, but face multiple barriers that interact to cause education exclusion. Overcoming these barriers requires public policy actions and investments on several fronts, not all of them traditionally within the remit of the formal education sector. To reach the hardest to reach, education authorities need to cross the sectorial boarder and work in close collaboration with staff from health, child protection and welfare, as well as with NGOs. While cross-sectoral efforts need political, legal and economic backing from the highest political level, it is important that such efforts are driven from the local level and from the outset are focused on practical solutions for excluded children. All national OOSCI studies from the region point to an awareness of these issues, including recommendations to:

- Strengthen the coordination and communication between different ministries with responsibilities for vulnerable children, in particular for disabled children.
- Promote a much stronger engagement from the civil society and local stakeholders, where diversity and practical measures that work at the local level are promoted.
- Enhance the coherence and use of existing monitoring and evaluation tools. Several OOSCI Country Reports highlight inconsistencies in the use of different data sources at the national level and a need to improve strategic planning based on the use of existing data and research.

3. To pay greater attention to school retention. Above all, financial and human resources must be better targeted towards ensuring that children who drop out are not 'pushed out' from school. This requires close attention to several inter-related issues, including schooling where the education staff ensure that children attend school, the ability of schools to better respond to diversity among pupils, adequate resources for support structures for weaker students, relevant curriculum and improved school climate where corporal punishment is prohibited in law and in practice.

All efforts for improved school retention should put the role and capacity of teachers at the centre. This is a recurrent theme in the recently conducted national OOSCI studies. To respond to the learning needs from complex and diverse groups of students, the pressure and demands on teachers can be immense. Countries should make sure that additional financial and human resources are targeted at schools with children from marginalized groups. This includes adequate resources for tracking children at risk of dropout and for organizing remedial classes, as well as ensuring that the best and most experienced teachers work in the most challenging environments.

At a more detailed level, the Barriers and Policy Chapter in the study pointed to some critical areas where more work will be needed to achieve a breakthrough in the out-of-school children problem in MENA. The key recommendations to emerge are:

Dropout:

- The study recommends further analysis of the impact of private tuition on children leaving school. Scattered evidence from the region points to private tutoring as a potentially important cause of leaving school for children from poorer households. Yet the existing data and research on the topic appears limited, in particular with regard to cross-country comparisons. Such research should not only explore how private tuition affects the demand for education for different groups, but also analyse the linkages to teacher pay and motivation.
- Concerted efforts are needed to eliminate corporal punishment. Apart from being a fundamental human rights issue, such practices contribute to a bad school climate and cause education exclusion. Countries in the MENA region should implement legal reforms to prohibit all forms of corporal punishments in schools. To promote non-violent forms of discipline, legal reforms should be accompanied by a range of practical and preventive measures, including giving teachers the necessary tools to use other disciplinary techniques, and responses and sanctions to address continued use of corporal punishment.
- Developing a taxonomy of causes of dropout and possible interventions. Despite a high level of heterogeneity across the countries in the MENA region, it is possible to construct a list of the many factors which are attributed as causes of dropout from different sources and group these together. Looking ahead, Annex B includes a list that can be used to associate reasons for dropout with possible interventions. Both the list of causes and the possible interventions have to be located in real political economies of educational change, unique to each country context. The taxonomy begins this process. It lists causes, contributing factors, comments elaborating on the cause, and possible policy options. The last two columns link the cause and policy option to the classification of causes of exclusion presented in this study, and to the OOSCI framework of enabling, supply, demand and quality factors.

Gender:

- The practice of early marriage is rooted in social norms and traditions and is deeply harmful for girls' education. Political commitment at the highest levels accompanied with community mobilization should be further promoted throughout MENA as effective measures for behaviour change and discouragement of harmful practices. Early marriage is closely linked to household poverty. In poor predominantly rural settings in the region, providing well-targeted financial incentives for girls to prolong their education and make it affordable for girls to go to school should be expanded to help delay marriage.
- To reduce the distance to school, there is a need to continue to expand the provision of school infrastructure, in particular for girls of lower secondary age living in rural areas. Equally important is the need to increase the number of female teachers in rural areas, as they are significant role models for girls to take control over their own destiny.
- Despite widespread awareness of the dropout problem for boys at the lower secondary level in a relatively big group of countries, this awareness has not resulted in any major research and even less in targeted education policy measures to address the problem. The study recommends further action-oriented research to better understand the dynamics of the dropout phenomenon of boys and girls across MENA.

Conflict:

- In view of the recurring character of conflicts in the MENA region, a far higher priority to the protection of education for conflict-affected children in the region is urgently needed. The international community should ensure sufficient funding for education in emergencies and national governments in the region should adopt flexible approaches for accommodating the education needs of conflict affected children. In particular, such a step to increase in funding should benefit the regional and country appeals for Syrian children, as well as children suffering from conflicts and recurrent violence in Iraq, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen.
- The alarming number of attacks on schools remains widespread in the region. Parties to conflict should fully comply with the obligation under International Humanitarian Law that prohibits armed forces to use schools for any purpose in support of their military efforts.
- Adolescents who have missed out on education due to conflict are a group of special concern. Different types of accelerated learning programmes exist in the region, but the number of students reached appears limited in relation to the needs. National governments should together with partners, and based on careful planning and monitoring, take such programmes to scale.

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Annexes

Annex 1 Statistical tables for the Five Dimensions of Exclusion

Dimension 1 Pre-primary school-age children who are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary school, by country

Region and country name	Most recent year since 2000	Total		Male		Female	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
UNICEF: MENA	2012	5,078,339*	58,0*	2,597,622*	58,1*	2,480,718*	58,0*
Algeria	2011	96,459	15.5	51,938	16.4	44,521	14.6
Bahrain	2012	5,761	31.1	2,968	31.1	2,793	31.2
Djibouti	2011	17,661	92.7	8,969	92.9	8,692	92.5
Egypt	2012	1,056,452*	62,6*	...	...	...	...
Iran	2003	864,408	70.9	452,994	72.5	411,414	69.2
Iraq	2007	682,234*	82,6*	348,708*	82,1*	333,526*	83,1*
Jordan	2011	72,339	48.1	36,383	47.2	35,956	49.0
Kuwait	2007	5,054	11.8	2,592	11.9	2,462	11.7
Lebanon	2012	1,002	1.6	...	...	...	...
Libya	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Morocco	2013	159,863	27.6	64,129	21.7	95,734	33.9
Oman	2012	20,880	41.5	10,304	40.3	10,576	42.8
Palestine	2012	59,379	51.8	30,159	51.4	29,220	52.1
Qatar	2012	3,517	18.6	2,185	21.9	1,332	14.9
Saudi Arabia	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Sudan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Syria	2012	217,350	41.2	109,136	40.5	108,214	41.9
Tunisia	2003	107,684*	62,6*	54,773*	62,2*	52,911*	63,1*
UA Emirates	2012	18,193	20.3	9,728	20.8	8,465	19.6
Yemen	2010	612,009	94.3	311,193	94.0	300,816	94.7

Legend of symbols:

... Data are missing

* UIS estimation

Source: UIS, 2014b; UIS, 2014c.

Dimension 2 Primary school-age children who are not enrolled in primary or secondary school, by country

Region and country name	Most recent year since 2000	Total		Male		Female	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
UNICEF: MENA	2012	4,301,431*	9,3*	1,793,039*	7,6*	2,508,392*	11,1*
Algeria	2012	25,337	0.9	...	...	...	...
Bahrain	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Djibouti	2013	38,735	41.7	18,024	38.3	20,711	45.2
Egypt	2011	258,378*	2,7*	...	...	...	...
Iran	2012	3,468	0.1	...	...	...	...
Iraq	2007	373,276*	8,2*	65,832*	2,8*	307,444*	14,0*
Jordan	2011	19,852	2.4	7,150	1.7	12,702	3.1
Kuwait	2007	3,490	1.8	1,155	1.1	2,336	2.4
Lebanon	2012	17,915*	4,2*	2,046*	1,0*	15,869*	7,3*
Libya	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Morocco	2013	43,220	1.3	18,560	1.1	24,660	1.5
Oman	2012	7,054	2.6	4,097	2.9	2,958	2.2
Palestine	2012	32,639	7.3	15,990	7.0	16,649	7.6
Qatar	2005	2,782	4.1	...	...	...	...
Saudi Arabia	2012	216,025*	6,5*	157,446*	9,0*	58,579*	3,7*
Sudan	2011	2,810,907	48.5	1,340,275	45.6	1,470,632	51.4
Syria	2010	18,600	0.9	...	...	...	...
Tunisia	2012	510	0.1	...	...	...	...
UA Emirates	2012	5,761	1.7	1,459	0.9	4,302	2.6
Yemen	2012	490,049	12.9	102,863	5.3	387,186	20.8

Legend of symbols:

... Data are missing

* UIS estimation

Source: UIS, 2014b; UIS, 2014c.

Dimension 3 Lower secondary school-age children who are not enrolled in primary or secondary school, by country

Region and country name	Most recent year since 2000	Total		Male		Female	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
UNICEF: MENA	2012	2,911,355*	11,7*	1,195,715*	9,4*	1,715,640*	14,1*
Algeria	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Bahrain	2012	4,505	9.8	2,438	10.3	2,067	9.2
Djibouti	2008	44,135*	57,5*	20,142*	51,9*	23,993*	63,3*
Egypt	2012	64,211*	1,4*	...	...	...	...
Iran	2011	187,284	5.6	73,028	4.3	114,256	7.0
Iraq	2007	575,274*	29,0*	199,469*	19,5*	375,805*	38,9*
Jordan	2011	31,128	5.7	15,494	5.6	15,634	5.9
Kuwait	2007	748	0.5	309	0.4	439	0.6
Lebanon	2012	49,775*	19,9*	21,000*	17,2*	28,775*	22,4*
Libya	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Morocco	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Oman	2012	13,403	9.1	9,014	11.8	4,389	6.3
Palestine	2012	98,220	15.2	56,483	17.1	41,737	13.2
Qatar	2011	574	1.5	406	2.1	168	0.9
Saudi Arabia	2012	65,216*	4,6*	...	...	...	...
Sudan	2011	610,279	35.4	275,851	31.6	334,428	39.3
Syria	2012	255,433	10.2	119,265	9.3	136,168	11.2
Tunisia	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
UA Emirates	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Yemen	2012	666,863*	37,0*	237,146*	25,8*	429,717*	48,6*

Legend of symbols:

... Data are missing

* UIS estimation

Source: UIS, 2014b; UIS, 2014c.

Dimension 4 Dropout rate before the last grade of primary education, by country

	Dropout rate before last grade of primary			
	2000 or closest	Year if different from 2000	2011 or closest	Year if different from 2011
Algeria	5.4		7.2	
Bahrain	7.7		2.2	
Djibouti	...		24.1	2012
Egypt	1.0		3.9	2009
Iran	2.6		3.8	
Iraq	50.5	1999	...	
Jordan	3.5	1999	2.1	2010
Kuwait	5.2		5.9	
Lebanon	3.7		6.7	
Libya	...		...	
Morocco	26.7		8.4	2012
Oman	5.5		6.4	
Palestine	2.2		0.7	
Qatar	...		...	
Saudi Arabia	...		1.3	
Sudan	...		24.2	
Syrian Arab Republic	11.3		6.8	
Tunisia	11.7		5.2	
United Arab Emirates	6.1		1.0	
Yemen	31.2	2001	...	

Note: Dropout rate defined as 100% minus the survival rate to the last grade of primary.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

Dimension 5 Dropout rate before the last grade of lower secondary education, by country

	Dropout rate before last grade of lower secondary (general programmes)			
	2000 or closest	Year if different from 2000	2011 or closest	Year if different from 2011
Algeria	20.3		25.2	
Bahrain	10.2		2.4	
Djibouti	10.8	1999	13.9	2012
Egypt	13.9	2002	...	
Iran	13.4		4.2	
Iraq	12.7	1999	...	
Jordan	8.5	2002	8.6	2010
Kuwait	10.9		8.7	
Lebanon	51.0		17.3	
Libya	...		...	
Morocco	22.6		12.0	2012
Oman	8.8		1.6	
Palestine	20.2		13.4	
Qatar	...		1.4	2010
Saudi Arabia	...		0.3	
Sudan	...		6.4	2009
Syrian Arab Republic	23.5		32.5	
Tunisia	...		30.7	2009
United Arab Emirates	4.2		10.2	
Yemen	...	2001	...	

Note: Dropout rate defined as 100% minus the survival rate to the last grade of primary.

Source: UIS, 2014a.

Annex 2 Table of causes of dropout from school and possible policy options

Cause	Contributing factors	Comment	Policy options	Level	Theme
Cost of schooling	Direct costs	Direct costs include admission fees, tuition fees, and any other essential payments required for attendance.	Legislate for fee free primary education; prohibit the charging of additional fees and in public schools; regulate fees in private schools. Consider conditional cash credit transfers linked to school attendance and achievement but only with tuition fee abolition.	N,D,C,H	E
	Indirect costs	Indirect costs include the cost of travel, school feeding and other discretionary inputs to schooling e.g. private tuition.	Use school mapping to reduce average distance to school and plan free school buses where appropriate; provide school feeding schemes free to those in the lowest two quintiles of household income; regulate private tuition and undermine demand with free access to revision services and school-based additional lessons.	N,D,H	E
Opportunity costs	Household demands on children	Children may contribute to domestic chores and to household economic activity at the expense of school attendance.	Promote community-based good parenting classes designed to encourage regular school attendance and limit domestic responsibilities of children.	C.D,H	D
	Legitimate child labour	Children may work for payment or income in kind outside the household under conditions judged legal and safe. This may affect school attendance.	Use CSOs, and social protection systems and schools to identify legitimate child labour, monitor its impact on attendance and learning, and discourage households from making demands on children to earn money.	N,D,C,H	D
	Illegal child labour	Children in the working age may be involved in work that is not decent or appropriate. This may affect school attendance and is illegal.	Identify and prosecute those commissioning illegal child labour and confiscate assets.	N,D,C,H	D
Perceived relevance	Lack of curriculum relevance	Knowledge and skills in national curricula taught in schools may not be seen as valuable for employment, livelihoods, and well-being.	Review and revise curricula and pedagogy in the light of well-considered school-based evaluation studies of learners' and teachers' practices, needs, and wants. Identify knowledge and skills critical to jobs, livelihoods and well-being broadly defined and incorporate into national curricula. Include flexibility in national curricula to respond to the specificities of local needs, cultural differences, gendered preferences and other opportunities to increase relevance.	N,D,C,S	S,Q
	Lack of support from caregivers	Caregivers may not see the benefits of schooling as sufficient to compensate for the costs in relation to particular children.	Promote community-based good parenting classes. Develop and promote information on the income, health, and well-being benefits of becoming more educated. Share information about reducing direct and indirect costs and sources of subsidy for low quintile of households.	C,D	D

Table of causes of dropout from school and possible policy options (continued)

Cause	Contributing factors	Comment	Policy options	Level	Theme
	Lack of special needs facilities	Children with special needs including disabilities and unusual talents may need different forms of provision to remain motivated.	Ensure that special needs are identified and accommodated in the design and operation of educational institutions. Allocate resources to give every teacher a basic understanding of common forms of disability and nominate at least one teacher in every school with special responsibility for assessing needs.	N,D,S	S,Q
Low achievement	Low achievement	Children with low levels of achievement both absolutely and relatively may suffer from reduced motivation and self-esteem and see the little value in repeatedly failing assessments.	Low achievement has many causes that do not have one policy response. All education systems should invest in the effective management of learning within a structured curriculum that provides clear goals and objectives for achievement in different domains of knowledge and skill. All teachers should be supported to develop skills in formative assessment that can diagnose learning problems and suggest pedagogic interventions. High-stakes assessment should be fit for purpose and reflect the full range of goals set for education systems, not simply the narrow demands of robust discrimination in performance for selection.	N,D,S	S,Q
	Poor and irregular attendance	Irregular attendance reduces time on task and continuity of learning experience and may do so to the point where children lose engagement with the curriculum.	Irregular attendance has many causes and no single policy response. Monitoring and diagnosis prior to intervention requires the systematic record keeping of patterns of attendance linked to unique child identity numbers. This can allow the tracking of children through the school system so that none disappear from support and intervention systems designed to ensure no child is left behind or can leave school silently. There should be a prohibition on punishing children whose attendance is poor. It should always be clear who is responsible to follow up a child's non-attendance whether it is a school teacher, a staff member with pastoral responsibilities, a social protection officer, or some other named individual.	D,C,H,S	D,S
	Overage entry	Overage children are often more at risk of dropping out than those in the appropriate age for their grade. Being substantially overage is associated with drop out and low achievement.	Legislation should be in place to ensure that every child enters school at an appropriate age and that parents are legally responsible to ensure this happens. In most countries this is likely to be no later than the age of 6. Children without birth certificates should be issued with identity documents by schools, or through school based services, if they are legal residents of the country and have no birth certificate.	D,S,C,H	E,D

Table of causes of dropout from school and possible policy options (continued)

Cause	Contributing factors	Comment	Policy options	Level	Theme
	Repetition	There is no systematic evidence that repetition improves achievement if it occurs more than once in a school career. High rates of repetition may demoralize students and lead to drop out.	Repetition increases the number of overage students and may demoralize those who repeat especially if they are simply invited to follow the same curriculum that they have failed. Norms should be set for acceptable rates of repetition (e.g. les than 1%) since repetition is a curriculum and pedagogic problem. High rates of repetition in a school indicate some combination of inappropriate curriculum and ineffective teaching. CPD should be used to ensure teachers' adopt strategies that minimise repetition. Automatic promotion should be the norm.	N,D,S,H	S,Q
Location	Distance and time to school	School attendance in most countries is highly correlated with distance from school.	School mapping should be used to minimize distance to school consistent with efficient operating costs since small schools are likely to be more expensive per student than larger schools. Costs of travel may discourage attendance and should therefore be subsidized for those in the lowest two quintiles of household income. Where boarding schools are deemed necessary by population density costs need to be carefully considered. Elective boarding by children in the top three quintiles of household income should be discouraged unless operated at full cost to parents.	D,C,S	E,S
	Safety in travelling to school	Parents and caregivers often indicate safety and travelling to school as a high-level concern especially in relation to girls.	Every school and local authority should undertake a risk analysis of safety issues in and around schools and adopt appropriate measures with a zero tolerance policy of antisocial and illegal behaviour.	D,C,S	S
Safety in school	Violence in school	Violence in school is given in some countries as a reason for dropping out and for not returning to school because of the fear of corporal punishment.	Legislation should be enacted to ensure that the boundaries of the appropriate action in relation to school discipline are well known and enforced. Children should have access to independent channels through which they can draw attention to inappropriate behaviour.	D,C,S,	E,S
	Bullying	Bullying is cited by both boys and girls as a reason for ceasing to attend school.	National and local guidelines are needed to discourage physical and mental bullying, which causes distress and loss of self-esteem. Guidelines need to be public, transparent, and it must be clear who is responsible for enforcing their implementation.	C,S	S
Health	Infectious and parasitic childhood disease	The epidemiology associated with dropping out can identify common treatable causes of becoming out-of-school children.	Children in school should undergo regular health checks and be within circles of support that monitor their health status during their school career and provide access to treatment.	D,C,S,H	E,S

Table of causes of dropout from school and possible policy options (continued)

Cause	Contributing factors	Comment	Policy options	Level	Theme
	Undernutrition and malnutrition	Undernutrition leads stunting which is often associated with late enrolment and a subsequent high risk of dropout. Malnutrition can lead to micronutrient deficiencies which have implications for cognition.	Health monitoring should establish the extent of undernutrition and malnutrition and identify strategies to ameliorate this in both school and preschool populations of children.	D,C,S,H	E,S
	Physical and mental disabilities	Different forms of disability are associated with exclusion from school.	Child health systems should assess and monitor all children in school and out of school periodically to identify physical and mental disabilities and make provision for their amelioration.	D,C,S,H	E,S
	Health of family members	Demands placed on children to become carers can affect their school attendance.	Social protection systems and schools should monitor whether or not children are acting as caregivers to other household members on a scale likely to affect their education. CSOs should be encouraged to provide support wherever possible.	D,C,S,H	E,S
	Sexual and reproductive health	Poor decision-making based on ignorance of good sexual and reproductive health practice can result in underage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, and emotional dislocation.	Appropriate curricula and training for teachers are needed to promote sexual and reproductive health good practice as part of life skills. Those with HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases should have the same legal rights to education as all other citizens.	D,C,S,H	E,S
Household status	Single parent households and orphanhood	Single parent households may result in reduced probabilities of attending school. In some surveys orphans have a reduced probability of attending school but not in all cases.	Single parent families are more likely to have specific needs in relation to the support of children's education. Schools and social protection agencies should be aware of children's household status and whether or not particular support is needed. Orphans also have many different circumstances that may need to be addressed to ensure children are protected and supported by caregivers or those acting in their place.	H,C S	D
	Fostered children	Fostered children may be discriminated against in terms of opportunities for schooling and payment of costs.	Legal obligations around fostering children should be regularized to ensure fostered children have the same rights as children of biological parents. The schooling status and progress of fostered children should be monitored by schools and social protection agencies.	H,C,S	D
	Migrant status	The civil status of migrants may inhibit enrolment in local schools; local authorities may be reluctant to provide schools for recent migrants; migrant children may have very different language capabilities and need to those of the host communities.	The specificities of internal or cross-border migration are very complex. The educational status of the children should be reviewed by the responsible agencies where children are located, to ensure that their right to education is realized and that their probability of completing a full cycle of education is no less than it would have been before migration.	N,D,C,S	D

Table of causes of dropout from school and possible policy options (continued)

Cause	Contributing factors	Comment	Policy options	Level	Theme
	Displaced household	Displaced households may or may not have rights of access to school for their children.	Households displaced by conflict may include children and adults; children may also be displaced without adult members of their families. In either case responsible authorities have an obligation to ensure that rights to access to education are realized.	N,D,C,S	D
	Membership of excluded social group	In some countries particular social groups suffer discrimination in terms of access to schooling.	Dropout resulting from membership of excluded social groups has many different forms. Participation and drop out in different communities should be monitored, and if some forms of participation are evidently inequitable the causes should be explored. Clear responsibilities should exist and force legislation that commits states to provide equality of opportunity.	D,C,S	E,S
	Nomadic household	Some communities have livelihood and lifestyle choices which create barriers to access to normal schooling for children.	Nomadic and other groups with livelihoods which mean that conventional secondary schooling is unlikely to deliver the right to basic education may need special provisions suited to circumstance which often includes seasonality, cultural specificities, and sensitive management of transitions between the past and the future.	D,C,H	E,S
Young families	Pregnancy	Some schools exclude girls who become pregnant.	No young girls or women should be excluded from school as a result of pregnancy. Special arrangements may need to be made in different cultural contexts to ensure this is the case.	D,C,S,H	S
	Young motherhood	Young mothers below the age of 15 may or may not be allowed to return to school.	Young mothers below the age of 15 should have a right to opportunities to continue their education in an appropriate way. This will benefit them and their young families.	D,C,S,H	S
	Young fatherhood	Young fathers may be required to become economically active.	Young fathers below the age of 15 should have a right to opportunities to continue their education in an appropriate way. This will benefit them and their young families.	D,C,S,H	S
School practices	Unfriendly schools	Child friendly schools should be inclusive and have pastoral systems that are designed to minimize dropout. They should also be child seeking schools where the locus of responsibility for children who may drop out is clear.	Child friendly school policy should be promoted throughout school systems to ensure that children are safe, secure, happy, motivated, and free of unfriendly and hostile school environments. Guidelines are widely available and should be adopted with clear responsibilities for generating and sustaining school environments that attract children rather than discourage them from attending.	D,S,C	S

Table of causes of dropout from school and possible policy options (continued)

Cause	Contributing factors	Comment	Policy options	Level	Theme
	Language of instruction	Language of instruction is often a factor in dropping out in countries where the mother tongue is not the language of instruction.	Many languages are used in the countries in the MENA region. Where the medium of instruction is not the mother tongue of children there will be issues of transition. Where an international language from outside the region becomes the language of instruction there will also be transition issues. Language policy must be clear and developed with an awareness of the consequences for dropping out and becoming out of school of poorly managed transitions.	N,S	S,D
	Poor management of transitions between levels	Transitions between school levels e.g. primary to lower secondary are often associated with higher rates of dropout than within each cycle.	Where transition rates between levels are much less than 100 per cent dropout is likely to be disproportionately concentrated at particular levels. Selection to the next level may favour those from higher income households, those from particular areas, and may also be favourable to one or the other gender. School management systems need to address transition issues and devise strategies that remove any association with involuntary dropout. This may involve research on the curriculum and pedagogic practice.	D,S	E,S
	Underqualified teachers	Teachers without appropriate levels of capability and skill may directly or indirectly encourage dropping out.	All children have a right to be taught by qualified teachers who have been trained to understand how children of different ages from different backgrounds can learn most effectively. This is an obligation of states and the responsibility of Ministries of Education.	N,D	E,S
	Teacher absenteeism	Significant teacher absenteeism undermines learning continuity and may be associated with falling motivation to attend school.	Where teacher absenteeism is significant its causes need to be identified and addressed. This may require changes in school management, employment contracts, sanctions for teachers whose absenteeism is excessive, and incentives for those who ensure continuity of learning.	N,D,S	E,S
	Lack of remedial support	Schools which fail to address the needs of the less capable may have lower retention rates.	Dropout relating to low achievement may arise if little provision is made for the specific learning needs of the less capable. Where this is true systematic attention needs to be given to systems of enrichment and retrieval which can lessen the difference in achievement between the highest and lowest scoring children.	D,S	S
	Large class sizes	Over large class sizes can result in children underperforming.	Large classes may contribute to unfriendly schools where vulnerable children may be more likely to drop out and be less likely to attract attention. Over large class sizes are unlikely to encourage high achievement amongst less capable learners and are more likely to generate classroom management problems.	N,D,S	S

Table of causes of dropout from school and possible policy options (continued)

Cause	Contributing factors	Comment	Policy options	Level	Theme
	Poor assessment practice	Poor management of learning may result in low achievement, leading to dropout.	School-based assessment should be focused strongly on formative assessment that diagnoses learning needs and learning capabilities. This will not be the case if it simply mimics high-stakes external exams designed to discriminate between candidates rather than illuminates learning difficulties. Investment may be needed in developing assessment practice linked directly to managing learning more effectively, especially for the less capable most at risk of dropping out.	N,D,S	S
	Uneven preschool supply	Preschool participation is associated with entry to primary school at the appropriate age and higher levels of subsequent achievement.	National legislation to phase in access to preschool to all children with subsidies to ensure that provision is free to those in the lowest two quintiles of household income. Take steps to encourage CSO's to develop local preschool provision on existing school sites and community spaces making use of opportunities to engage parents and project good parenting messages.	N,D,C	S

Key to classifications

Level	
Individual	I
Household	H
Community	C
District	D
School	S
National	N

OOSCI theme	
Enabling environment	E
Supply	S
Demand	D
Quality	Q

- Individual characteristics of children are not used in the classification in the chart (I) since policy issues at system level are not generally mediated by the characteristics of individual children.
- A national level has been added to the classification.
- The OOSCI theme categories have some overlap since supply-side interventions are likely to be enabling and quality improvement, though mostly on the supply side, and will affect demand.

For more information visit our Website:
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