

Arab States and Northern Africa fact sheet – 2020 GEM Report

Please note that this factsheet only contains some of the mentions from the region. The full Report and all regional mentions can be found here: [Bit.ly/2020gemreport](https://bit.ly/2020gemreport)

Embargo : 23 June



Headline statistic: 20% of countries in the region did not target the marginalised in their education response to Covid-19

Persistent exclusion

- 17 million children and youth are entirely excluded from education in the region, with poverty the main constraint to access.
- The stateless bidoon in the Gulf countries have difficulty gaining access to education
- Pre-primary: Djibouti has the world's lowest early childhood education participation rate. Morocco lacks a public pre-primary education system; the share of private institutions, mostly attached to mosques, in total enrolment was 87% in 2018, and enrolment levels have stagnated over the past two decades.
- Refugees are taught in parallel education systems. Sahrawi refugees in Algeria have a separate education system and curriculum. Malian refugees in refugee camps in Mauritania still follow the Malian curriculum
- Exclusion can happen inside school walls as well: In Yemen, children of the Muhamasheen, a historically marginalized social group associated with garbage collection, face persistent discrimination, abuse by teachers and bullying by peers
- Over 30% of children feel like outsiders in school in Jordan and Qatar
- 57% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth felt unsafe in school

Inequitable foundations: Alongside today's new Report, the GEM Report has launched a new website, [PEER](https://peer.unesco.org), with descriptions of laws and policies on inclusion in education for every country in the world.

- Laws in 13% of countries in the region say that children with disabilities should be educated in separate settings, while 30% had laws calling for inclusion.
- Inclusion is beneficial: In Saudi Arabia, contact with children with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive school resulted in positive student attitudes
- No countries in the Arab States and North Africa have an education law that is inclusive of all learners
- Among the countries in the region that have a definition of inclusive education, 46% define it in a way that is comprehensive and covers all learners, without exception
- 36% of countries only target people with disabilities in their definitions of inclusive education, but do not mention other groups.
- In the region, 83% have laws referring to people with disabilities, 36% on gender, 35% on ethnicity and indigeneity and 22% on language
- In Iraq, a 2011 ministerial decree authorised the Ministry of Education to create special classes and schools to educate students who are 'slow learners or have visual or hearing weakness' (Article 14). As of 2019, there were 1,325 schools with special classes for children with disabilities, of which 107 were in rural areas.

- In Lebanon, the 2000 law on the rights of people with disabilities granted education rights while allowing segregation to continue. In practice, school admission is at the discretion of head teachers, who may turn down children with disabilities, leaving them no alternative to specialized institutions run by private organizations funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which the Ministry of Education and Higher Education may not recognize as schools.
- Most countries combine mainstreaming with separate setting arrangements, usually for learners with severe disabilities. But lack of definition of severe disabilities can lead to arbitrary decisions. In Djibouti, Article 15 of the 2000 education law established that children with physical or mental disabilities preventing them from following structured education were exempt from compulsory education. In Oman, a 2017 ministerial decree stated that students with disabilities, especially visual impairment and other physical disabilities, could be accepted only in fully equipped schools.
- Some laws focus on integration. Amendments to Armenia's education law in 2014 made a commitment to introduce a universal inclusive education system by 2025. A 2016 action plan provided for reorganization of special education institutions into pedagogical and psychological assistance centres supporting general education by 2022

Exclusion can be very blatant in some laws:

- Two of the six countries that have no minimum age for marriage are in the region: Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. In Sudan, girls can get marriage at age 10.
- About 31 countries have laws and regulations restricting the right to freedom of expression in relation to sexual orientation issues on individuals, educators or the media. While morality codes have been almost ubiquitous in the Arab States, new legal tools criminalize expressions of affirmation or support for homosexuality.

Education systems often assume that all children are the same.

- No country in the region recognizes sign language as an official language
- Schools adapted for children with disabilities: In Morocco, only 17% of schools are adapted for learners with disabilities,
- Effective hygiene management. Only 36% of schools in Jordan have effective sanitation provided.
- In Turkey, mathematics and computing are among subjects not adapted to the needs of students with impairments, especially to hearing and sight
- In Morocco, teachers lacked training on adaptive methods for ensuring learning among children with disabilities or special needs

Curricula and textbooks can alienate too.

- In Turkey, primary school textbooks presented unequal social roles and a patriarchal understanding of family unquestioningly, and secondary school textbook language exhibited sexism, although these problems were somewhat reduced after the 2004 curricular reform
- An analysis of preschool textbooks in Morocco found that 71% of images depicting women showed them doing voluntary work and 10% doing paid work

There is a chronic lack of quality data on those left behind.

- Household surveys are key for breaking education data down by individual characteristics. But 58% of countries – corresponding to 54% of the region's population – did not have

surveys with publicly available data. Repeated rounds of the DHS in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen and of the MICS in Algeria, Iraq, Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia helped increase coverage, but there have been no data since 2014 in Egypt and Sudan. Public access to data from Morocco, Turkey and, especially, Gulf Cooperation Council countries has been restricted; for instance, Oman's data from the 2014 MICS are not public.

- Data on education expenditure for the three largest economies in Northern Africa and Western Asia are either non-existent (United Arab Emirates) or patchy (e.g. no data for Egypt and Saudi Arabia since 2008).

Signs of moves towards inclusion: The Report and its [PEER](#) website note many countries using positive, innovative approaches to transition to inclusion. Of those noted in the report:

- Turkey's cash transfers for education since 2003 has increased the secondary school enrolment rate among 14- to 17-year-olds, especially in rural areas. The government later scaled up the programme and extended it in May 2017 to reach Syrian and other refugee children. It is implemented through a partnership of the Ministry of Family, Work and Social Services, Ministry of National Education, Turkish Red Crescent, European Commission and UNICEF. By June 2019, more than 500,000 students regularly attending school were receiving a transfer of between US\$6 and US\$10 per month; 83% of the families also benefited from Emergency Social Safety Net grants of US\$20 per family member per month.
 - Morocco, with one of the most gender-unequal tertiary enrolment ratios in the early 1990s (3 women for every 10 men), reached parity in 2017. As recently as 2011, Morocco had the same low participation rate as Sudan (16%), but while the latter stagnated, Morocco more than doubled participation in seven years to 36%
- **ENDS –**

For more information, b-roll, photos, for interviews, videos or animations please contact Kate Redman k.redman@unesco.org 0033 6 71 78 62 34

Notes to editors

Visit the Report's [electronic press kit](#) containing Report and multimedia materials. [password: AllmeansAll]

The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report) is developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO. It has the official mandate of monitoring progress in meeting the fourth Sustainable Development Goal on education, SDG 4.

The PEER Website will be publicly available from 23 June. Until that point, journalists can access the site using the following passwords:

- <https://www.education-profiles.org/>
- Username: team
- Password: gemprofiles246!