

Population Growth, Education and Poverty in the Arab Region



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Population of the Arab Region

In 1990, the year of the World Conference on Education for All 'EFA' (in Jomtien, Thailand), the Arab region's total population was estimated at 229 million; it is projected to be at about 321 million in 2005, and to increase to 456 million in 2025.

School-age Population

- **The structure or age composition of the population determines the size of the school-age population, i.e. the potential demand for education, which is clearly the starting point for any education policy.**
- **The proportion of school-age children in the Arab region is very high (30% in 1990 and 27% in 2005), bringing enormous pressure to bear on traditional education systems.**

EFA Goals

- **In 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar agreed on six EFA goals:**
 - **Goal 1 addresses pre-school children.**
 - **Goal 2 is directed at children of primary-school age.**
 - **Goals 3 and 4 are intended to meet the needs of young persons and adults.**
 - **Goal 5 is across-cutting goal covering gender equality.**
 - **Goal 6 is concerned with the quality of education.**

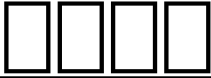
EFA Goals

- **In the same year, the Millennium Development Goals were agreed, two of which – universal primary education and the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education – were defined as critical to the elimination of extreme poverty.**

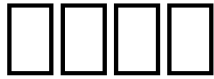
Goal 1

Early childhood care and education (ECCE)

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



- **ECCE refers to a wide range of programmes, all aimed at the physical, cognitive and social development of children before they enter primary school.**
- **The benefits of ECCE programmes, which extend into adulthood, are well documented.**
- **In the Arab region, the most common duration for pre-primary programmes is two years, typically serving ages 3 and 4, or, less frequently, 4 and 5.**



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- **In most Arab States, the gross enrolment ratio in ECCE is very low.**
 - **In 2002, only in 3 countries was the percentage above 70%: UAE (83%), Lebanon (74%), and Kuwait (73%), while in Morocco it was 60%.**
 - **The remaining countries have GER level below 35%; and in 5 countries ECCE gross enrolment rates are under 5%.**



- **Access to early childhood services is unequal for various social groups.**
- **Children that are better off economically and socially are more likely to be enrolled than children from families with few resources.**



- **Several factors contribute to the low ECCE enrolment ratios observed in most Arab states:**
 - **In almost all Arab states, ECCE programmes are operated by the private sector and NGOs; governments are not concerned legally with education support at the pre-school level.**



- **Global macro-economic trends tend to marginalize social services.**
 - **Globalisation appears in fact to be increasing the gap between rich and poor.**
 - **Structural adjustment programmes have resulted in tremendous spending constraints.**
 - **These have had dire consequences for the poor, especially poor children, because of the cuts in social spending.**

Goal 2

Universal Primary Education (UPE)

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

Primary school-age population

- **The region's total primary school-age population (ages 6-11) , grew from 38 million in 1990 to 44 million in 2005, and looks set to reach an estimated 51 million by 2025, that is, 13 million more than in 1990.**
- **These figures show the scale of the efforts that the Arab region will need to make to meet the potential demand for education and ensure that all school-age children are enrolled by 2015.**

Universal Primary Education (UPE)

- **The gross enrolment ratio (GER) expresses the number of pupils at a given level of schooling – regardless of their age – as a proportion of the number of children in the relevant age group.**
- **The GER can be higher than 100% if children begin their first grade when they are older (or younger) than the official starting age, or if there is grade repetition. Both of these phenomena lead to over-age enrolment, particularly in the higher grades.**

Universal Primary Education (UPE)

- **9 of 22 Arab states have GERs greater than 100.**
- **As indicated earlier, their frequency indicates the presence of over-age children in school arising partly from late enrolment.**

Universal Primary Education (UPE)

- **The net enrolment ratio (NER) takes account of the age structure of those enrolled by excluding all those children who are older or younger than the officially school-eligible age group from the numerator of the ratio. Thus, by definition, it cannot exceed 100%.**

Universal Primary Education (UPE)

- **The Arab States have NERs close to 80%, but there are serious gender gaps.**
- **NER is:**
 - **below 70% in 7 countries,**
 - **between 70-90% in 4 countries,**
 - **and above 90% in 11 countries.**
- **The wide variation of NERs reflects serious enrolment problems in most countries in the Arab region.**

Goal 3

Learning needs of all young people and adults

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

Learning needs of young people and adults

- Education for all is not age specific; learning should not be restricted to school age, nor to any other age.**
- This implies a focus on people to whom learning opportunities are frequently denied: particularly the growing number of young and poor people for whom life chances are restricted by the lack or limited nature of their school education.**

Learning needs of young people and adults

- In the Arab region, non-formal education (NFE) has not been well developed.**
- There is an urgent need to develop NFE programmes, within a holistic education system, that aim to help young people- especially the poor, gain the skills they need to earn a living.**

Goal 4

Adult literacy

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

... in other words, the literacy gap that existed in 2000 should be halved.

Adult literacy

- **Illiteracy among adults in most Arab countries constitutes a large-scale problem both on the social and economic level.**
- **The adult literacy rate increased from around 40% in 1980 to 60% in 2000 and to around 67% in 2005. Adult literacy is expected to rise to 72% by 2015.**
- **Throughout the region, literacy rates are higher among men than among women.**

Adult literacy

- **An acceleration will be needed to achieve the target of 75%–80% literacy in 2015.**
- **The situation is worrisome for several countries in the region where no major improvement is expected while literacy levels are at present below 70% or even 50%.**
- **In fact, the phenomenon of rising absolute numbers of illiterates is likely to persist in several countries, particularly the Comoros, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, and Yemen.**

Youth literacy

- **Remarkable increases in the youth literacy rates, among both sexes, were attained during the 1990s.**
- **Literacy among the youth population (aged 15-24) is nearly universal in Bahrain, Jordan, and Oman, with rates around 99%.**
- **Slightly lower rates of youth literacy are observed in Libya (97%) and in Lebanon and Syria (95%).**

Youth literacy

- **Rates in the range of 90-95% are found in 4 Arab Gulf States (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE) and Tunisia.**
- **Significantly lower rates, in the range of 68-74%, are shown for Egypt, Morocco and Yemen, while the lowest literacy rate (45%) is found in Iraq.**

Youth literacy

- **The female youth literacy rate increased, between 1990 and 2002:**
 - **from 68% to 86% in Algeria,**
 - **from 75% to 97% in Oman,**
 - **and from 25% to 51% in Yemen.**

Goal 5

Gender equality

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

Gender equality

- **All Arab States experienced substantial progress towards gender parity in enrolment during the 1990s.**
- **But girls and women are still less educated and more likely to be illiterate than men in many Arab States.**
- **Poverty is, of course, a significant factor in this situation.**
- **This inequality must also be explained in the light of the status of women in a number of Arab societies.**

Gender equality

- **Gross intake rates in primary education for 2000, show that the gender parity index was close to 1 in 12 of 22 Arab States, indicating equal access to school between girls and boys in these countries.**
- **Disparities in access favouring boys are particularly high in Yemen (GPI=0.72), and to a lesser extent, Sudan (GPI= 0.82).**

Goal 6

Education quality

... improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Education quality

- **Education for all cannot be achieved without improving quality.**
- **Two principles characterize most attempts to define quality in education:**
 - **The first identifies learners' cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all education systems. Accordingly, the success with which systems achieve this is one indicator of their quality.**
 - **The second emphasizes education's role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development.**

Goal 6

Education quality

- **International achievement tests provide some information on education quality, but indicators to measure progress need to be established in other aspects of educational quality.**

Population growth and education

- **High rates of population growth in the past are still influencing the number of children to be enrolled in the Arab region, in spite of a significant decrease in fertility in many countries in the region.**
- **The region's total school-age population (ages 6-17) grew from around 70 million in 1990 to 86 million in 2005, and looks set to reach an estimated 103 million by 2025, that is, 33 million more than in 1990.**

Population growth and education

Year	Population <i>(millions)</i>	School-age population (6-17)	
		Number <i>(millions)</i>	Percent
1990	229.1	69.6	30.4
2005	321.4	86.1	26.8
2025	459.4	102.6	22.3

Population growth and education

- **These figures show the scale of the efforts that the Arab region will need to make to meet the potential demand for education.**
- **To achieve education for all within the timeframe set, actions must be taken immediately and goals pursued persistently.**

Call to Establish Arab Education Fund



Arab Education Fund

- **Education is the nexus between all items on the development agenda:**
 - **reducing poverty,**
 - **improving health,**
 - **advancing gender equality,**
 - **applying new technologies,**
 - **protecting the environment,**
 - **extending democratic participation and good governance.**

Arab Education Fund

- **Arab States are called upon to establish an ‘Arab Education Fund.’**
- **Each of the 22 Arab States to contribute annually an equal percentage of its GDP.**
- **Each country to be allocated an amount from the ‘Fund’ depending on:**
 - **Size of its school-age population;**
 - **Income per capita; and**
 - **Level of literacy.**