



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



# Inequalities in Education



A child or young person's circumstances, such as their wealth, gender, ethnicity and where they live, play an important role in shaping their opportunities for education and life.

The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE), developed by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, draws attention to unacceptable levels of education inequality across countries and between groups within countries, with the aim informing policy design and public debate.

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

This booklet looks at the impact that gender, wealth and where a child or young person lives has on their opportunities for education and later in life. Data in the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) for eight countries are analyzed: **Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, India, Haiti, Nigeria, Uganda and Yemen.**

Ranking these countries shows that the largest proportion of the poorest girls who have never been to school live in Nigeria and Yemen. In both countries, there has not been much progress in improving the education prospects of the poorest girls between one generation and the next. In Nigeria, 7 out of 10 of the current age group have never been to school, suggesting that there could continue to be a high proportion of young women who have not completed primary school in the next decade.

Percentage of the poorest females who have never been to school Aged 7-16			Percentage of the poorest young women who have not completed primary education Aged 15-24		
Country	%	Rank	Country	%	Rank
<b>Nigeria</b>	70	1	<b>Yemen</b>	88	1
<b>Yemen</b>	60	2	<b>Ethiopia</b>	88	1
<b>Ethiopia</b>	36	3	<b>Haiti</b>	88	1
<b>India</b>	33	4	<b>Nigeria</b>	84	4
<b>DRC</b>	30	5	<b>Uganda</b>	84	4
<b>Haiti</b>	22	6	<b>DRC</b>	76	6
<b>Uganda</b>	14	7	<b>India</b>	70	7
<b>Bangladesh</b>	11	8	<b>Bangladesh</b>	52	8

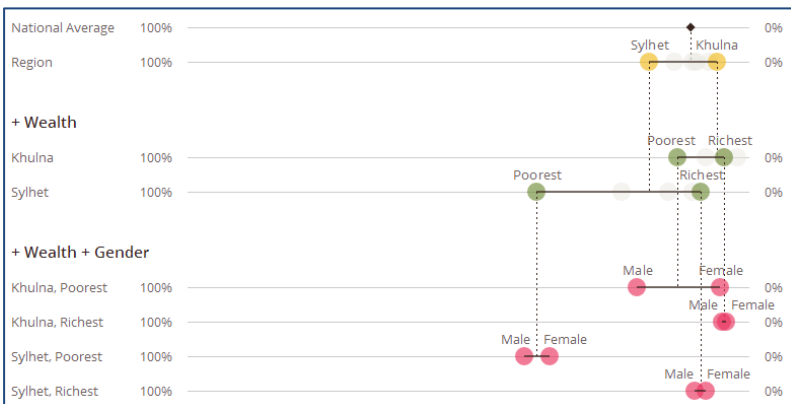
Bangladesh ranks the best for having the largest proportion of poorest girls accessing education as well as the largest percentage who have completed primary education. Uganda is in second position for the percentage who have ever been to school, but fourth in terms of the poorest young women who have ever completed primary school. This suggests education progress for the poorest girls entering school now than there were in the past. It gives hope that fewer young women will be left lacking skills for work in Uganda in the future.

# Bangladesh: Progress for the poorest

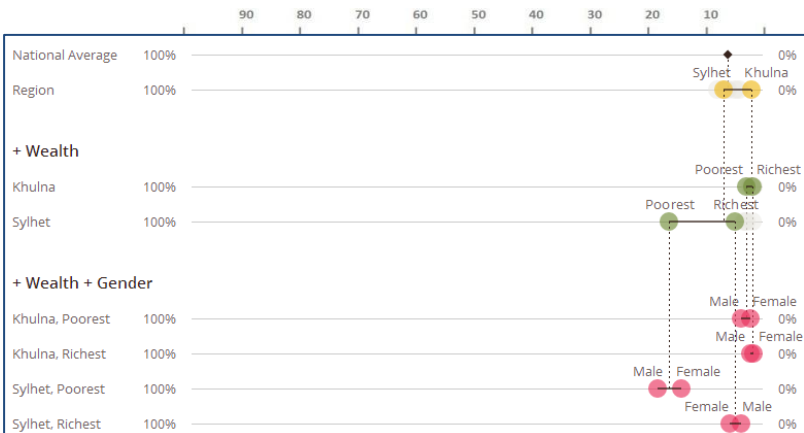
Bangladesh has made great progress in education. In 2011, only 6% of those aged 7-16 had never been to school. Progress has been exemplary in the way it has benefited poor girls and boys in disadvantaged areas. In 2004, 38% of poor children in Sylhet had never been to school. By 2011, only 17% were in this position. The country's successful cash stipend programme for girls has resulted in it being one of only a few low-income countries to have more girls than boys in school than boys.

## Bangladesh: Never been to school, aged 7-16

### 2004

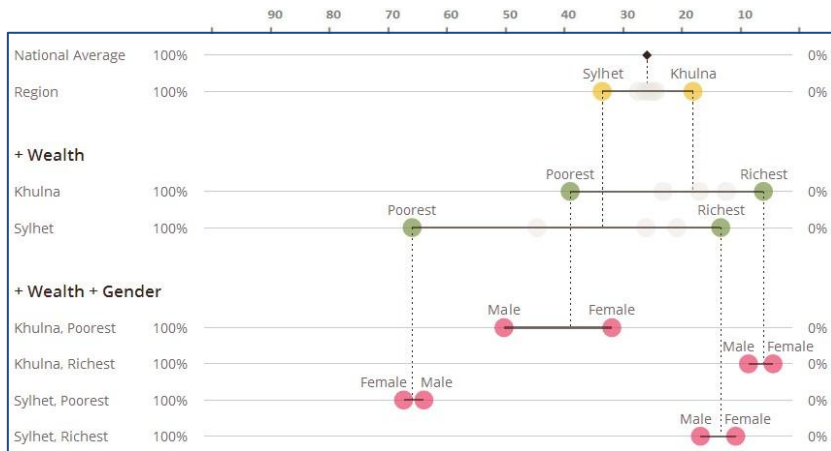


### 2011



Despite Bangladesh's tremendous progress in getting children into school in recent years, there remains a legacy of young people who have not completed primary education. In 2011, while 56% of the poorest youth had not completed primary education, the same is true for only 10% of the richest. In Sylhet, young women in the poorest households are still at more of a disadvantage than young men: two-thirds never completed primary school and so need a second chance through programmes such as those offered by BRAC and other NGOs.

### Bangladesh, 2011: Not completed primary school, aged 15-24



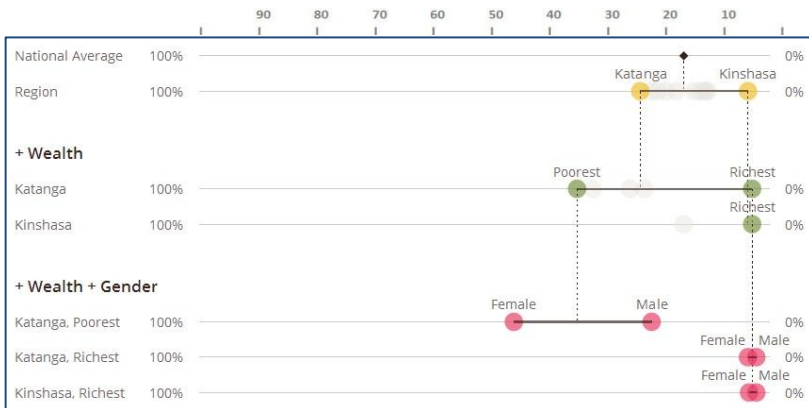
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# Democratic Republic of the Congo: Children living in conflict-affected areas left behind

The chances of children going to school in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are heavily influenced by whether they live in a conflict zone, and whether they are rich or poor.

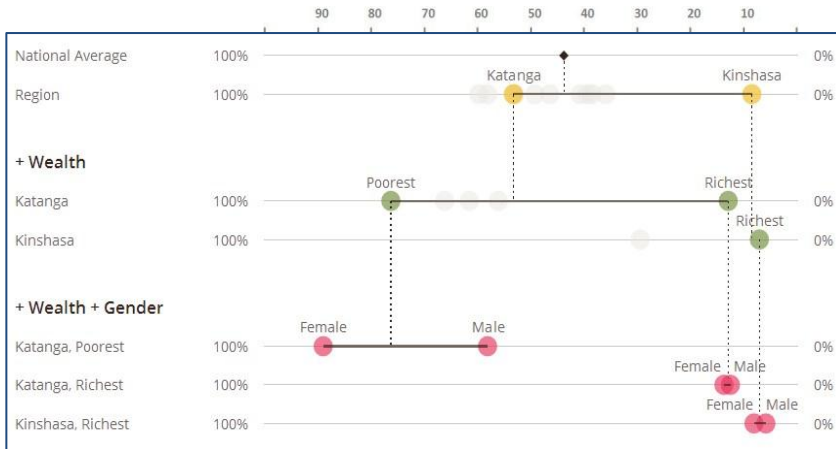
Almost all children aged 7-16 in the capital city, Kinshasa, have been to school, whether male or female. In the conflict-affected region of Katanga, the richest children have a similar chance of going to school as those in Kinshasa. But one in three of the poorest children have never been to school. The poorest girls in Katanga are the worst off of all: 44% have never been to school, compared with 17% of boys in the region.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2010: Never been to primary school, aged 7-16



Where young people live and their family's wealth have a huge impact on whether they have completed primary school or not. Overlapping inequalities create even larger disparities. The poorest young women in conflict-affected areas suffer the worst disadvantages: almost nine out of 10 in Katanga do not have basic skills that can be gained through completing primary school. This generation of young women urgently needs a second chance to learn.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2010: Not completed primary school



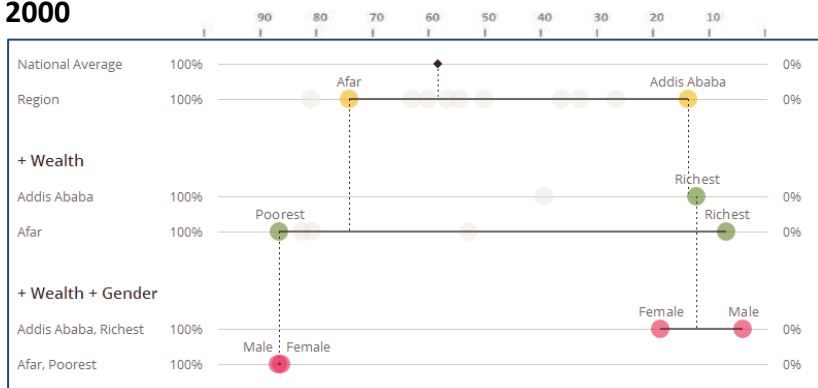
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# Ethiopia: Progress but policies needed to reach poor girls and pastoralists

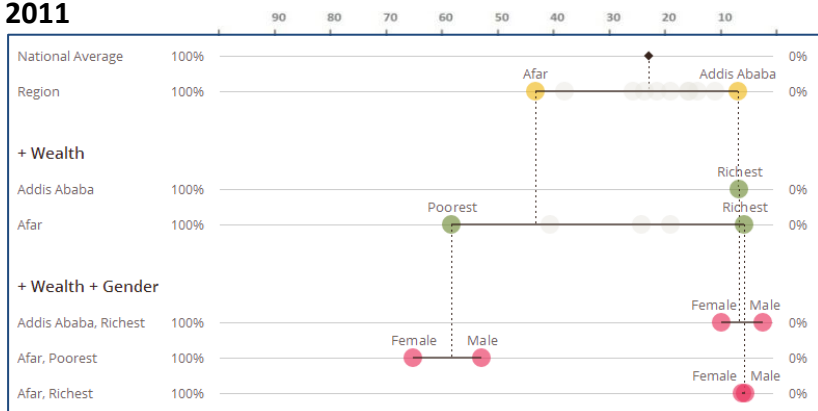
In Ethiopia, many more children have had the opportunity to attend school over the past decade, including those in the most disadvantaged areas. Even so, wide disparities still need to be tackled. In the capital, Addis Ababa, almost all children now start school. By contrast, almost six out of 10 of the poorest children living in Afar, a predominantly pastoralist region, have never had a chance to go to school. Poor girls in Afar are least likely of all to make it to school: only one in three have the opportunity.

## Ethiopia: Never been to primary school, aged 7-16

2000

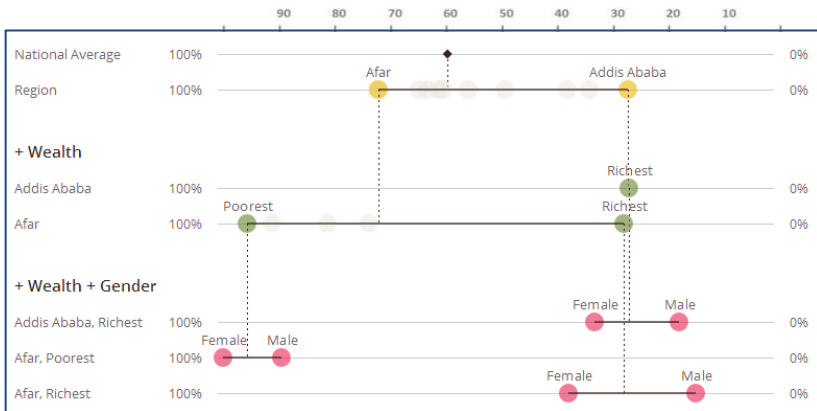


2011



Overlapping disadvantages, such as where a young person lives, poverty or being female, diminish the chances of having completed primary school. In Afar, almost all of the poorest young women are in this category. Even in the capital, the legacy of limited education has left a wide gender divide among young people: twice as many young women as young men have not completed primary school.

### Ethiopia, 2011: Not completed primary school, aged 15-24



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# Haiti: Wide disparities between rich and poor before the earthquake

Before the devastating earthquake in Haiti, the poorest children were least likely to enter school, regardless of the region they were living in.

In 2005, one sixth of the poorest in the urban Aire Métropolitaine had never been to school, compared with one third in the Centre. At that time, girls and boys had a similar chance of accessing an education

The earthquake destroyed schools across the country, and has meant that the education system needed to be rebuilt.

## Haiti, 2005: Never been to primary school, aged 7-16



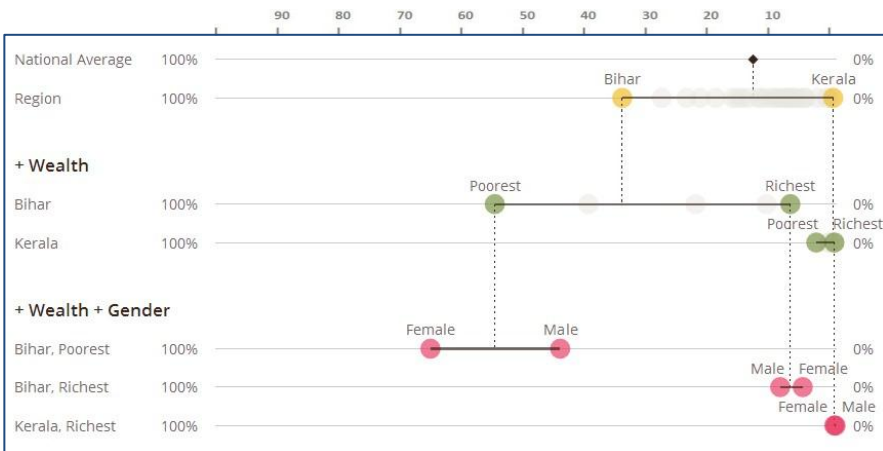
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# India: Education inequalities leave a legacy of disadvantage for young people in some states

Vast differences in access to education between different states in India in the mid-2000s are likely to have left large numbers of young people lacking basic skills needed to find secure employment and lead fulfilling lives.

In 2005, over half of the poorest 7- to 16-year-olds in Bihar state had never been to school. Gender disparities for the poorest in Bihar were far wider than for the richest. The success in Kerala state, by contrast, provides an encouraging signal of the possibilities of narrowing inequalities: almost all had been to school, whether rich or poor, or male or female.

## India, 2005: Never been to primary school, aged 7-16

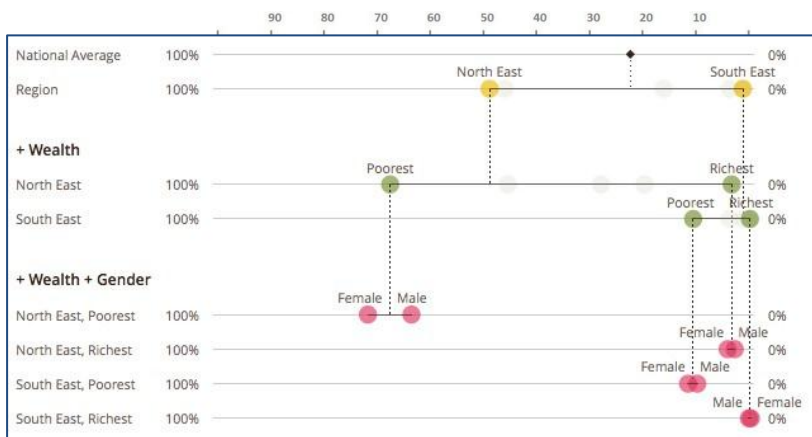


# Nigeria: Wealth gaps deny many of the poorest the chance of an education

In Nigeria, there are vast disparities by region and wealth. Although primary education was free in 2008, over half of parents reported paying some fees that year to send their children to school. Even low-fee private schools are out of reach for the poorest households. Prohibitive costs of schooling continue to keep children out of school. In 2008, almost three-quarters of the poorest 7- to 16-year-olds in the northeast had never been to school, while almost all of the richest had. Gender gaps were also larger among the poorest, while being almost non-existent for the richest in the country.

In the southeast, there were smaller but still discernible wealth gaps between those who had been to school and those who had not.

## Nigeria, 2008: Never been to primary school, aged 7-16

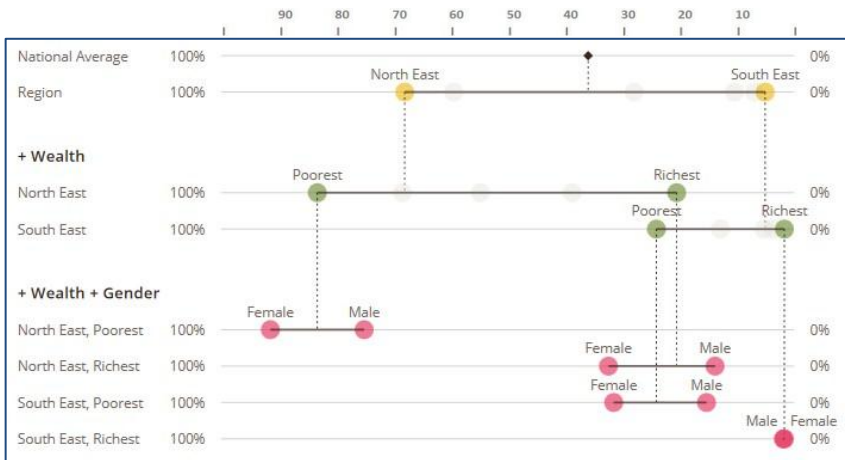


Long-term education inequalities in Nigeria have left a large proportion of young people without skills they need to find well-paid, secure work.

In the northeast, vast wealth disparities are apparent: in 2008 four-fifths of the poorest young people had not completed primary school, compared with just one-fifth of the richest. Wealth divides are further aggravated by gender in the region: 9 out of 10 young women have not had the chance to complete primary school.

Even youth in the southeast of the country are affected by large wealth divides: 24% of the poorest in the southeast are without primary education, compared with just 2% of the richest.

### Nigeria, 2008: Not completed primary school, aged 15-24

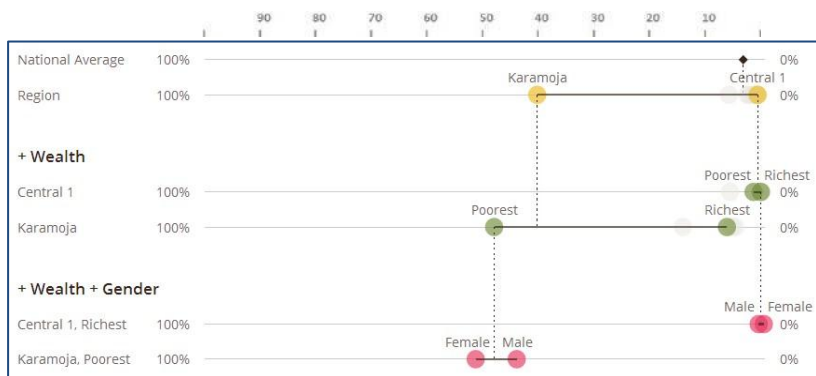


# Uganda: The challenge of reaching pastoralist communities

While the proportion of those who have never been to school in Uganda is small on average, there are striking regional disparities. Two-fifths of 7- to 16-year-olds in Karamoja, a pastoralist area, have never been to school. This stands in stark contrast with Central Uganda, where all children go to primary school.

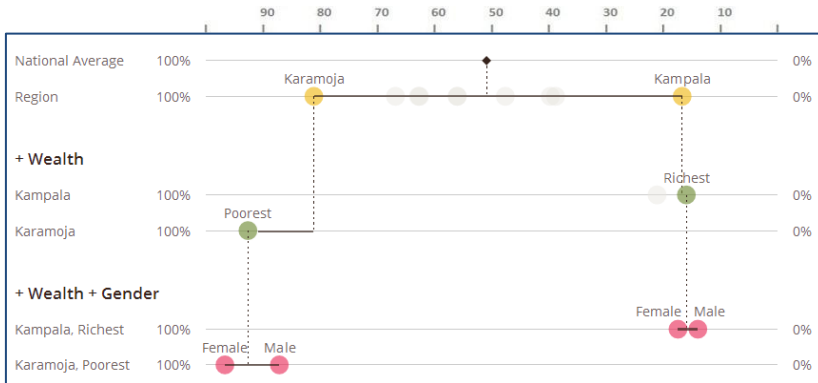
These statistics show how hard it can be to deliver education to semi-nomadic pastoralists such as those in Karamoja. A mobile lifestyle, early and forced marriages, and insecurity can mean that school is not seen as a priority for herders' children. Overlapping disadvantages make the task even harder: half of the poorest in the region have never been to school, compared with only 7% of the richest.

## Uganda, 2011: Never been to school, aged 7-16



Regional and wealth divides in Uganda have left half of young people without completing primary school. These youth will struggle to find work that pays them a decent wage. Almost all of the poorest young women in Karamoja have not completed primary school, compared with 12% of the richest young men in the capital, Kampala.

### Uganda, 2011: Never completed primary school, aged 15-24



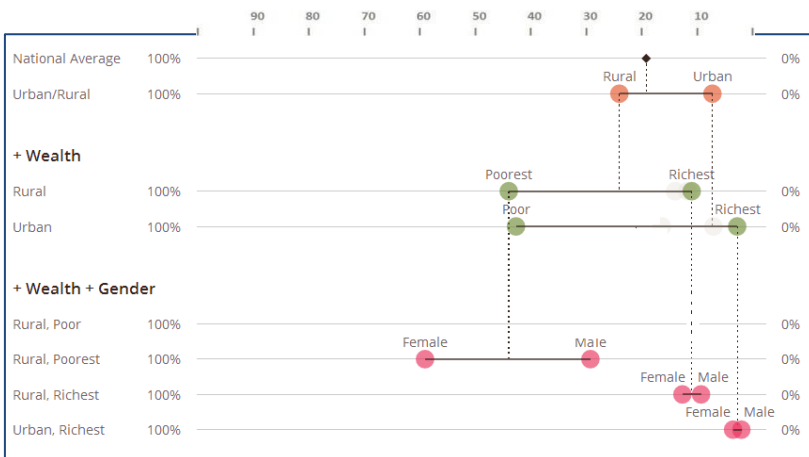
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# Yemen: The urban poor are as disadvantaged as the rural poor

Poverty in Yemen continues to keep children out of school, whether they live in urban or rural areas. Around 45% of 7- to 16-year olds from poor households in both rural and urban areas have never been to school.

Yemen also has some of the largest gender disparities in the world. These disparities are particularly stark in rural areas, and are exacerbated by poverty: the poorest girls in rural areas are twice as likely never to have been to school as the poorest boys.

## Yemen, 2006: Never been to school, aged 7-16

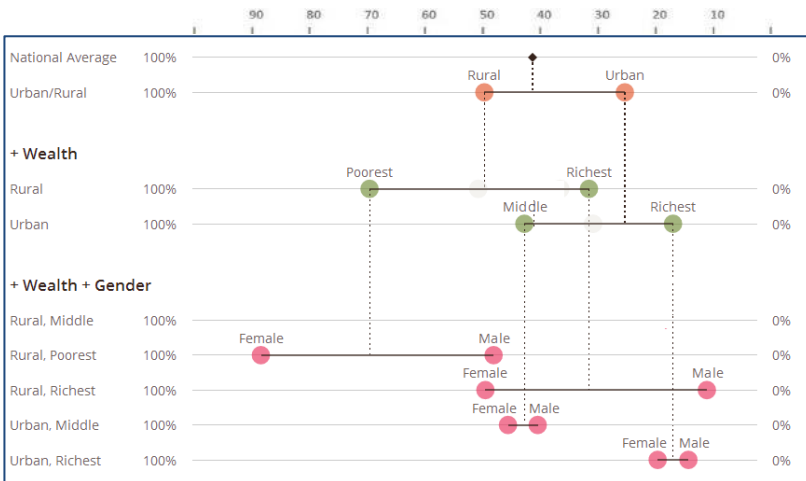


Until recently, very high numbers of children were out of school in Yemen, so many young people in the country today do not even have a primary education.

These long-term education inequalities have left wide disparities for young people now looking for work. Young Yemeni women are twice as likely as young Yemeni men to have not completed primary education. Those in rural areas are twice as likely as those in urban areas to be in this situation.

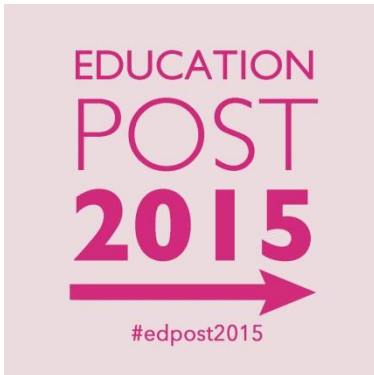
Overlapping disparities exacerbate disadvantages for youth in Yemen. Almost nine out of 10 of the poorest young women in rural areas have not completed primary education, compared with around one out of 10 of the richest males in rural areas.

### Yemen, 2006: Never completed primary school, aged 15-24





# Failing to tackle inequalities has left the world off track to reach the Education for All goals by 2015



Despite overall progress in more children entering school over the past decade, insufficient attention has been paid to eliminating inequalities in education. Tackling inequality needs to be a central focus of goals being set after 2015, with specific measures included to reach those disadvantaged by factors such as gender, poverty, location, ethnicity or disability.

A target is needed that tracks progress of the lowest-performing group in each country to ensure that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, reaches the goals by 2030.

While administrative and household data each have their strengths and weaknesses, improved household data will be essential post-2015 to enable better monitoring of progress for the most disadvantaged children.

This will require comparable household survey data to be available on a larger scale, with sufficient observations to allow analysis of sub-groups of the population.

The graphs in this booklet are taken from the **World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)**, which brings together the latest data from Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.

Visitors to the website can compare groups within countries according to various education indicators, and according to the factors that are associated with inequality, including wealth, gender, ethnicity, religion and location. Users can create maps, charts and tables from the data, and download, print or share them online.

The website hosting the database and visualizations were designed by InteractiveThings.

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

**EFA Global Monitoring Report**  
c/o UNESCO  
7, place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris 07 SP, France  
Email: [efareport@unesco.org](mailto:efareport@unesco.org)  
Tel : +33 (1) 45 68 10 36  
[www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org)

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