Congo, Rep
Learning Poverty Brief

LEARNING POVERTY: A WORLD BANK-UIS INDICATOR TO HIGHLIGHT THE LEARNING CRISIS

All children should be able to read by age 10. Reading is a gateway for learning as the child progresses through school—and conversely, an inability to read constrains opportunities for further learning. Reading proficiency is also critical for foundational learning in other subjects.

In low- and middle-income countries, more than half the children cannot read and understand a simple story by the end of primary school. This learning crisis threatens countries' efforts to build human capital and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), undermining sustainable growth and poverty reduction.

Tackling the learning crisis in the foreseeable future requires rapid progress at a scale that has not been seen yet. To galvanize action on this crisis, we introduced the concept of **Learning Poverty** (LP), a measure constructed jointly by the World Bank and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

WHAT IS LEARNING POVERTY?

Learning Poverty means being unable to read and understand a short, age-appropriate text by age 10. All foundational skills are important, but we focus on reading because: (i) reading proficiency is an easily understood measure of learning; (ii) reading is a student's gateway to learning in every other area; and, (iii) reading proficiency can serve as a proxy for foundational learning in other subjects.

The Learning Poverty indicator allows us to illustrate progress toward SDG 4's broader goal to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. It particularly highlights progress towards **SDG 4.1.1b**, which specifies that all children at the end of primary reach at least a **minimum proficiency level (MPL)** in reading.

HOW IS LEARNING POVERTY MEASURED?

The indicator combines the share of primary-aged children out-of-school who are **Schooling Deprived (SD)**, and the share of pupils below a minimum proficiency in reading, who are **Learning Deprived (LD)**. By combining schooling and learning, the indicator brings into focus both "more schooling", which by itself serves a variety of critical functions, as well as "better learning," which is important to ensure that time spent in school translates into acquisition of skills and capabilities.

$$LP = SD + [(1 - SD) \times LD]$$

where, LP is Learning Poverty; LD, Learning Deprivation, is share of children at the end of primary below minimum proficiency, as defined by the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) in the context of the SDG 4.1.1b monitoring; SD, Schooling Deprivation, is the share of primary-aged children who are out-of-school, and is linked to SDG 4.1.4. All out-of-school children are implicitly assumed to be below minimum proficiency.

The data used to calculate Learning Poverty has been made possible thanks to the work of the **Global Alliance to Monitor Learning** led by UIS, which established minimum proficiency levels that enable countries to benchmark learning across different cross-national and national assessments.

LEARNING POVERTY IN CONGO, REP

- **Learning Poverty**. 70 percent of children in Congo, Rep at late primary age today are not proficient in reading, adjusted for the out-of-school children.

- **Learning Deprivation.** Large-scale learning assessments of students in Congo, Rep indicate that 66 percent do not achieve the MPL at the end of primary school, proxied by data from grade 6 in 2019.

- **Schooling Deprivation.** In Congo, Rep, 11 percent of primary school-aged children are not enrolled in school. These children are excluded from learning in school.

For countries with very low Schooling Deprivation, the share of children with Learning Deprivation will be very close to the reported Learning Poverty.

Notes: The LP number for Congo, Rep is calculated using the Global Learning Assessment Database (GLAD) harmonization based on PASEC and the MPL threshold used was level 4. For more details, please consult the GLAD and Learning Poverty repositories in GitHub.

BENCHMARKING CONGO, REP'S LEARNING POVERTY

Learning Poverty in Congo, Rep is **16.3 percentage points lower than** the average for the Sub-Saharan Africa region and **9.6 percentage points higher than** the average for lower middle income countries.

Figure 1. Learning Poverty and components
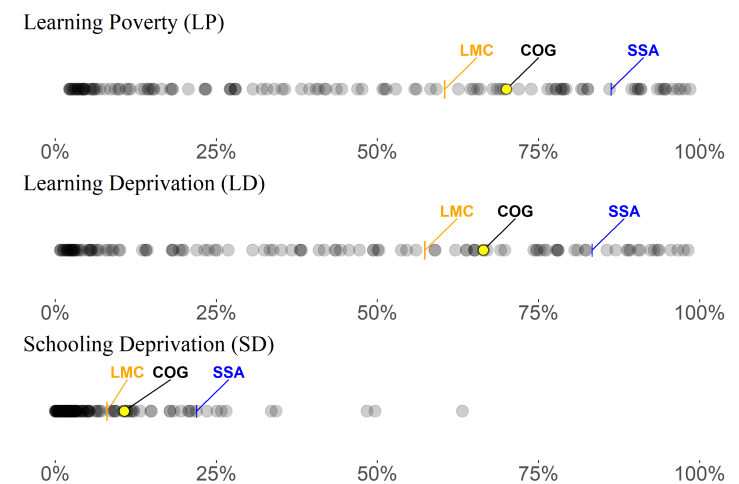
Source: UIS and World Bank as of May 2021.

Notes: (1) Yellow circle represents Congo, Rep; (2) Gray circles represent other countries; and, (3) Vertical lines reflect the averages of Congo, Rep's region and income group.

HOW DOES CONGO, REP'S GENDER GAP COMPARE GLOBALLY?

As in most countries, **Learning Poverty is higher for boys than for girls** in Congo, Rep.

This result is a composition of two effects. First, the share of **out-of-school children is higher for boys** (14.5%) than for girls (6.9%).

Second, **boys are less likely to achieve minimum proficiency** at the end of primary school (69.8%) than girls (63%) in Congo, Rep.

Table 1 shows sex disaggregation for Learning Poverty and Human Capital Index (HCI) education components whenever available.

Table 1. Sex Disaggregation

Indicators and Components	Boys	Girls	All
Learning Poverty	74.2	65.5	70
Learning Deprivation	69.8	63	66.4
Schooling Deprivation	14.5	6.9	10.7
Human Capital Index	0.41	0.43	0.42
Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling	5.2	5.4	5.3

Source: UIS and World Bank for LP, LD and SD as of May 2021; EdStats/WDI (World Development Indicators) for HCI and LAYS (Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling); The Full Learning Poverty database is available for download at the Development Data Hub.

Figure 2. Gender Gap - Learning Poverty by Sex
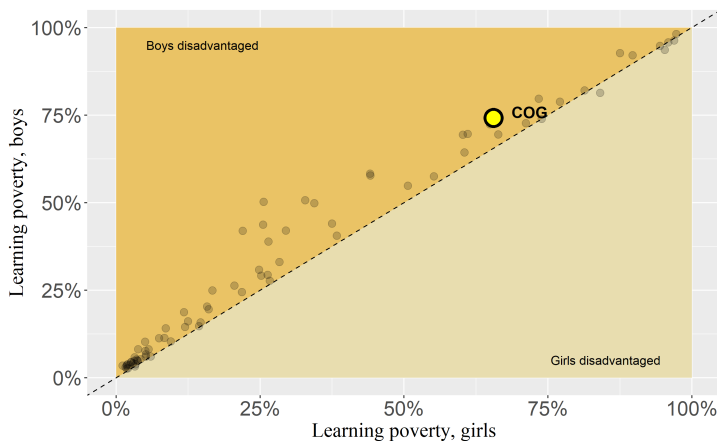
Source: UIS and World Bank as of May 2021. *Notes:* (1) - Yellow circle represents Congo, Rep; and, (2) The closer a country is to the dotted line the smaller its LP gender gap.

POINT OF CONTACT

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PRIMARY EDUCATION EXPENDITURE

Primary education expenditure per child of primary education age in Congo, Rep is **USD 453 (PPP)**, which is **19.3% below** the average for the Sub-Saharan Africa region and **43.9% below** the average for lower middle income countries.

Figure 3. Expenditure per child of primary school age
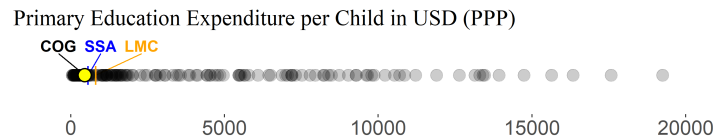
Source: UIS and World Bank as of May 2021. *Note:* Primary education expenditure per child is calculated as total expenditure on primary education divided by total number of children of primary school age. Data for Congo, Rep is from 2010.

DATA AND DATA GAPS ON LEARNING AND SCHOOLING IN CONGO, REP

Congo, Rep administers a National Large-Scale Assessment (NLSA) at the end of primary school, according to UIS SDG 4.1.1b monitoring. If this NLSA is mapped against the **SDG 4 Global Proficiency Framework** using **policy linking**, **student linking** or **item linking**, it may be possible to monitor Learning Poverty with it in the future.

Congo, Rep participated in the following published cross-national learning assessments in recent years: PASEC (1996, 2007, 2014, 2019).

Congo, Rep has not participated in the World Bank's LeAP diagnostic exercise to analyze its assessment system. To get started, contact the LeAP team.

The out-of-school adjustment in Learning Poverty relies on enrollment data. Our preferred definition is the adjusted net primary enrollment rate (ANER) as reported by UIS. This data relies both on the population census and EMIS (Education Management Information System). We use enrollment data for the year closest to the assessment year. In the case of Congo, Rep, ANER based on EMIS data is for 2019.

Notes: The definition of NLSA does not include National Exams; LeAP: Learning Assessment Platform (LeAP-team@worldbank.org). PASEC: Programme d'Analyse des Systems Educatifs de la Confemen. For questions related to the data in the brief, contact the EduAnalytics team (eduanalytics@worldbank.org).

#LearningPoverty