

Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

### 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 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 PAKISTAN

- **Learning Poverty.** 77 percent of children in Pakistan 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 Pakistan indicate that 65 percent do not achieve the MPL at the end of primary school, proxied by data from grade 4 in 2014.
- **Schooling Deprivation.** In Pakistan, 34 percent of primary school-aged children are not enrolled in school. These children are excluded from learning in school.

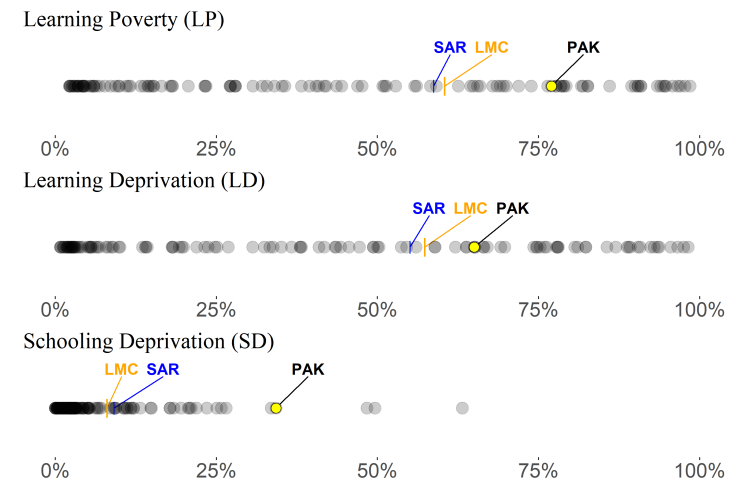
For countries with very low Schooling Deprivation, the share of children with Learning Deprivation will be very close to the reported Learning Poverty.

*Notes:* The LP number for Pakistan is calculated using data from NLSA and the MPL threshold used was level Low (400 points). No learning data harmonization following the Global Learning Assessment Database (GLAD) guidelines has been produced for Pakistan, this limits the current analytical possibilities for this country. For more details, please consult the [GLAD](#) and [Learning Poverty](#) repositories in GitHub.

### BENCHMARKING PAKISTAN'S LEARNING POVERTY

Learning Poverty in Pakistan is **18.3 percentage points higher** than the average for the South Asia region and **16.6 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 Pakistan; (2) Gray circles represent other countries; and, (3) Vertical lines reflect the averages of Pakistan's region and income group.

### HOW DOES PAKISTAN'S GENDER GAP COMPARE GLOBALLY?

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

This result is a composition of two effects. First, the share of **out-of-school children is lower for boys (29.3%)** than for girls (39.6%).

Second, **boys are less likely to achieve minimum proficiency at the end of primary school (70%)** than girls (62%) in Pakistan.

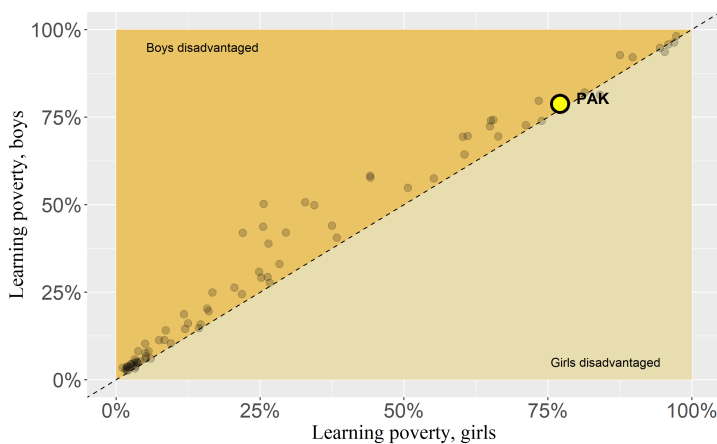
Table 1 shows sex disaggregation for Learning Poverty and Human Capital Index (HCI) education components whenever available.

**Table 1. Sex Disaggregation**

Indicators and Components	Boys	Girls	All
Learning Poverty	78.8	77.1	77
Learning Deprivation	70	62	65
Schooling Deprivation	29.3	39.6	34.2
Human Capital Index	0.41	0.4	0.41
Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling	5.4	4.8	5.1

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 Pakistan; and, (2) The closer a country is to the dotted line the smaller its LP gender gap.

### POINT OF CONTACT

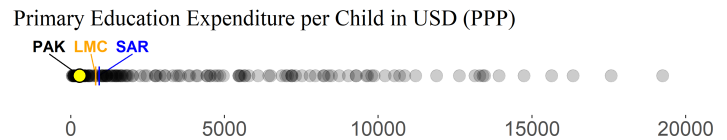
**Pakistan:** Tazeen Fasih and Juan Baron

**South Asia:** Koen Martijn Geven

### PRIMARY EDUCATION EXPENDITURE

Primary education expenditure per child of primary education age in Pakistan is **USD 287 (PPP)**, which is **68.8% below** the average for the South Asia region and **64.5% 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 Pakistan is from 2015.

### DATA AND DATA GAPS ON LEARNING AND SCHOOLING IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan administers a National Large-Scale Assessment (NLSA) at the end of primary school, according to UIS SDG 4.1.1b monitoring. This NLSA is currently being used for interim reporting on SDG 4.1.1 and to monitor Learning Poverty.

Pakistan participated in the following published cross-national learning assessments in recent years: TIMSS (2019).

According to the World Bank's 2012 LeAP diagnostic analysis of Pakistan's assessment system, the country's ratings on large-scale assessment activities were **Latent (1 out of 4)** on Cross-National Learning Assessment and **Emerging (2 out of 4)** on NLSA. **Latent** is absence of, or deviation from, attribute. **Emerging** is partial presence of attribute. **Established** is acceptable minimum standard on indicator. **Advanced** is ideal or current best practice. To update results, contact 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 Pakistan, ANER based on EMIS data is for 2014.

Notes: The definition of NLSA does not include National Exams; LeAP: Learning Assessment Platform ([LeAP-team@worldbank.org](mailto:LeAP-team@worldbank.org)). TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. For questions related to the data in the brief, contact the EduAnalytics team ([eduanalytics@worldbank.org](mailto:eduanalytics@worldbank.org)).



#LearningPoverty