

# A growing number of children and adolescents are out of school as aid fails to meet the mark

## POLICY PAPER 22 / FACT SHEET 31

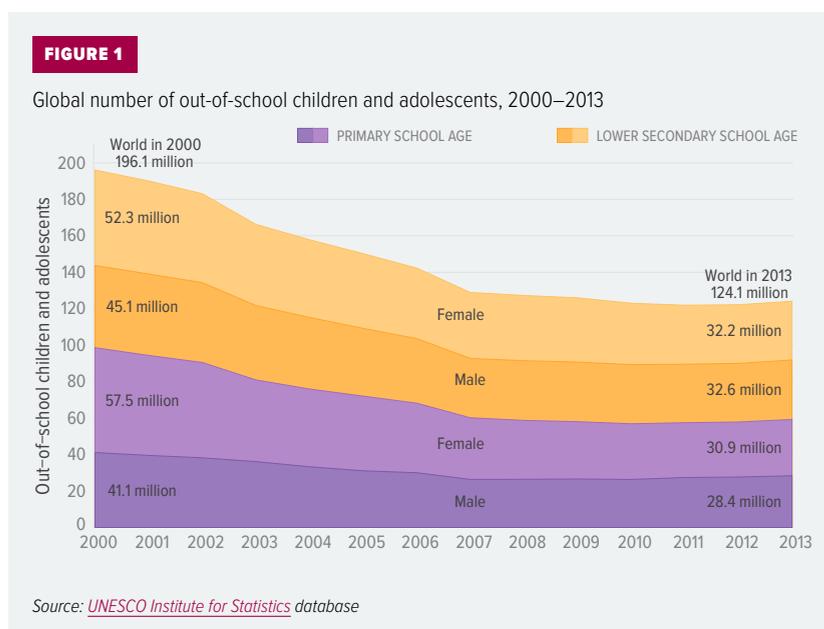
July 2015

*This paper, jointly released by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, shows that the number of out-of-school children and young adolescents is on the rise, reaching 124 million in 2013. As countries strive to achieve universal primary and secondary education through the new Sustainable Development Goals, the international community must dramatically increase aid to education for countries with the greatest needs. While international aid to education increased slightly in 2013, it is still below the levels reached in 2010.*

## The global number of children and young adolescents out of school is increasing

New data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) show that the global number of children and young adolescents not enrolled in school is rising at the same time that the international community is setting a new sustainable development goal that includes universal secondary education. According to UIS data for the school year ending in 2013, 124 million children and young adolescents, roughly between the ages of 6 and 15 years, have either never started school or have dropped out, compared to 122 million in 2011 (see **Figure 1**).

The global number of out-of-school children of primary school age rose by 2.4 million between 2010 and 2013, reaching a total of more than 59 million. This serves as a grim reminder that the world has yet to fulfil its original promise to provide every child with a primary education by 2015. The increase also marks



a stark contrast to the progress achieved from the start of the century, when the international community pledged to achieve universal primary education. According to the data, 1 out of 11 (or 9%) of children of primary school age (typically 6 to 11 years) continue to be denied the right to education.

A growing number of young adolescents are also out of school, with the global total reaching almost 65 million in 2013. Adolescents of lower secondary school age (typically 12 to 15 years) are almost twice as likely to be out of school as primary school-age children, with 1 out of 6 (17%) not enrolled.

Efforts to reduce the gender gap have also faltered in recent years. While the gap is considerably smaller than in the early 2000s, UIS data show little improvement in recent years, despite the many campaigns and initiatives designed to break the barriers that keep girls out of school. Among children of primary school age, 1 out of 10 girls and 1 out of 12 boys were out of school in 2013 (see **Figure 2**). Among adolescents of lower secondary school age,

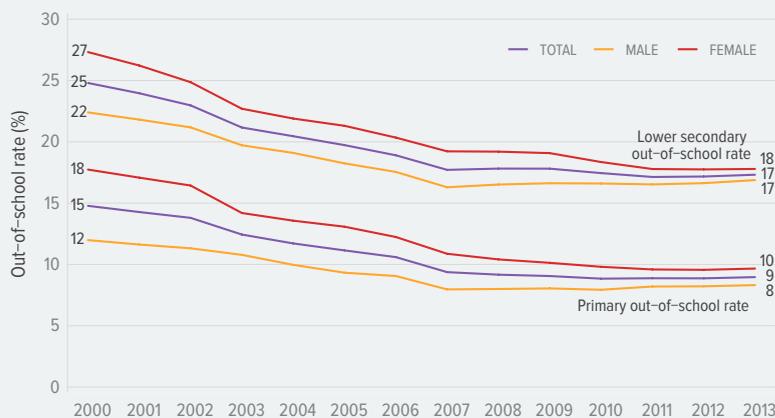
the proportion of out-of-school boys and girls was almost equal. Although relatively fewer girls enter primary school, they are less likely to drop out and more likely to pursue their education at the secondary level than boys, according to UIS data. A look at primary and lower secondary ages combined shows 1 out of 8 girls was out of school in 2013, compared to 1 out of 9 boys.

Two reasons help explain the recent increase in the number of out-of-school children and adolescents. To begin with, a number of sub-Saharan African countries find it difficult to keep up with the rising

demand for education from a school-age population that continues to grow. At the same time, the tremendous progress seen at the start of the century was largely due to large-scale measures to improve access to education, such as the abolition of tuition fees and the construction of new schools. But a [recent report](#) by the UIS and UNICEF shows why we can no longer only rely on 'business as usual' strategies based on more teachers, more classrooms and more textbooks.<sup>1</sup> Targeted interventions are needed to reach the most marginalised children and youth who are out of school today, including those with disabilities; from ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities; and children affected by armed conflict.

**FIGURE 2**

Global out-of-school rate, children of primary and lower secondary age, 2000–2013



Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) database

India, for example, is providing financial resources to help children with disabilities attend mainstream schools and adapt school infrastructure. In addition, teachers are being trained on inclusive education, with resource centres established to support clusters of schools. In Viet Nam, new policies have been developed about language of instruction in order to provide more relevant education for specific ethnic groups (UNICEF and UIS, 2014d).

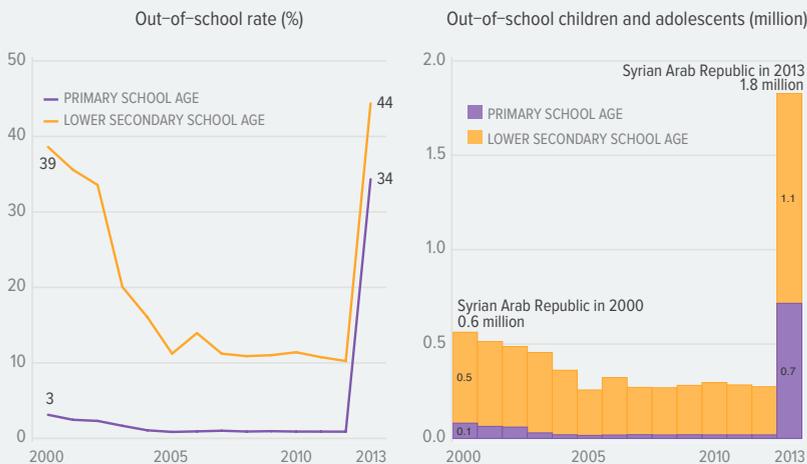
### *Armed conflict has a severe impact on education in the Syrian Arab Republic*

The case of the Syrian Arab Republic demonstrates the devastating consequences of war for children's education. By 2000, the country had achieved universal primary enrolment. Yet, as the civil war spread, the number of out-of-school children and adolescents jumped from 0.3 million in 2012 to 1.8 million by the end of 2013 (see **Figure 3**).

Enrolment in grades 1 to 12 fell by 35% between the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years. As a result, 1 out of 3 children of primary school age and more than 2 out of 5 adolescents of lower secondary school age were not in school, erasing all gains since the start of the century. Many families have been internally displaced or have fled to neighbouring countries. Lebanon alone has registered nearly 1.2 million Syrian refugees as of May 2015 and it has been estimated that nearly 90% of the refugee children of primary and lower secondary school age in Lebanon were not enrolled in school in 2013.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 3**

Out-of-school children and adolescents in the Syrian Arab Republic, 2000–2013



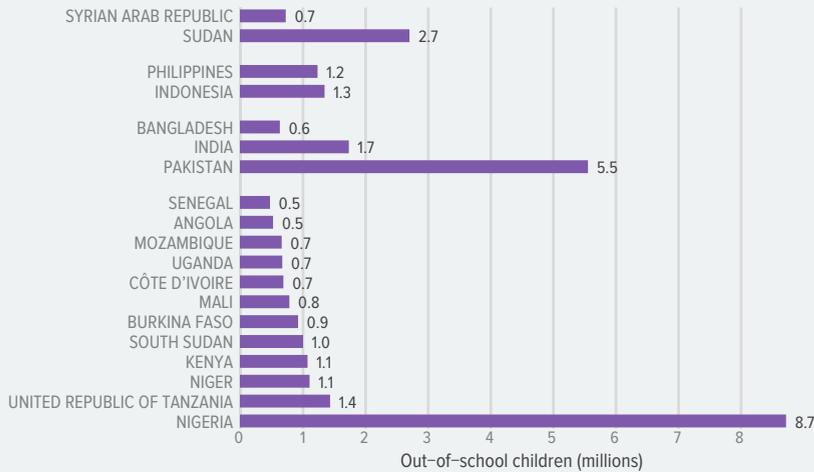
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database

### *Most out-of-school children live in a small number of countries*

The Syrian Arab Republic is not the only country with a large number of out-of-school children and adolescents. According to the latest UIS data, there were more than 0.5 million out-of-school children of primary school age in at least 19 countries (see **Figure 4**). Combined, these countries were home to one-half of the global number of out-of-school children. At least 1 million children were denied the right to education in each of the following countries: India, Indonesia, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan and the

**FIGURE 4**

Out-of-school children of primary school age in selected countries, 2013 or latest year



**Notes:** Data for Senegal refer to 2014. Data for India, Indonesia, Kenya and Sudan refer to 2012. Data for Angola and South Sudan refer to 2011. Data for Bangladesh and Nigeria refer to 2010.

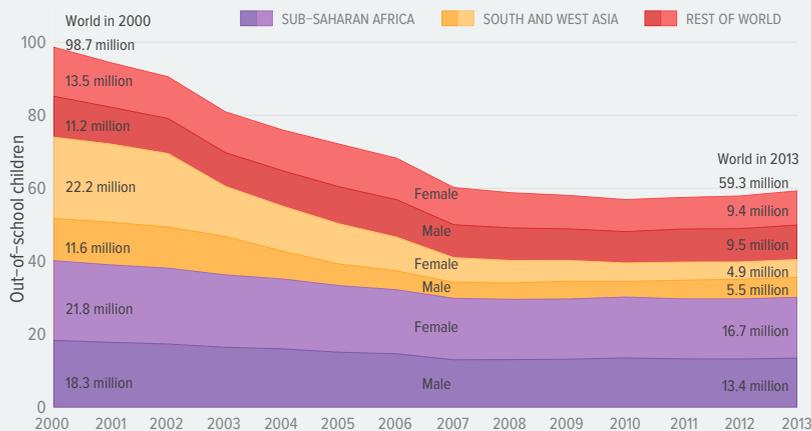
Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) database

United Republic of Tanzania. It is important to note that Figure 4 does not include countries like Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Somalia, which have large numbers of children out of school but lack precise data.

The picture for young adolescents of lower secondary school age is less clear due to lack of recent data for many countries. India has made impressive progress in the provision of primary education but is struggling to do the same for lower secondary education. In 2011, the latest year with data, more than 16 million young adolescents of lower secondary school age were not enrolled in school in India. In addition, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mexico, Niger, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic each had more than 1 million out-of-school adolescents. It is important to note that some countries with large numbers of out-of-school children of primary school age lack recent data on excluded adolescents, as in the case of Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

**FIGURE 5**

Number of out-of-school children of primary school age, 2000–2013

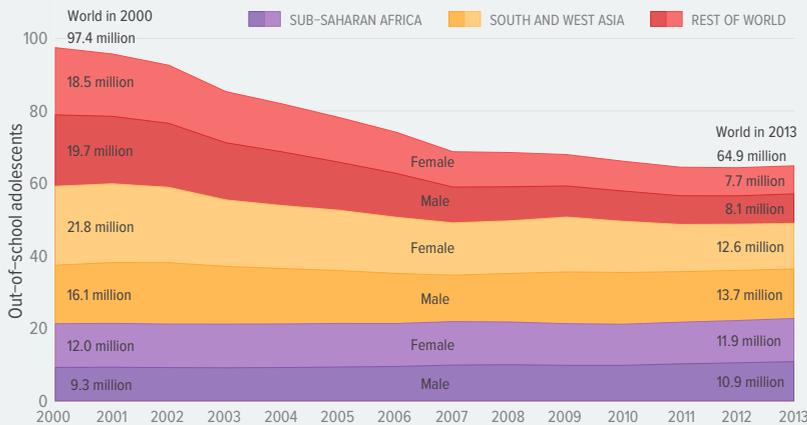


Source: [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) database

10 million in South and West Asia (see **Figure 5**). For adolescents of lower secondary school age, the order was reversed: of the 65 million out-of-school adolescents in 2013, 26 million lived in South and West Asia and 23 million in sub-Saharan Africa (see **Figure 6**). However, sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in which the number of out-of-school adolescents has grown, from 21 million in 2000 to 23 million in 2013, a consequence of rapid population growth.

**FIGURE 6**

Number of out-of-school adolescents of lower secondary school age, 2000–2013



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database

Sub-Saharan Africa is also the region with the largest gender disparities; here, girls account for 55% of all out-of-school children and 52% of all out-of-school adolescents. In South and West Asia, by contrast, girls account for only 47% of all out-of-school children and 48% of all out-of-school adolescents, but this is largely a reflection of the fact that the number of boys exceeds the number of girls in the total population by more than in any other region.

### *Fix the broken promise to the 24 million children who will never enter a classroom*

In September 2015, the United Nations is expected to adopt a new set of Sustainable Development Goals that will call for universal primary and secondary education. The ambition driving this goal marks a positive step forward so long as national governments and the international community are prepared to invest the resources needed to reach all children and youth. As countries and donors seek to expand access to higher levels of education, we must not lose sight of the millions of children who will never set foot in a classroom.

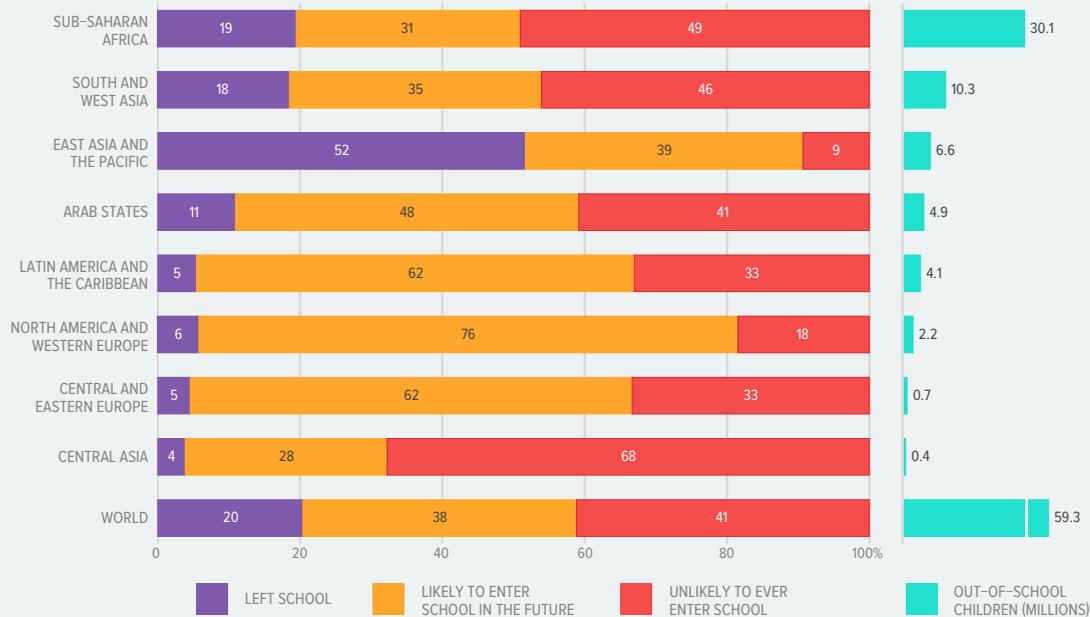
To better evaluate the challenges ahead, the UIS produces estimates to gauge how many children who are currently out of school will attend in the future (see **Figure 7**). Globally, 41% or 24 million of all out-of-school children have never attended school and will probably never start if current trends continue. About 20% of these children attended school in the past but could not continue their education, and 38% are likely to start late and will be overage for their grade.

The situation is most extreme in sub-Saharan Africa, where one-half of the 30 million out-of-school children will never enrol. About 19% managed to start but dropped out and 31% are likely to enter school late. Girls face the biggest barriers, 56% of out-of-school girls in the region will never enter a classroom compared to 41% of out-of-school boys.

Similar trends are found in South and West Asia, the region with the second largest number of out-of-school children. Yet there is one major difference: the gender gap is even wider. According to UIS estimates, 80% of out-of-school girls in the region are unlikely to start school compared to 16% of out-of-school boys in the region, most of whom are likely to enrol late.

**FIGURE 7**

School exposure of out-of-school children of primary school age by region, 2013



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database

## Aid to education remains inadequate and not well targeted

In 2000, the international community affirmed “that no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources”. With the latest UIS figures showing that 124 million children and adolescents remain out of school, there is much more donors need to do to fulfil their promise and to accomplish the very ambitious agenda adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in May 2015.

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report team has estimated that, even if countries commit more public resources to education, an annual funding gap of at least US\$22 billion will need to be filled to achieve universal lower secondary education of good quality between now and 2030. The gap extends to US\$39 billion if universal upper secondary education is to be achieved by that year. In low-income countries, external financing will need to cover 42% of the total costs. In short, the chances of schooling for millions of children and adolescents will be jeopardised without a significant rise in aid.

**BOX 1**

**Explore the data – interactive tools about out-of-school children**

To what extent does sex, household wealth or location affect a child’s chances of entering school, starting late or dropping out? Is poverty the biggest barrier for these children or is it the fact that they live in a rural area? Developed by the UIS, an interactive data explorer at <http://on.unesco.org/oosci-global> illustrates the multiple barriers to education in selected countries participating in the **Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children**.

You can also explore and export the new global numbers and rates of out-of-school children and adolescents through the Institute’s **eAtlas**. Download data and embed interactive charts and maps from <http://on.unesco.org/oosc-map> on your website, blog and social media.

Finally, you can look for trends over time in school attendance, over-age students or primary and lower secondary school attainment by overlapping population characteristics in about 100 low- and middle-income countries at the EFA Global Monitoring Report’s **World Inequality Database on Education** at <http://www.education-inequalities.org>. You can create infographics and tables from the data, and download, print or share them online.

*Despite an increase in 2013, aid to education is still below peak levels*

Aid to education in 2013 rose for the first time in three years. Between 2012 and 2013:

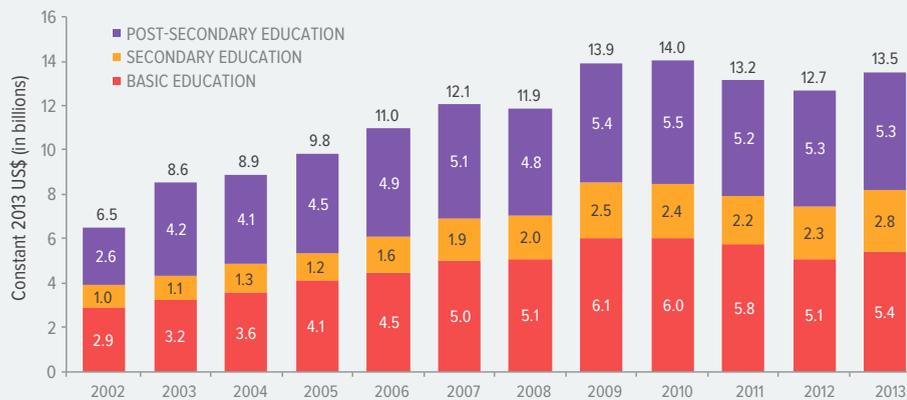
- Total aid to education rose by 6% from US\$12.7 billion to US\$13.5 billion.
- Aid to basic education similarly increased by 6% from US\$5.1 billion to US\$5.4 billion.<sup>3</sup>
- Aid to secondary education increased by 21%, reaching the highest level ever since records began in 2002 at US\$2.8 billion (see **Figure 8**).

While the post-2015 agenda has placed much more emphasis on post-secondary education, only a small share of aid is currently intended to strengthen higher education systems in recipient countries. About 70% of aid to post-secondary education is intended for scholarships to study in donor countries.

Despite the increase, total aid to education was still 4% lower in 2013 than in 2010, when it reached its peak. Aid to basic education is 11% lower than in 2010. The 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report, moreover, indicates that aid to education is expected to stagnate from 2014 onward according to the OECD Forward Spending Plans. Low-income countries are expected to fare worst given that most aid increases will be directed to middle-income countries, largely in the form of soft concessional loans.

**FIGURE 8**

Total aid to education disbursements, US\$ billions, 2002–2013

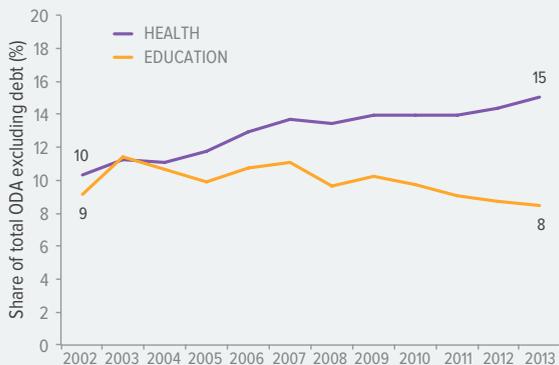


Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2013)

Aid to education grew at a slower pace than overall official development assistance (ODA) between 2012 and 2013. As a result, the share of education in total ODA declined further from 9% in 2012 to 8% in 2013 – the lowest since 2002. It is as low as 3% for the United States and

**FIGURE 9**

Share of health and education in total ODA excluding debt relief, 2002–2013



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2013)

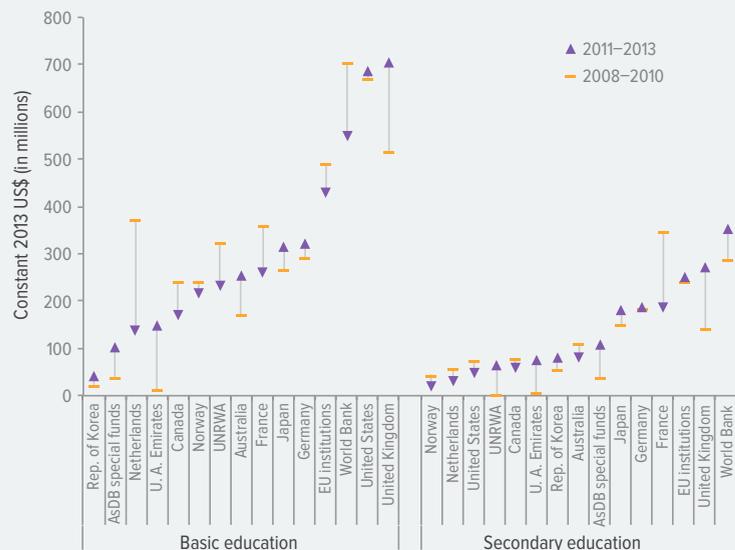
6% for European Union (EU) institutions. By contrast, aid to the health sector grew by 16% and the share of health in total ODA increased to 15% in 2013 (see **Figure 9**).<sup>4</sup>

### *A waning commitment to education by many donors threatens progress*

Despite the increases in aid to education between 2012 and 2013, a poor commitment to education by many donors is evident. Relative to 2010, when aid to education peaked at US\$14 billion, a large number of donors have decreased their aid disbursements to the education sector: between 2008–2010 and 2011–2013, 19 out of 47 donors decreased their total aid to education, 22 decreased aid to basic education and 16 decreased aid to secondary education. This includes several of the largest 15 donors to education in the period 2011–2013 (see **Figure 10**).

**FIGURE 10**

Aid disbursements to basic and secondary education, by donor, 2008–2010 and 2011–2013



**Note:** The figure includes the 15 largest bilateral and multilateral donors in terms of their aid to education over 2011–2013. The following abbreviations are used: UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; AsDB is the Asian Development Bank.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2013)

Among the largest bilateral donors, Canada and the Netherlands decreased aid to basic education, while France and the Netherlands decreased their aid to secondary education. Among the largest multilateral donors, the EU and the World Bank also decreased aid to basic education significantly between the two periods.

The recent increase in combined aid to basic and secondary education has largely been propped up by a handful of donors, such as the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom. The United Arab Emirates' large increase in funding for basic and secondary education was largely due to an increase in disbursements to Egypt.

### *Donors are shifting away from basic education*

Multilateral donors, whose aid disbursement decisions are less constrained by historic ties between individual countries, appear to be reducing the share of aid going to basic

education and are instead focusing efforts on secondary and post-secondary education. The share of multilateral aid going to basic education has fallen from a high of 65% in 2005 to 43% in 2013 (see **Figure 11**). The World Bank, the largest multilateral donor, has decreased the share of aid to basic education from 63% over 2002–2004 to 47% over 2011–2013. Similarly, EU institutions, which are the second largest multilateral donor, gave 50% of their total aid to

education to basic education over 2002–2004; however they currently disburse roughly the same share of aid to basic and post-secondary education – around 40% (see **Figure 12**).

Among large bilateral donors, the share of bilateral aid going to basic education has remained stagnant at 39% since 2007. France, Germany and Japan continue to provide most of their aid to post-secondary education, largely to support students coming to study in these countries. The United Kingdom has reduced the share of aid disbursements to basic education from 73% at the beginning of the decade to just 57% over 2011–2013, while the share of secondary education has increased from 14% to 22% over the same period. The United States continues to devote close to 80% of its aid to basic education.

There is no doubt that the scope of the international education agenda is expanding after 2015 and this may explain the shift in aid beyond primary education. However, it should not be ignored that the costing analysis of the EFA Global Monitoring Report team identifies an annual funding gap of US\$7.5 billion for primary education alone between 2015 and 2030.

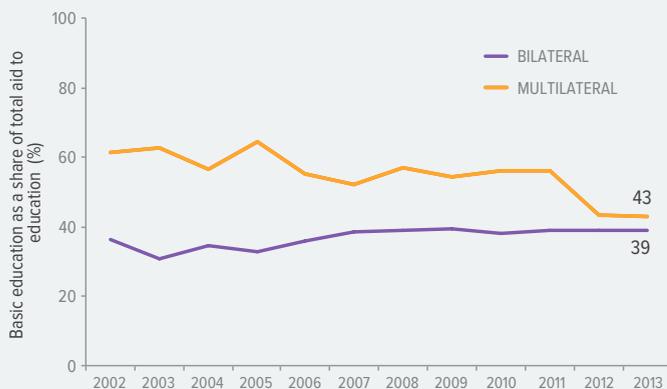
*Aid to education is not reaching the countries most in need*

### Aid by country income group

Of the US\$5.4 billion in ODA to basic education in 2013, just 39%, or US\$2.1 billion, was allocated to the 34 low-income countries. This share has remained relatively constant since the start

**FIGURE 11**

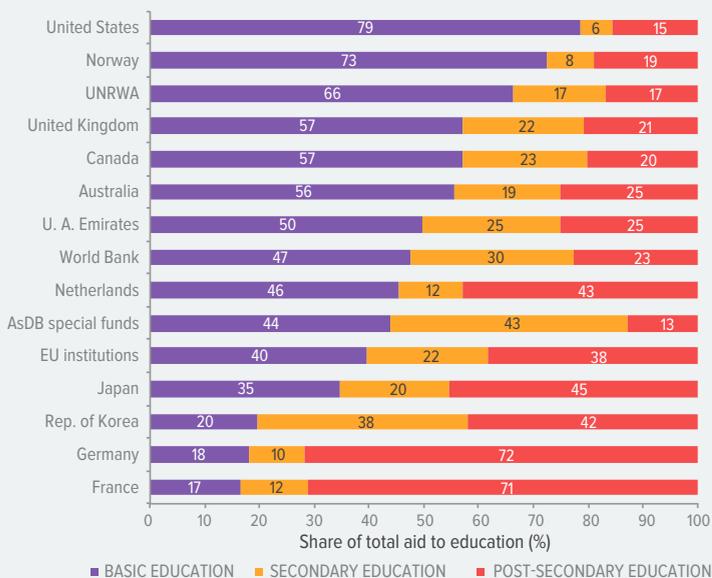
Share of basic education in total aid to education, by donor type, 2002–2013



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2015)

**FIGURE 12**

Share of aid to education, by level and donor, 2011–2013



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2015)

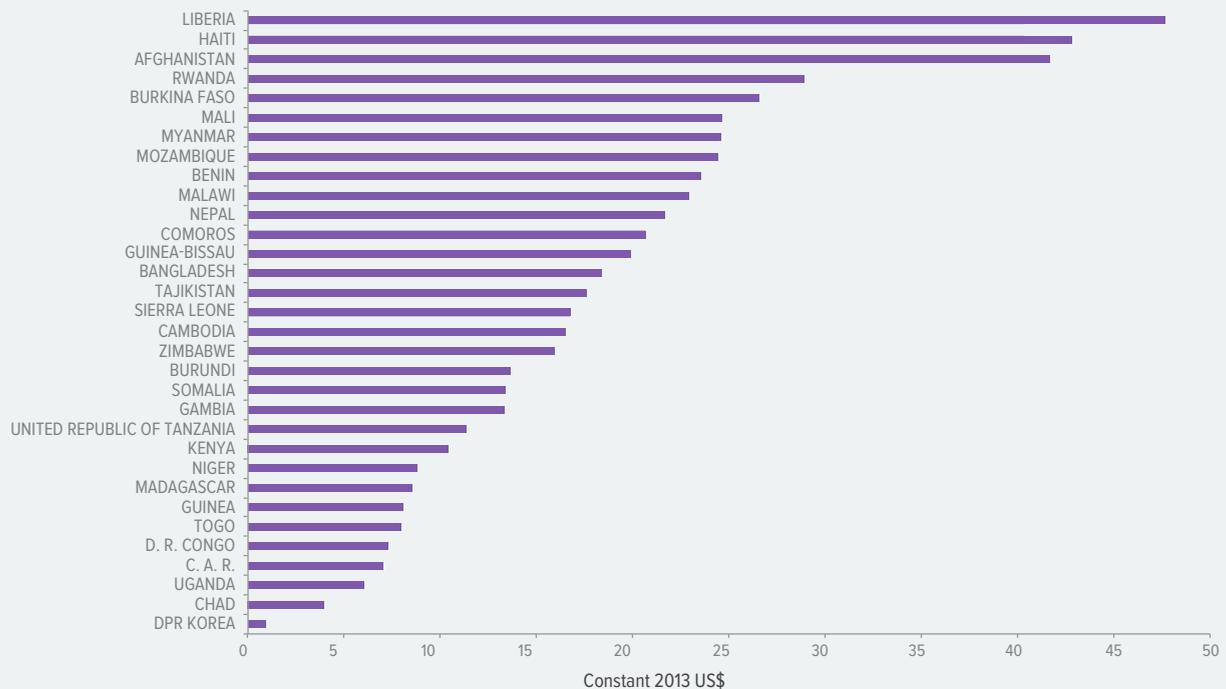
of the decade despite the fact that they face some of the greatest challenges to achieving even universal primary education. Although aid to basic education in low-income countries rose by 17% between 2012 and 2013, this increase was largely concentrated in a handful of countries. Myanmar alone accounted for 66% of the total increase in aid to basic education for low income countries. Fifteen low-income countries witnessed a decrease in volumes of aid between 2012 and 2013.

Even within low-income countries, there is a great deal of disparity in terms of per capita aid allocations, ranging from US\$5 or less in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Chad to US\$47 in Liberia over 2011–2013. While some recipient countries, such as Afghanistan, Haiti and Liberia, have seen a large increase in aid per child over the course of the decade, others have continued to be neglected by development donors. In the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo aid still amounts to less than US\$10 per child (see **Figure 13**).

Aid to secondary education grew by 16% in low-income countries between 2012 and 2013 – at half the rate of lower-middle-income countries, where aid grew by 31%. In spite of an increase overall, 18 out of 34 low-income countries experienced a reduction in disbursements of aid to secondary education from already very low levels.

**FIGURE 13**

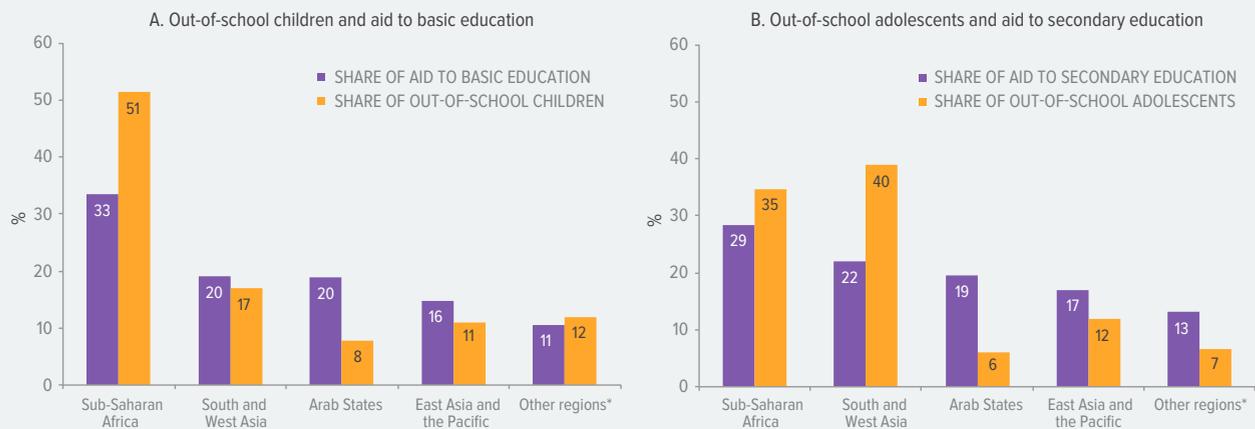
Aid per capita to basic education, low-income countries, US\$, 2011–2013



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2015)

**FIGURE 14**

Share of out-of-school populations and aid, by region, 2013

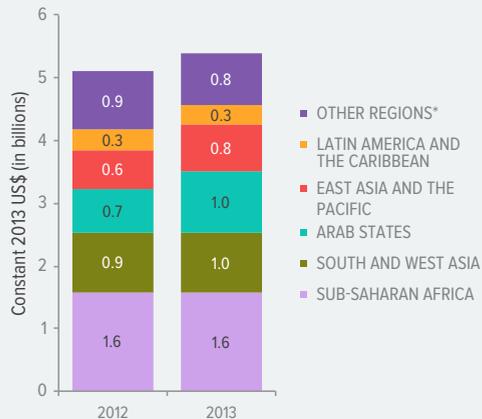


**Note:** Other regions include Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The share of aid to basic and secondary of education does not include aid unallocated by region.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2015) and UNESCO Institute for Statistics database

**FIGURE 15**

Aid to basic education, by region, 2012 and 2013



**Note:** Other regions include Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, overseas territories and those countries/regions unallocated by region.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2015)

Within aid to post-secondary education, just 9% of scholarships in 2013 were for low-income countries, with upper-middle-income countries receiving 43% of total disbursements.

### Aid by region

Of the 59 million children and almost 65 million adolescents out of school in 2013, the majority were living in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab States. Despite sub-Saharan Africa accounting for over half of all out-of-school children, aid to basic education in the region accounted for only 33% of the total. By contrast, the Arab States is home to 8% of out-of-school children and 6% of out-of-school adolescents but received 20% of aid to basic education and 19% of aid to secondary education, with Jordan and Palestine being the largest recipients by far. South and West Asia, which has the largest share of out-of-school adolescents (40%), received 22% of ODA resources for secondary education (see **Figure 14**). India, which has the largest number of out-of-school adolescents, has seen a reorientation of external support from basic education to secondary education between 2012 and 2013: aid to basic education in India fell from US\$100 million to US\$27 million between 2012 and 2013 and aid to secondary education rose from US\$21 million to US\$232 million over the same period.

Universal access to primary education has not been achieved

in sub-Saharan Africa and external resources are clearly needed. But overall education aid to the region fell by 6% between 2012 and 2013, and aid to basic education fell by 1% to US\$1.56 billion over the same period (see **Figure 15**). Of the 26 low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 12 experienced declines in their levels of aid to basic education. These include Malawi, where aid declined by nearly half, from US\$81 million to US\$44 million between 2012 and 2013, and the Central African Republic, where aid to basic education fell from already low levels to just US\$1 million in 2013. These countries are far from reaching the target of universal primary education by 2015.

## Conclusion

At the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea, governments recognized the world is far from achieving education for all but expressed support to the proposed Sustainable Development Goal 4 to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all”. The Incheon Declaration calls for “the provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education, of which at least nine years are compulsory, leading to relevant learning outcomes” and for “meaningful education and training opportunities for the large population of out-of-school children and adolescents, who require immediate, targeted and sustained action ensuring that all children are in school and are learning.”

The international community is preparing to embark on this ambitious new agenda as the number of children and young adolescents out of school climbs. The data send a stark warning: we must reach the most marginalised children who are at risk of continued neglect as attention shifts to higher levels of education. It is therefore essential to direct greater resources to those countries furthest away from universal primary and secondary education.

Aid levels have not returned to the peak achieved in 2010 and prospects for improvement in the future look doubtful. As of 2013, aid to basic and secondary education in low- and lower-middle-income countries was US\$6.2 billion, a fraction of the financing gap. Donors need to prioritise education in their aid programming and focus on those poorest countries unable to mobilise sufficient domestic resources to meet the education targets. The Oslo Summit on Education for Development and the Addis Ababa Third International Conference on Financing for Development present a real test of donor commitment.

1. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2015). Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children. Montreal: UIS. <http://on.unesco.org/oosci-global>
2. For more information, see the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) (<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>), and A World at School report entitled Education Without Borders: A Summary (<http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8575.pdf>).
3. Basic education as defined under the OECD Development Assistance Committee Creditor Reporting System refers to primary education, basic life skills for youth and adults and early childhood education. Secondary education refers to both general secondary education and vocational training.
4. Health is defined to include two categories of the OECD's database on aid flows: health, population policy and reproductive health. Additionally, 15% of general budget support has been factored in to reflect government commitments made under the Maputo Plan of Action in 2006.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)  
C.P. 6128 Succursale Centre-ville  
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7 Canada  
Tel: +1-514-343-6880  
Fax: +1-514-343-5740  
<http://www.uis.unesco.org>

The UIS is the official source of education data used to monitor Education for All and related international goals. Our eAtlas of Out-of-School Children lets you explore the data with interactive maps at <http://on.unesco.org/oosc-map>.



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  
Fax: +33 (1) 45 68 56 41  
[www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org)

Developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report is an authoritative reference that aims to inform, influence and sustain genuine commitment towards Education for All.



© UNESCO  
2015/ED/EFA/MRT/PP/22REV2