

# Navigating Change: Building Stability in an Unpredictable World

Economic and Social Committee: Topic 1

## COMBATING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY THROUGH ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

### Background:

The economic inequality and inaccessible education that we are seeing today are deeply interconnected, with the worsening of one fueling the deterioration of the other in a downward spiral. This pattern is especially visible in low-income countries (LICs) and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs).

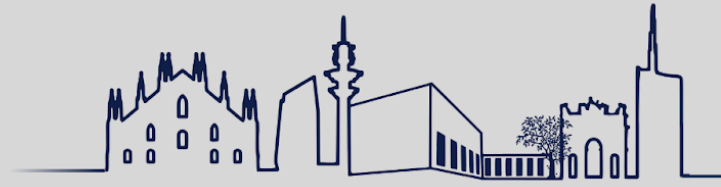
Inaccessible, low-quality, and uninclusive education has become one of the strongest drivers of long-term economic disparity.

The term “learning poverty” describes the “inability of a child to read and understand a simple text by age 10”, and is usually measured in primary school.<sup>1</sup> The increase in learning poverty describes a phenomenon where even those who attended school leave without foundational skills and knowledge, severely limiting their ability to succeed in the labour market. When students pass through the education system without gaining real and usable skills, it becomes harder for them to break out of poverty. This pattern repeats throughout generations, holding back economic development and growth across entire countries.

Addressing this issue requires more than just increasing school enrollment; it demands ensuring that education is truly accessible, inclusive, and of high quality. The current situation reveals persistent gaps in both access and quality across regions, highlighting the urgent need for targeted policies and investments.

### Current Situation:

Economic inequality is a pressing issue that millions of people face nowadays, mostly in developing and marginalized communities. According to UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report, “Globally, 251 million children and youth remain out of school, a reduction of just 1% since 2015, of which 129 million are boys and 122 million are girls. Exclusion is exacerbated by social norms and poverty: Around 6 in 10



children, adolescents, and youth are out of school in Afghanistan and Niger.”<sup>1</sup> One of the most effective long-term solutions to combat this growing issue is to provide accessible education for all. Accessible education needs to be affordable, inclusive, and available to all, no matter a person's gender, race, religion, or any other determining factors.

Additionally, there is considerable inequity in the distribution of financing for public education systems, with the lowest 20% of students receiving a disproportionately smaller share than their wealthier classmates. For example, children from the wealthiest homes may receive about four to six times as much money as those from the poorest in low-income nations.

### **Important bloc positions:**

*Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa:* Countries within this region have significant disparities in access to education across two factors: rural versus urban and gender disparity. The disparity between rural and urban education has been a consistent problem, caused by the differing resources and lifestyles between the two areas.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, females often have less access to education than males.

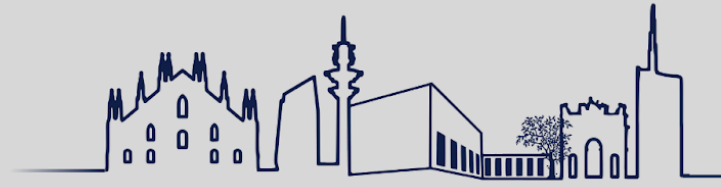
*South Asian Countries (such as India and Pakistan):* Countries within this region have seen an improvement in literacy rate by about 20% in the past two decades.<sup>4</sup> There is still a sizeable disparity between genders.

*Latin American, South American, and Caribbean Countries:* Latin America and the Caribbean are the most unequal regions in the world in terms of education disparity due to finances. With top 20% are 5 times more likely to complete secondary education than the bottom 20%<sup>5</sup>. There are also varying degrees of inclusion in the country, with countries often focusing on a particular group. Hence, these countries have not achieved broad inclusion. However, these regions prioritise spending on education to a greater extent than the rest of the world.

<sup>2</sup> Sumida, Sugata & Kawata, Keisuke. (2021). An analysis of the learning performance gap between urban and rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa. *South African Journal of Education*. 41. 1-17. 10.15700/saje.v41n2a1779.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. “Education in Africa.” *Uis.unesco.org*, 2016, [uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa](https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa).<sup>4</sup> Shabbar, Shagufta. “The State of Education in South Asia: Challenges and Proposed Solutions PRISA.” *PRISA*, 6 Oct. 2024,

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF. *Are Children Really Learning? Exploring Foundational Skills in the Midst of a Learning Crisis*. New York: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2022.



[prisa.org.uk/research/the-state-of-education-in-south-asia-challenges-and-proposed-solutions/](https://prisa.org.uk/research/the-state-of-education-in-south-asia-challenges-and-proposed-solutions/).

<sup>5</sup>“Latin America and the Caribbean – 2020 GEM Report.” *Gem-Report-2020.Unesco.org*, [gem-report-2020.unesco.org/latin-america-and-the-caribbean/](https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/latin-america-and-the-caribbean/).

*Countries with high equity of education (such as Finland, Norway, Singapore):* Countries with high equity in education are evidence that inclusive education is possible. They can also provide a base framework for what a strong, inclusive education system looks like.

*Global Partnership for Education (GPE):* Donors to this organisation often contribute sizeable amounts towards education within their country, and/or have strong educational systems. Providing aid to countries that struggle financially to provide education to all<sup>6</sup>

### **Possible solutions:**

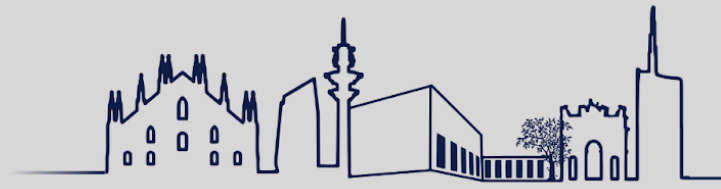
- Supporting the increase of spending on education, as well as reducing cuts to education spending, to spend on other sectors, such as the military.
- Improve teacher training programs and teacher retention, to ensure quality education is not affected.
- Increase international support for education programs in countries with limited resources.
- Encourage investment in technology and infrastructure to reduce the gap between urban and rural education.
- Promote initiatives that improve access to education for marginalized groups, including girls and displaced children.
- Support programs that make schooling more accessible.
- Enhance regional and international cooperation on education policies.

### **Further reading:**

[https://academic.oup.com/ooec/article/4/Supplement\\_1/i55/8046481](https://academic.oup.com/ooec/article/4/Supplement_1/i55/8046481)

<https://www.iicba.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/01/STUDY%202024-2%20Africa%20Teachers%20Reports%20Series.pdf>

<https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/library/publications/543.html>



<sup>6</sup>Global Partnership for Education. "Global Partnership for Education." *The Global Partnership for Education*, 2025, [www.globalpartnership.org/](http://www.globalpartnership.org/).

### **Bibliography:**

Fernández, Raquel, et al. "Education Inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean." *Oxford Open*

*Economics*, vol. 4, Supplement<sub>1</sub>, Mar. 2025, pp. i55–76,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ooec/odae013>.

University, Stanford, et al. "What We Can Learn from Finland's Successful School Reform."

*Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education*, 6 Jan. 2012,

[edpolicy.stanford.edu/library/publications/543.html](http://edpolicy.stanford.edu/library/publications/543.html).

UNICEF. *Are Children Really Learning? Exploring Foundational Skills in the Midst of a Learning Crisis*.

New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2022.

Wodon, Quentin, et al. *Africa Teachers Reports Series Empowering Teachers for All Learners to Thrive*

*UNESCO IICBA 2024-2 Study Educating Girls and Ending Child Marriage in Africa: Investment*

*Case and the Role of Teachers and School Leaders in Partnership with the African Union*

*Conference Edition*. 2024,



November 13-15, 2025  
Milan, Italy



[www.iicba.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/01/STUDY%202024-2%20Africa%20Teachers%20Reports%20Series.pdf](http://www.iicba.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/01/STUDY%202024-2%20Africa%20Teachers%20Reports%20Series.pdf)

[0Africa%20Teachers%20Reports%20Series.pdf](http://www.iicba.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/01/STUDY%202024-2%20Africa%20Teachers%20Reports%20Series.pdf).