



Teacher Valige Landaza assisting students in the outdoor classroom setup after Cyclone Freddy—the longest-lasting tropical cyclone on record—at Inlima Primary School in Mozambique.
GPE/Mbuto Machili

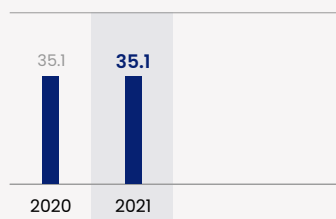
CHAPTER 1

PROGRESS TOWARD GPE 2025

RESULTS AT A GLANCE*

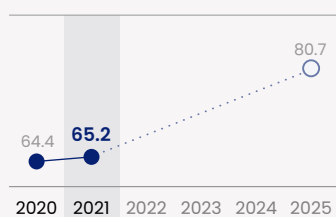
1.

35.1% of partner countries had at least one year of free and/or compulsory pre-primary education guaranteed in legal frameworks.



2.

65.2% of children participated in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age.

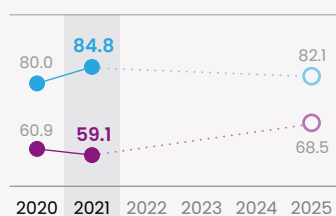


3.i.

3.i.a. 84.8% of children reached the last grade of primary education.

3.i.b. 59.1% of children reached the last grade of lower-secondary education.

● primary ● lower secondary



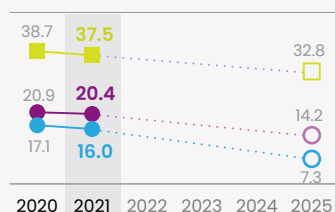
3.ii.

3.ii.a. 16% of primary-school-age children were out of school.

3.ii.b. 20.4% of lower-secondary-school-age children were out of school.

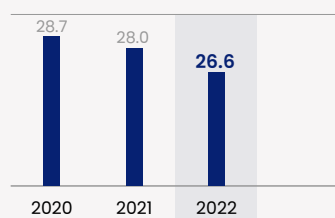
3.ii.c. 37.5% of upper-secondary-school-age children were out of school.

● primary ● lower secondary ■ upper secondary



5.i.

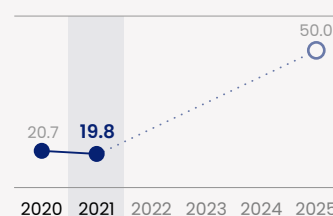
26.6% of women aged 20–24 years were married or in a union before age 18.



6.

6.b.ii 19.8% of children and young people at the end of primary achieved at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics.

minimum proficiency in math

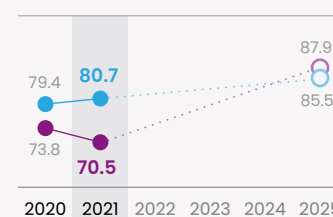


7.i.

7.i.b. 80.7% of teachers in primary had minimum required qualifications.

7.i.c. 70.5% of teachers in lower secondary had minimum required qualifications.

● primary ● lower secondary



Notes

*Indicators with no data for the current reporting year are not shown here.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- In 2021, by the end of primary education, about 19.8 percent of students reached minimum proficiency in mathematics.
- Thirty-five percent of partner countries guarantee at least one year of free and/or compulsory pre-primary education, while 22.2 percent of partner countries affected by fragility and conflict (PCFCs) have such legal provisions.
- In 2021, across 61 partner countries with available data, on average 65.2 percent of children, of whom 68.8 percent are girls (52.4 percent in PCFCs), attended school one year before the official primary entry age.
- Sixteen percent of primary-school-age children (21.8 percent in PCFCs), 20.4 percent of lower-secondary-school-age adolescents (24.2 percent in PCFCs) and 37.5 percent of upper-secondary-school-age youth (42.1 percent in PCFCs) were out of school across partner countries with data available.
- In 2021, the gross intake ratio (GIR) into the last grade of primary was 84.8 percent on average in partner countries and 74.4 percent in PCFCs. The GIR into the last grade of lower secondary was 59.1 percent overall and 52.2 percent in PCFCs.
- An estimated 18 million girls across 50 partner countries with data available (or 26.6 percent of girls) were married or had entered a union before the age of 18. About 26 percent of the girls in 16 PCFCs entered a union before the age of 18.
- On average, the share of teachers trained according to national standards is 80.7 percent (82.1 percent in PCFCs) in primary and 70.5 percent (70.4 percent in PCFCs) in lower-secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

The GPE 2025 results framework assesses the extent to which the partner countries are making progress in access, learning and gender equality. The 2022 results report highlighted the challenge for achieving the GPE 2025 goal and the additional obstacles the COVID-19 pandemic placed on that trajectory. This chapter of the 2023 results report provides the latest information on GPE partner countries' progress toward this goal, bearing in mind that COVID-19 continues to hamper data collection, somewhat constraining the scope for insights on progress.

The chapter discusses GPE results framework indicators that monitor progress toward the GPE 2025 goal, reviewing progress relative to the baseline. For those GPE 2025 indicators that correspond to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 benchmark indicators,² partner countries' progress is also assessed relative to (1) how likely they are to achieve their national benchmarks and (2) a measure of feasible progress, that is, the progress they would have achieved if they moved at the historical rate of the fastest-improving 25 percent of countries, as outlined in the SDG 4 scorecard.³ The chapter also addresses gender and equity issues, where relevant. Last, it highlights issues pertaining to monitoring and reporting data, given that the current level of reporting among partner countries remains low despite years of investment in developing statistical capacity.

1.1. EDUCATION QUALITY: STATUS OF FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

(Indicator 6)

In 2023, GPE joined nearly 50 organizations in signing the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning that emerged from the United Nations Transforming

Education Summit. GPE's strategic plan, GPE 2025, highlights the importance of learning at each stage of a child's education,⁴ and the partnership serves as a crucial delivery mechanism for foundational learning at the country level. Foundational learning encompasses "basic literacy, numeracy and transferable skills such as socio-emotional skills."⁵ Many of the GPE 2025 results framework indicators monitoring progress toward the strategic goal measure either foundational learning directly or some of the necessary conditions for children to achieve foundational learning.

Few Students Achieve Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Indicator 6 of the GPE results framework (SDG indicator 4.1.1) monitors partner countries' progress in learning. It tracks the proportion of students achieving minimum proficiency levels in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, at three levels of education: (a) early grades of primary (grade 2 or 3), (b) the end of primary and (c) the end of lower-secondary education.

The availability of learning data is very low and is not improving. Compared to the 2022 results report, data on reading at the end of primary education became available for only two more countries, Albania and Georgia, with the recent release of the 2021 Progress in

² The SDG 4 benchmarks are national targets that countries have set on seven SDG 4 indicators for 2025 and 2030, of which four are also GPE 2025 indicators. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and Global Education Monitoring Report, *Setting Commitments: National SDG 4 Benchmarks to Transform Education*, (Montreal: UIS, 2022), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382076>.

³ The SDG 4 scorecard is the first progress report on national SDG 4 benchmarks. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and Global Education Monitoring Report, *2023 SDG 4 Scorecard Report on Progress Towards National SDG 4 Benchmarks*, (Montreal: UIS, 2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384295>.

⁴ R. Vivekanandan and K. Sonnenberg, "GPE: A dedicated partnership to improve foundational learning," *Education for All* (blog), May 18, 2023, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/gpe-dedicated-partnership-improve-foundational-learning>.

⁵ United Nations, The global challenge of addressing the learning crisis, Transforming Education Summit, <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/global-challenge-addressing-learning-crisis>.

International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).⁶ Because the group of partner countries has expanded to 85 countries, data exist now for only about 16 percent of children in partner countries for the period 2017–21 (see section 1.5).⁷

The available data show that partner countries are far from reaching their learning targets set for 2025. In 2020, the baseline of GPE 2025, an estimated one in three students by grade 3 and one in four at the end of primary education had reached minimum proficiency in reading in partner countries.⁸ One in five students met the global standard for minimum proficiency in mathematics at the end of primary, and only one in six in PCFCs. These numbers are far from the collective target that half of students will achieve minimum proficiency in mathematics by the end of 2025.⁹ Considering that 28 percent of children do not reach the last grade of primary school on time and 18 percent of children never reach it, a higher percentage of children in the population than of students in school does not achieve minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics (see box 1.1).

In 13 of 19 countries with available data by grade 3 and in 23 of 24 countries with data by the end of primary education, less than half of students reach minimum proficiency in reading (figure 1.1). Of partner countries with data, only Vietnam—an outlier—has at least 50 percent of students reaching minimum proficiency in reading at the end of primary (82 percent).

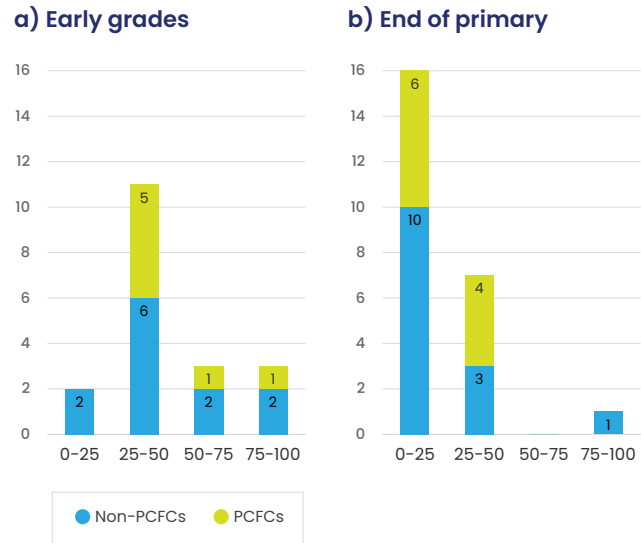
Accelerating Progress in Foundational Learning Will Require Unprecedented Efforts

Figure 1.2 provides a summary of where partner countries stand with regard to achieving their national targets for foundational learning.¹⁰ For early grade mathematics, 13 countries have data available; of those countries, four—Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Republic of Congo and Niger—are on track to meet their national targets. Only two, the Republic of Congo and Niger, appear likely to meet their national targets in early grade reading. At the end of primary, none of the 15 countries with data available is on track to meet its national target for

FIGURE 1.1.

In most partner countries, less than 50 percent of students reach minimum proficiency in reading.

Distribution of countries by the proportion of students achieving at least minimum proficiency in reading, by level, 2021



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://uis.unesco.org>.

reading (the remaining 9 countries do not have data on the 2025 target). And only one country, Georgia, is accelerating fast enough to achieve its GPE 2025 target for mathematics.

Several countries have not set targets for 2025 (or SDG 4 benchmarks), which prevents an adequate assessment of their progress. Even for countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso and Honduras, which have shown fast progress in general, the lack of national targets makes it impossible to assess whether that progress is fast enough to meet the countries' specific objectives.

6 I. V. S. Mullis et al., *PIRLS 2021 International Results in Reading*, (Boston: Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Association of the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2023), <https://pirls2021.org/>.

7 Indicator 6 of the GPE results framework uses the most recent learning data available in the period 2017–21. For early-grade learning, data are available for only 17 partner countries in reading and mathematics. At the end of primary education, reading data are available in 24 countries and mathematics data in 27 countries. At the lower-secondary level, only 7 countries have data in reading and mathematics.

8 Global Partnership for Education (GPE), *Results Report 2022*, (Washington, DC: GPE, 2022), <https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/gpe-results-report-2022-en-v2.pdf>.

9 Low availability of data on minimum proficiency levels in reading among partner countries prevents an estimation of the collective target for reading.

10 Because of issues with data availability, most partner countries (between 68 and 72 countries depending on the indicator, which account for 85 percent of children targeted by GPE 2025) cannot assess progress in basic literacy and numeracy skills. Therefore, it is impossible to estimate by how much these countries need to accelerate progress to meet their national targets.

FIGURE 1.2.

Only a handful of countries are on track to meet their GPE 2025 targets.

Distribution of partner countries according to the likelihood of achieving their GPE 2025 targets on learning outcomes

	Early grades		End of primary	
	Reading	Mathematics	Reading	Mathematics
Fast progress	Congo, Rep.; Niger	Burundi; Côte d'Ivoire; Congo, Rep.; Niger	—	Georgia
Slow or average progress, acceleration needed	Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Senegal, Togo	Cameroon, Senegal, Togo	Côte d'Ivoire; Cameroon; Congo, Rep.; Madagascar; Senegal; Chad; Togo	Côte d'Ivoire; Congo, Rep.; Madagascar
No progress	Guatemala	Guatemala	Guatemala	Cameroon, Guatemala, Kenya, Senegal, Togo
Progress but no benchmark	Burundi, Benin, Chad	Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Honduras, Nicaragua	Benin, Burkina Faso, Honduras, Niger, Zambia	Benin, Burkina Faso, Honduras, Nicaragua, Niger
Stagnating or deteriorating and no benchmark	Burkina Faso, Honduras, Nicaragua	—	Burundi, Nicaragua	Burundi, Chad, Zambia
Not enough data to monitor progress toward GPE 2025	Afghanistan; Albania; Angola; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; Central African Republic; Congo, Dem. Rep.; Comoros; Cabo Verde; Djibouti; Dominica; El Salvador; Eritrea; Eswatini; Ethiopia; Fiji; Gambia, The; Georgia; ^a Ghana; Grenada; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Guyana; Haiti; Indonesia; Kenya; ^b Kiribati; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; ^a Malawi; Maldives; Mali; Marshall Islands; Mauritania; Micronesia, FS; Moldova; Mongolia; Mozambique; Myanmar; Nepal; Nigeria; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Rwanda; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Samoa; São Tomé and Príncipe; Sierra Leone; Solomon Islands; Somalia; South Sudan; Sudan; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Tunisia; Tuvalu; Uganda; Ukraine; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; Vietnam; Yemen, Rep.; Zambia; ^a Zimbabwe			

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, *SDG4 Scorecard: Progress Report on National Benchmarks—Focus on Early Childhood* (Montreal: UIS and Paris: Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384295>.

Note: Countries have been classified following their classification for the SDG 4 scorecard report. Countries with new benchmark data at the time of this results report have been reclassified accordingly. Progress for countries that did not submit benchmark values has been assessed against feasible benchmark values. See UIS – GEM SDG 4 scorecard report for more details.

a. Partial lack of data; data available at the end of primary for reading and mathematics.

b. Partial lack of data; data available at the end of primary for mathematics only.

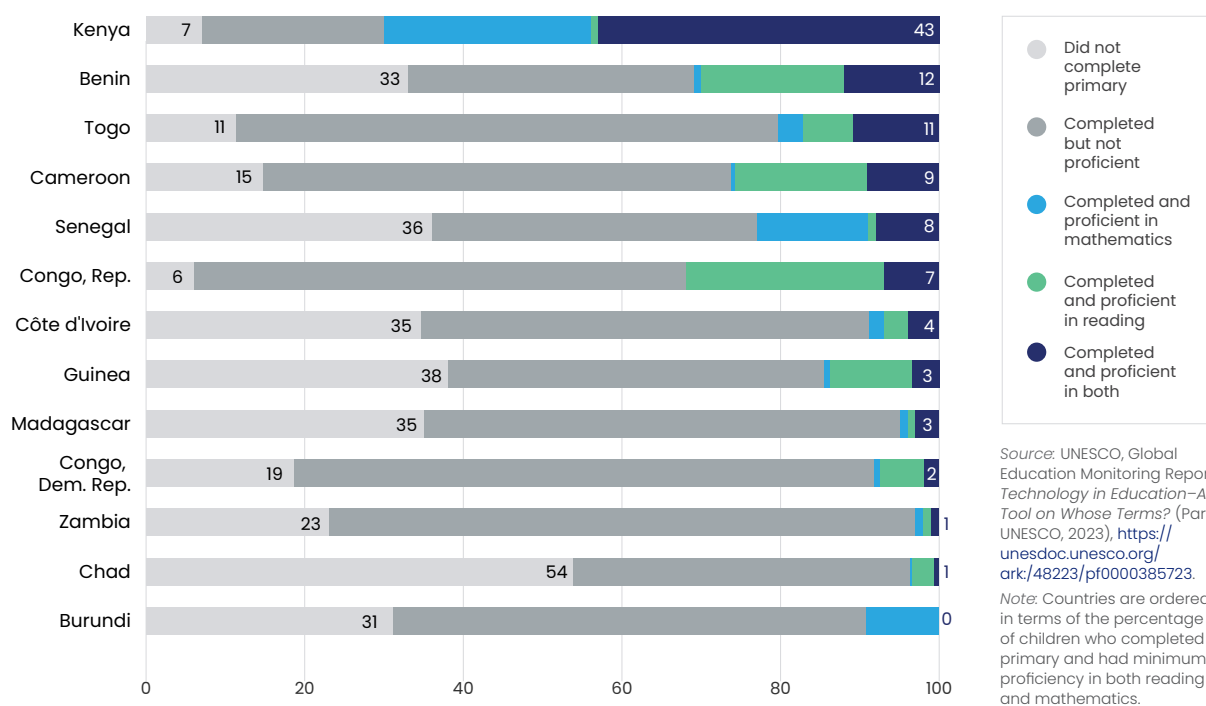
BOX 1.1. Very few children reach minimum proficiency in both reading and mathematics

SDG target 4.1 aims to ensure that “all girls and boys complete primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.”^a Combining learning and completion into a single measure helps clarify the extent of the learning crisis in the population. SDG indicator 4.1.1 measures the share of children who have completed a given education cycle on time and have reached minimum proficiency levels. It assumes that children who do not complete a cycle have not achieved a minimum level of proficiency.

Data on both reading and mathematics can also be used to produce a more targeted measure of the proportion of children who complete primary education and reach minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics. Applying this definition to countries with data from the 2019 PASEC survey and to two countries that took part in the GPE-supported Monitoring the Impacts on Learning Outcomes project (Kenya and Zambia) shows that less than 10 percent of students in 10 of the 13 partner countries with data achieve minimum proficiency in both reading and mathematics. On average for all 13 countries with data available, only 20 percent of students achieve minimum proficiency in reading or mathematics or in both subjects after completing primary education. Only 35 percent of the students who achieve minimum proficiency in reading or mathematics achieve minimum proficiency in both subjects.

Among the few children who reach minimum proficiency in reading or mathematics, only one in three achieves proficiency in both.

Distribution of primary-school-age population, by primary school completion status and minimum learning proficiency status at the end of primary education, selected Sub-Saharan African countries, 2019–21

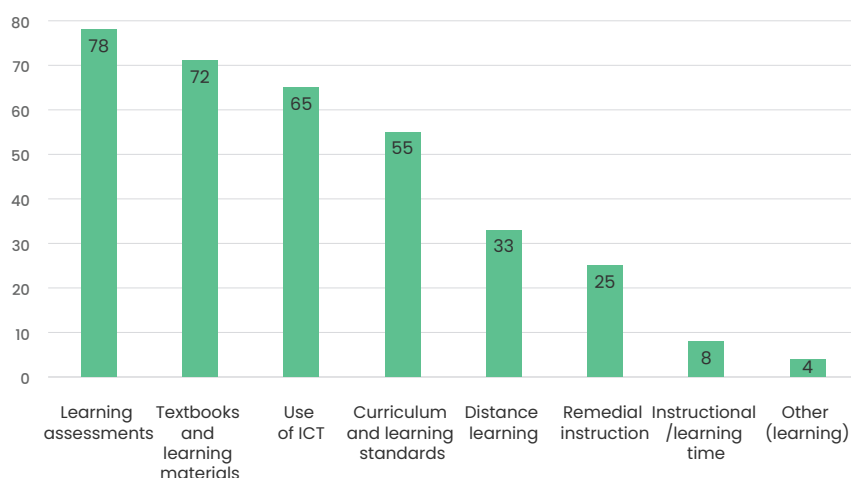


a. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, SDG indicator metadata (Harmonized metadata template—format version 1.1), <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-04-01-02.pdf>.

FIGURE 1.3.

Close to 80 percent of active implementation grants supporting learning include a learning assessment component.

Proportion of grants supporting various areas under learning priority area out of all active implementation grants supporting learning (percent)



Source: Global Education Monitoring Report analysis of GPE Secretariat data.

Note: Countries can receive grants targeting more than one learning component.

ICT = information and communication technology.

Active GPE Grants Cover a Range of Interventions That Can Improve Foundational Learning

Active GPE grants cover a wide range of inputs needed for countries to improve foundational learning outcomes. Of the 84 implementation grants active at some point in fiscal year 2023, 80 targeted direct support to learning. Of these, more than 78 percent support learning assessment, 71 percent support textbooks and learning materials and 55 percent support curriculum and learning standards (figure 1.3).

Grants also typically cover teachers, including teacher allocation in poor areas or training in disability inclusion, as well as efforts to reduce dropout and repetition, including through improvements in learning environments. Of these many interventions, it is difficult to know in practice which ones ultimately improve foundational learning and under which circumstances.

Each partner country program has a different combination of policy interventions to accelerate improvement in learning. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, GPE funding has targeted improving school infrastructure. Since 2012, the country has received \$212 million for building new schools and improving learning conditions, including delivery of school meals

and teacher training. In Côte d'Ivoire, the partnership is targeting six regions with high levels of poverty and low learning levels. Interventions there include expanding access to preschool, training primary teachers, providing support to adopt and apply better teaching methods and improving community participation through school management committees.

Improving Learning for All Requires Accounting for Complexity and Diversity

There are concerns that education systems continue to leave behind the children who are most in need. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected learning outcomes among the most vulnerable children—who typically have limited access to remote learning opportunities.¹¹ A wide range of factors can affect learning outcomes, and policy responses need to account for such complexity (boxes 1.2 and 1.3).

For instance, the gender gap in learning outcomes changes depending on the level of education and the subject matter. Overall, girls tend to outperform boys in reading at the end of primary education, whereas boys outperform girls in early-grade mathematics (figure 1.4). In Cambodia, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and

¹¹ Global Education Monitoring Report, *Technology and Education: A Tool on Whose Terms?* (Paris: UNESCO, 2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723>.

Vietnam, girls' reading performance at the end of primary was at least 4 percentage points higher than that of boys. In mathematics, the gap tends to remain in favor of girls but never exceeds 3 percentage points. In the early grades, however, boys perform better in mathematics, with gender gaps in favor of boys as high as 13, 10 and 8 percentage points, respectively, in Chad,

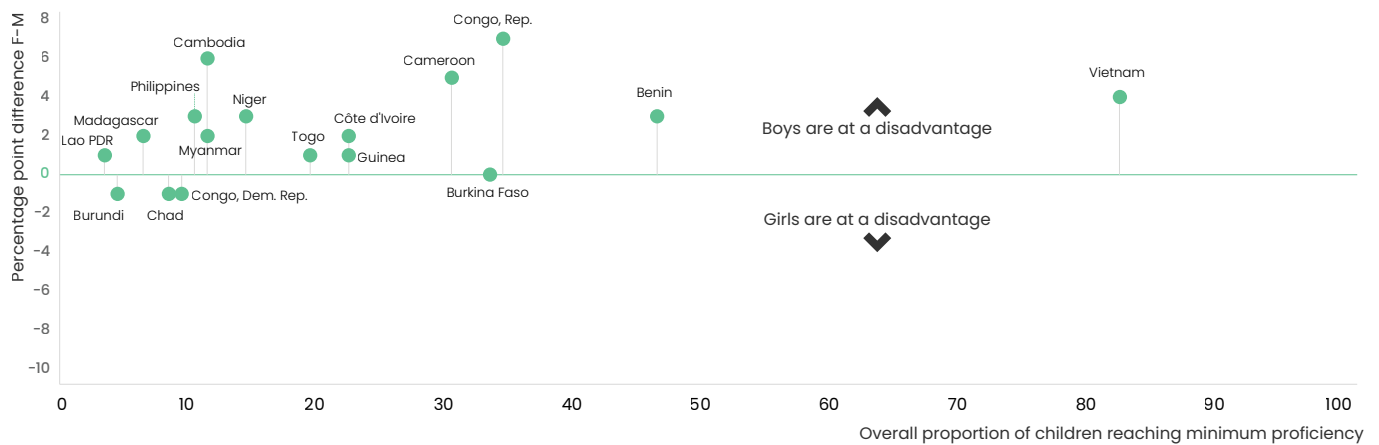
Benin and the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹² Analysis by the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) team in 2022 highlighted that, in 50 of 54 sample countries, girls are less likely to be among the top performers in mathematics even though they outperform boys on average. Girls perform better in mathematics in more gender-equal societies, and even better in reading.

FIGURE 1.4.

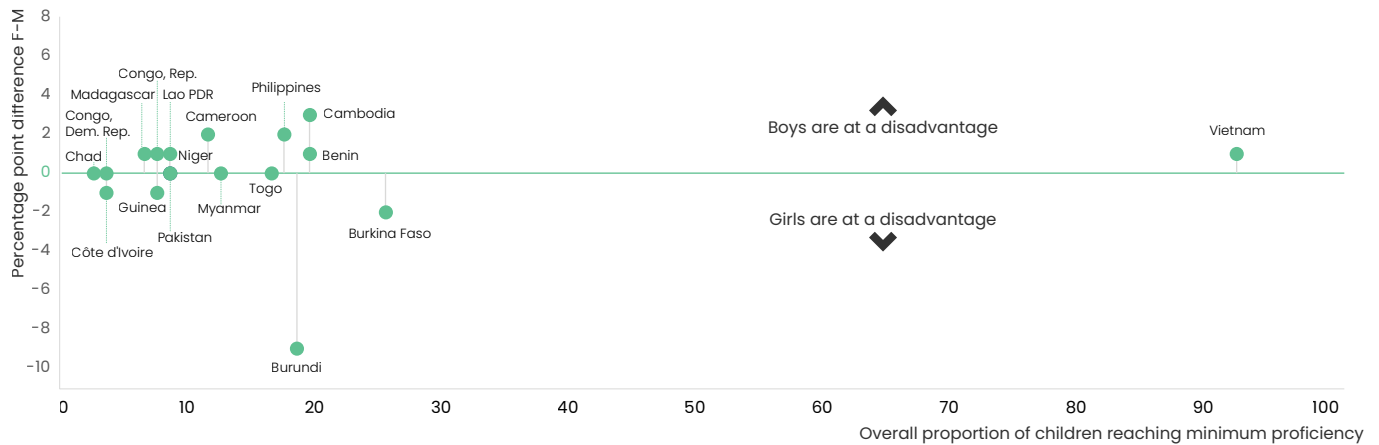
By the end of primary, girls outperform boys in reading.

Female–male gap in share of students achieving minimum proficiency level in reading, 2015–19 (percentage points)

a) Reading



b) Mathematics



Sources: UNESCO, World Inequality Database on Education, <https://www.education-inequalities.org/>.

12 UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report—Deepening the Debate on Those Still Left Behind*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2022), <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/2022-gender-report>.

BOX 1.2. Learning outcomes and language of instruction

In low-income and lower-middle-income countries, schools' use of local language has increasingly been shown to be critical for improving foundational learning. Global consensus exists on the benefits of using children's local language at least during the first six years of schooling.^a

This practice is particularly salient in regions with high linguistic diversity, like Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific.^b In 16 out of 22 Sub-Saharan African countries with available data, about one-third of students receive instruction in the language they speak at home.^c In Cameroon and Guinea, the proportion of students who reach the minimum level of proficiency in early grade reading is 3.5 times larger among those who speak the language of instruction at home than among those who do not. In Chad, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, this proportion is at least twice as large among those who are taught in their home language.^d

Some partner countries have taken steps to ensure instruction in local languages. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the \$100 million GPE-funded Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) included a component on training early grade teachers to teach in national languages. By the end of the project in 2022, 150,000 teachers in grades 1 through 3 had received training to effectively teach reading in national languages.^e Nevertheless, implementing bilingual or multilingual education is a complex endeavor; to develop effective policies on language of instruction, policy makers need more evidence on best practices. In that regard, the GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange project Strengthening Bilingual and Multilingual Learning Systems in Francophone Africa aims to improve learning outcomes by equipping policy makers with tools and approaches to determine the most appropriate language of instruction and how to transition between languages of instruction.^f

a. UNESCO, *Born to Learn: Spotlight on Basic Education Completion and Foundational Learning in Africa*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2022), <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/2022-spotlight-africa>.

b. D. M. Eberhard, G.F. Simons, and C. D. Fennig, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, twenty-sixth edition, (Dallas: SIL International, 2023).

c. UNESCO, *Born to Learn*.

d. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), World Inequality Database on Education, Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023, Paris, <https://www.education-inequalities.org/>.

e. For more information, see World Bank, DR Congo—Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) web page, <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/PI57922>.

f. For more information, see the GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange web page, "Strengthening Bilingual and Multilingual Learning Systems in Francophone Africa," <https://www.gpekix.org/project/strengthening-bilingual-and-multilingual-learning-systems-francophone-africa>.

BOX 1.3. A variety of factors contributes to the gender gap in reading and mathematics

Using PASEC 2014 data, a study attempted to better understand the gender gap in learning outcomes. Findings from the study show that, overall, girls achieve better outcomes in reading whereas boys outperform girls in mathematics. Differences in gender do not explain why girls outperform boys in reading. Other factors such as teachers' gender, school facilities, age and area of living mostly explain the gender gap in reading. The gender gap in mathematics, however, is explained by differences in gender. Being a boy positively affects achievements in mathematics. Factors such as gender stereotypes and differences in girls' and boys' perceptions of the importance of mathematics may negatively contribute to girls' achievement in mathematics. Improving school facilities and increasing the number of female teachers can contribute to closing the gender gap in mathematics and can help improve girls' and boys' achievements in reading.

Source: E. W. Miningou, "Understanding the Gender Gap in Learning Outcomes in Primary Education: Evidence from PASEC Results," *International Journal of Gender Studies in Developing Societies* 4, no. 3 (2022), <https://www.inderscienceonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1504/IJGSDS.2022.121104>.

1.2. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: ARE CHILDREN READY FOR FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING?

(Indicators 1 and 2)

Accelerating progress toward foundational learning also means making sure that students are ready to learn once they get to primary school. Acquisition of foundational learning skills builds on earlier cognitive developments—shape and sound recognition, speaking and listening and a sense of numerical magnitude—many of which happen during early childhood education.¹³ Access to early childhood education is especially important in partner countries where opportunities for school readiness are scarce for disadvantaged children.¹⁴ Pre-primary education can help compensate for these adverse conditions, for instance, by offering early exposure to print and books. It also plays a key role in children's social-emotional development.

The partnership is committed to supporting universal access to at least one year of quality pre-primary education. Two indicators in the GPE 2025 results framework monitor progress toward universal access to pre-primary education. Indicator 1 (based on SDG

indicator 4.2.5) measures the proportion of partner countries whose legal frameworks guarantee at least one year of free and/or compulsory pre-primary education. Indicator 2 (SDG indicator 4.2.2) measures the participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age.

Most Partner Countries Do Not Guarantee Early Childhood Education

GPE results framework Indicator 1 shows that about a third (35.1 percent) of partner countries guarantee at least one year of free and/or compulsory pre-primary education. Less than a quarter of PCFCs (or only six of 27 partner countries categorized as PCFC) have such legal provisions. The lack of legislation conflicts somewhat with the pledges most countries have made in this area, as expressed in their national SDG 4 benchmarks. Among 74 partner countries with data, 57 have set a national SDG 4 benchmark on early childhood education attendance, but only 26 have legal provisions guaranteeing at least one year of free and/or compulsory pre-primary education.

¹³ H. Abadzi, "Structured Teaching to Support Foundational Learning in Africa," Background paper for the Spotlight Continental Report 2022, (Paris: UNESCO, 2022); I. Borisova et al., "Effective Interventions to Strengthen Early Language and Literacy Skills in Low-Income Countries: Comparison of a Family-Focused Approach and a Pre-primary Programme in Ethiopia," *Early Child Development and Care* 187, no. 3–4 (2017): 655–671, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1255607>.

¹⁴ UNESCO, *Born to Learn: Spotlight on Basic Education Completion and Foundational Learning in Africa*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2022), <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/2022-spotlight-africa>; UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child*, (New York: UNICEF, 2016), <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2016>.

The contrast between ambitious targets and the lack of a supportive legislative framework is particularly stark in some countries. The Federated States of Micronesia had a 2021 pre-primary enrollment rate of 13 percent but has a 2025 national benchmark of 69 percent. In Samoa, the respective figures are 35 percent and 80 percent; in São Tomé and Príncipe, they are 51 percent and 100 percent. Despite their ambitious targets, none of these countries guarantees a single year of free or compulsory pre-primary education. Analysis for the SDG 4 scorecard report showed that lower-middle-income countries with legislation guaranteeing at least one year of pre-primary education had both higher baseline rates in 2015 (82 percent) and higher national benchmarks (97 percent) than countries that did not make pre-primary education compulsory (61 percent and 84 percent, respectively).

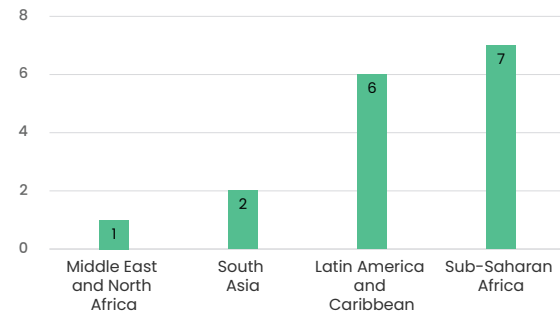
Since 2015, the number of partner countries that guarantee at least one year of free education stayed constant in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (figure 1.5).¹⁵ Nonetheless, national policies and plans appear to have an increasing focus on early childhood education. In 2021, Sierra Leone introduced its National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development, which focuses on equitable access to quality early learning opportunities and pre-primary education for 3- to 5-year-olds to support the transition to primary education. Rwanda and Tunisia have developed strategic plans for early childhood development. Pakistan prioritized early childhood education in its 2017–25 national education policy. Eritrea's 2018–22 Education Sector Plan included improving access to early childhood education as one of its main strategic priorities. Lesotho's Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2016–26 added improving access to comprehensive early childhood care and development as a strategic priority.

GPE and UNICEF developed the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative to strengthen country capacity to plan and carry out quality early childhood education programs.¹⁶ The partnership also supported the ECE Accelerator Analysis and Planning Toolkit to help integrate early childhood education in education sector plans.¹⁷ Through BELDS, São Tomé and Príncipe has developed an early childhood education plan, fully integrated into the broader Education Policy

FIGURE 1.5.

The number of countries with legal frameworks guaranteeing at least one year of free and/or compulsory pre-primary education remained the same in five regions since 2015.

Number of countries with legal frameworks guaranteeing at least one year of free and/or compulsory pre-primary education since 2015



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://uis.unesco.org>.

Charter and its accompanying costed Action Plan (2019–23).¹⁸ Following an ECE Accelerator workshop, South Sudan dedicated a chapter of its education sector plan to early childhood education, ensuring its inclusion in government initiatives and its recognition as an integral part of the overall education sector.¹⁹

Participation in Early Childhood Education Has Stagnated since 2015

Indicator 2 of the GPE 2025 results framework shows that the gap between participation rates in organized early learning and the GPE 2025 target remains large. In 2021, across 61 partner countries with available data, on average 65.2 percent of children (and 52.4 percent in PCFCs) attended school one year before the official primary entry age (figure 1.6). To put these numbers in perspective, although partner countries have committed to raising participation rates to 80.7 percent by 2025 (76.1 percent in PCFCs), participation rates have remained stagnant since 2015 (and have even declined in PCFCs). To reach the 2025 targets, participation in early childhood education will need to grow on average by about 4 percentage points annually in partner countries, and by up to 6 percentage points in PCFCs.

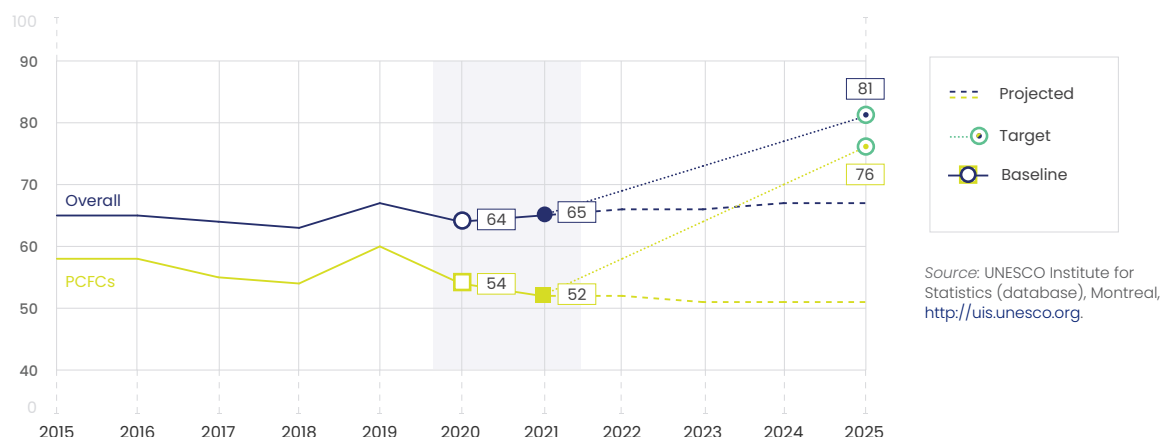
¹⁵ GPE, *Results Report 2022*.

¹⁶ For more information, see GPE's "Early Learning" web page, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/what-we-do/early-learning>.

¹⁷ For more information, see the ECE Accelerator website, <https://www.ece-accelerator.org>.

¹⁸ B. Costa, A. Monteiro, and A. Neto, "São Tomé and Príncipe invests in early childhood education to ensure children's success," *Education for All* (blog), July 30, 2020, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/sao-tome-and-principe-invests-early-childhood-education-ensure-childrens-success>.

¹⁹ Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Knowledge Innovation Exchange, "Doing It Right—Advocacy for ECE in South Sudan," May 30, 2023, <https://www.gpekix.org/news/doing-it-right-advocacy-ece-south-sudan>.

FIGURE 1.6.**Early childhood education participation rates have stagnated, while targets are ambitious.***Adjusted net enrollment rate, one year before the official primary entry age, 2021, 2020 baseline value and 2025 target*

About 21 percent of partner countries (18 countries) registered fast progress toward their 2025 targets. In other words, these countries have at least a 75 percent probability of achieving their national targets set for 2025 (figure 1.7). Only three of these countries are PCFCs. By contrast, 22 percent of partner countries have made only average or slow progress, and 14 percent have made no progress, which means they have limited prospects of achieving their 2025 targets. And 31 percent of partner countries do not have enough data to monitor their progress toward a national target on early childhood participation for GPE 2025.

Of the 84 GPE implementation grants active in 72 partner countries as of June 2023, 51 grants (or 62 percent) supported early childhood education. More specifically, 35 grants (43 percent of the grants) expressly targeted access to early childhood education, among other areas. Less than 20 percent of partner countries with no progress on early childhood participation benefited from GPE grants supporting access to early childhood education.²⁰

On average, partner countries have achieved gender parity in access to early childhood education. Nevertheless, girls remain disadvantaged in PCFCs, which have an adjusted gender parity index of 0.90. In addition, a few countries continue to face the combined challenge of low enrollment rates and high gender disparity. Chad has a participation rate of 17 percent and a gender parity index of 0.87; the respective figures are 15 percent and 0.87 in Djibouti, and 12 percent and 0.83 in Tajikistan.

1.3. ACCESS AND COMPLETION: CHILDREN MUST BE IN THE CLASSROOM TO LEARN

(Indicators 3i, 3ii and 5i)

Too many children continue to face barriers in accessing education. GPE 2025 monitors progress in access to education with Indicator 3ii (SDG indicator 4.1.4), the out-of-school rate at (a) primary-school age, (b) lower-secondary-school age and (c) upper-secondary-school age. This indicator is calculated using household survey data to enable better monitoring of equity issues.

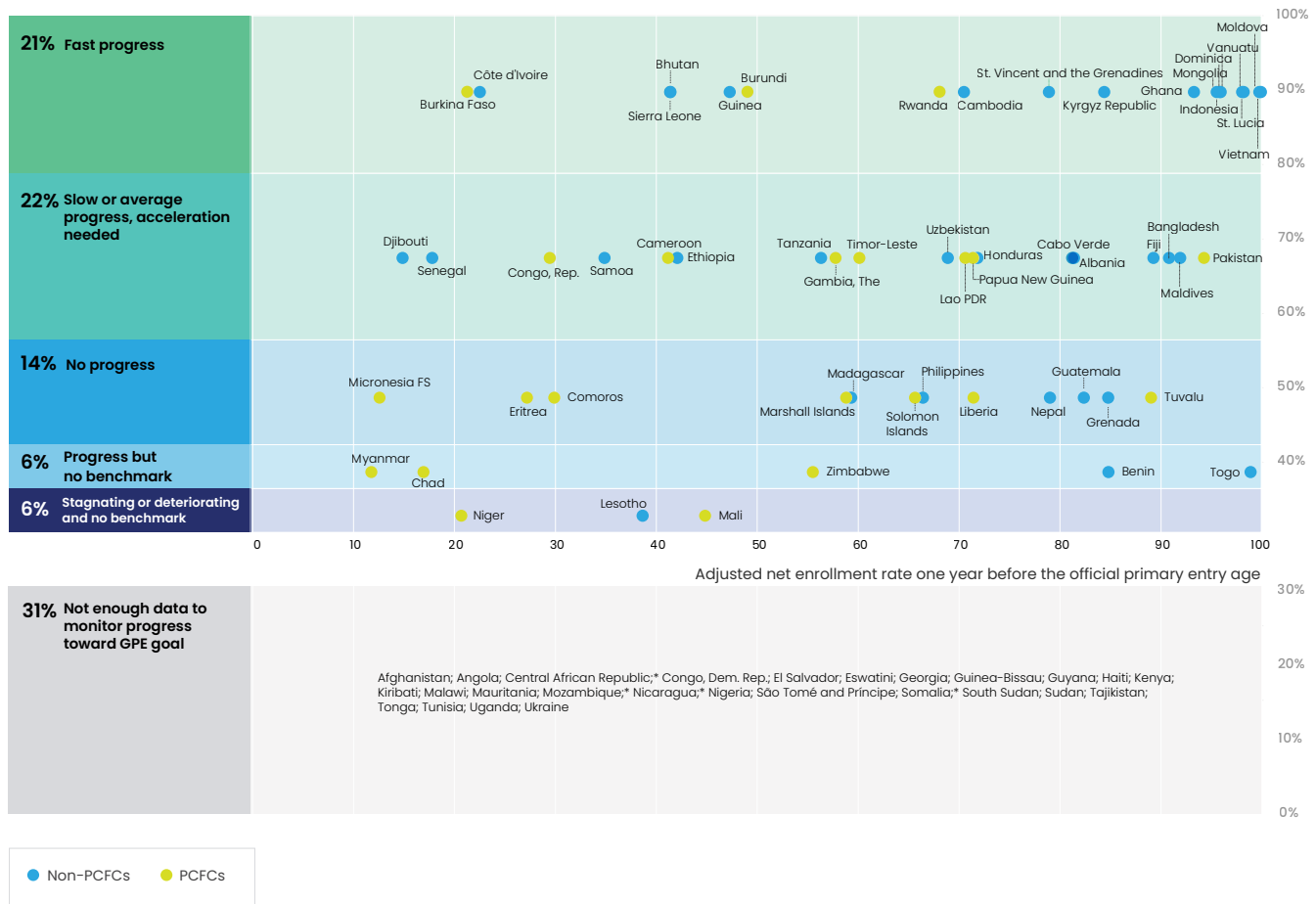
Despite Some Progress in Reducing the Out-of-School Rate, the Number of Out-of-School Children Has Stagnated

Available data indicate that in partner countries 16 percent of primary-school-age children (21.8 percent in PCFCs), 20.4 percent of lower-secondary-school-age adolescents (24.2 percent in PCFCs) and 37.5 percent of upper-secondary-school-age youth (42.1 percent in PCFCs) are out of school. Children from poor households in PCFCs lag farthest behind: 42 percent of primary-school-age children, 46 percent of lower-secondary-school-age adolescents and 65 percent of upper-secondary-school-age youth in this group are out of school (figure 1.8).

20 It is important to highlight that partner countries make decisions about the utilization of GPE grants across subsectors, according to their priorities.

FIGURE 1.7.**Only 21 percent of partner countries are moving at the right pace toward their 2025 targets.**

Distribution of partner countries according to their likelihood of achieving their GPE 2025 targets on the adjusted net enrollment rate one year before the official primary entry age (percent)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, *SDG4 Scorecard: Progress Report on National Benchmarks—Focus on Early Childhood* (Montreal: UIS and Paris: Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384295>.

Note: Country classification follows the SDG 4 Scorecard. Fast progress means that countries have a 75 percent probability of achieving their national target (or have already achieved it). Slow or average progress means that countries have less than a 75 percent probability of achieving their national target. No progress means that countries have been regressing. Countries with new benchmark data at the time of this report have been reclassified accordingly. Progress for countries that did not submit benchmark values has been assessed against feasible benchmark values. * = country with active grant targeting access to early childhood education.

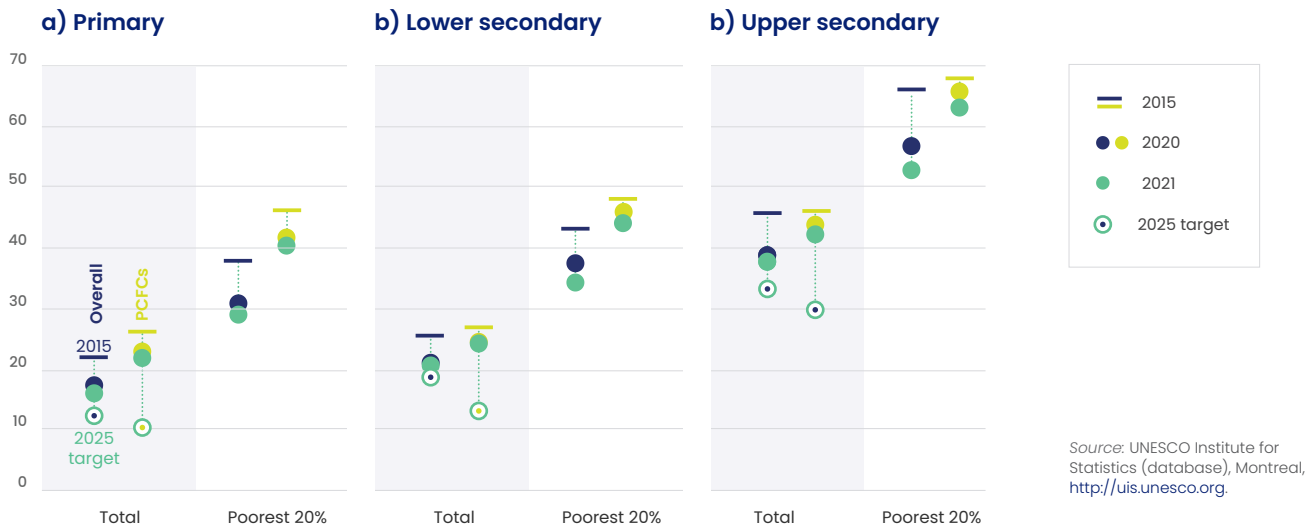
Out-of-school rates have declined slowly in recent years, and partner countries have set national targets for 2025 that are achievable on average. However, PCFCs appear to have set targets that are particularly ambitious when assessed against their progress since 2015. For instance, the out-of-school rate among primary-school-age children in PCFCs fell from 26 percent in 2015 to 22 percent in 2021, but will need to progress four times faster to reach PCFCs' 2025 collective target of 10 percent by 2025. Their progress will need to be five times faster for lower-secondary-school-age adolescents and seven times faster for upper-secondary-school-age youth.

Overall, partner countries have limited data to monitor progress toward their GPE 2025 out-of-school targets. About 40 percent of GPE partner countries with data available (or 18 percent of all partner countries) are on track to meet their primary out-of-school rate commitment (figure 1.9). Countries like Fiji, The Gambia, Georgia, Guyana, Madagascar and Sierra Leone are moving at a pace that would enable them to meet their 2025 target. In contrast, partner countries like Mauritania, Mali and Guinea are making little to no progress: 45 percent, 38 percent and 34 percent of their primary-school-age populations, respectively, are out of school.

FIGURE 1.8.

Children and youth from the poorest households in fragile and conflict-affected countries have high out-of-school rates.

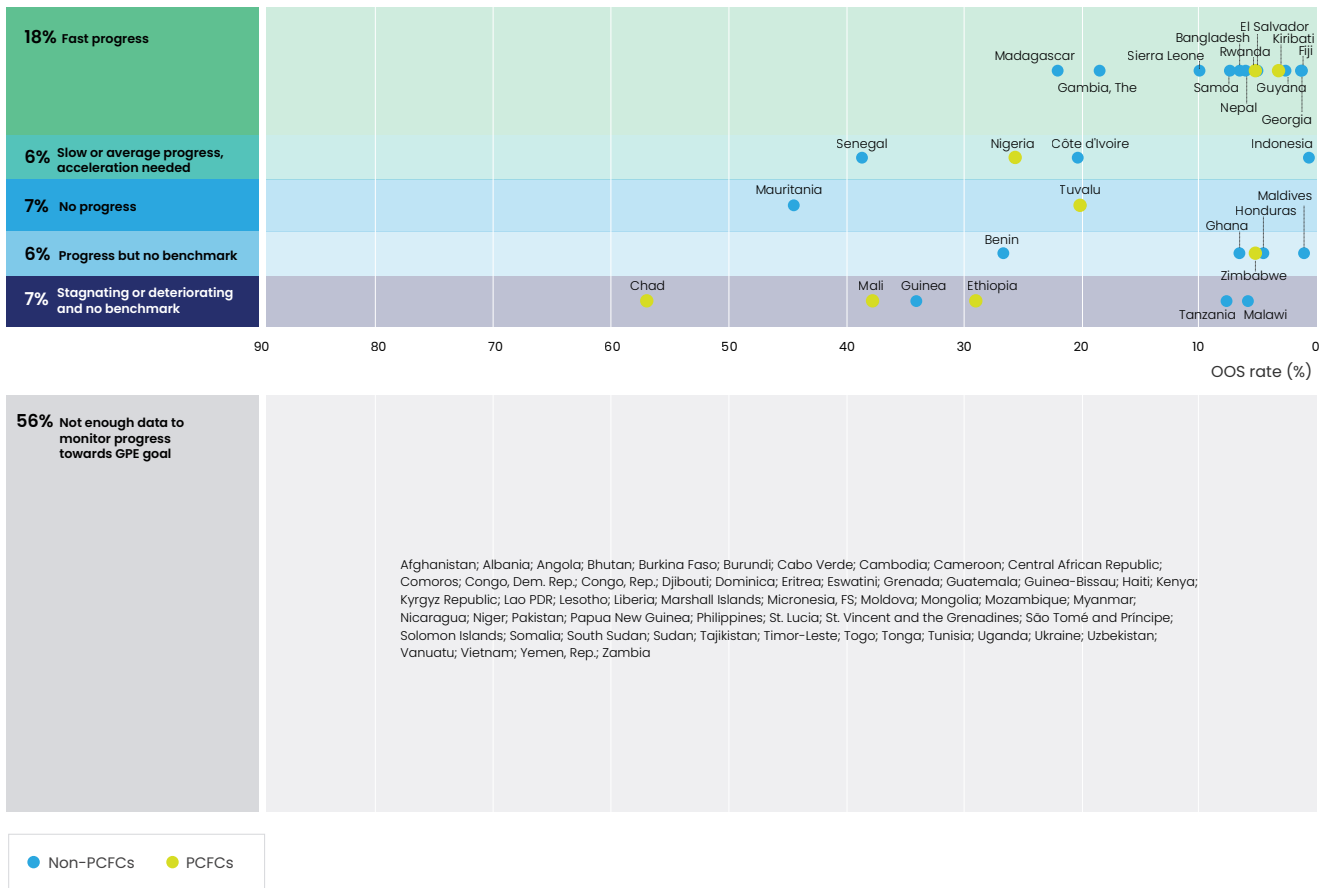
Out-of-school rate for children of primary-, lower-secondary- and upper-secondary-school age, 2015, 2020 and 2021, and average of national SDG 4 benchmarks for 2025 (percent)

**FIGURE 1.9**

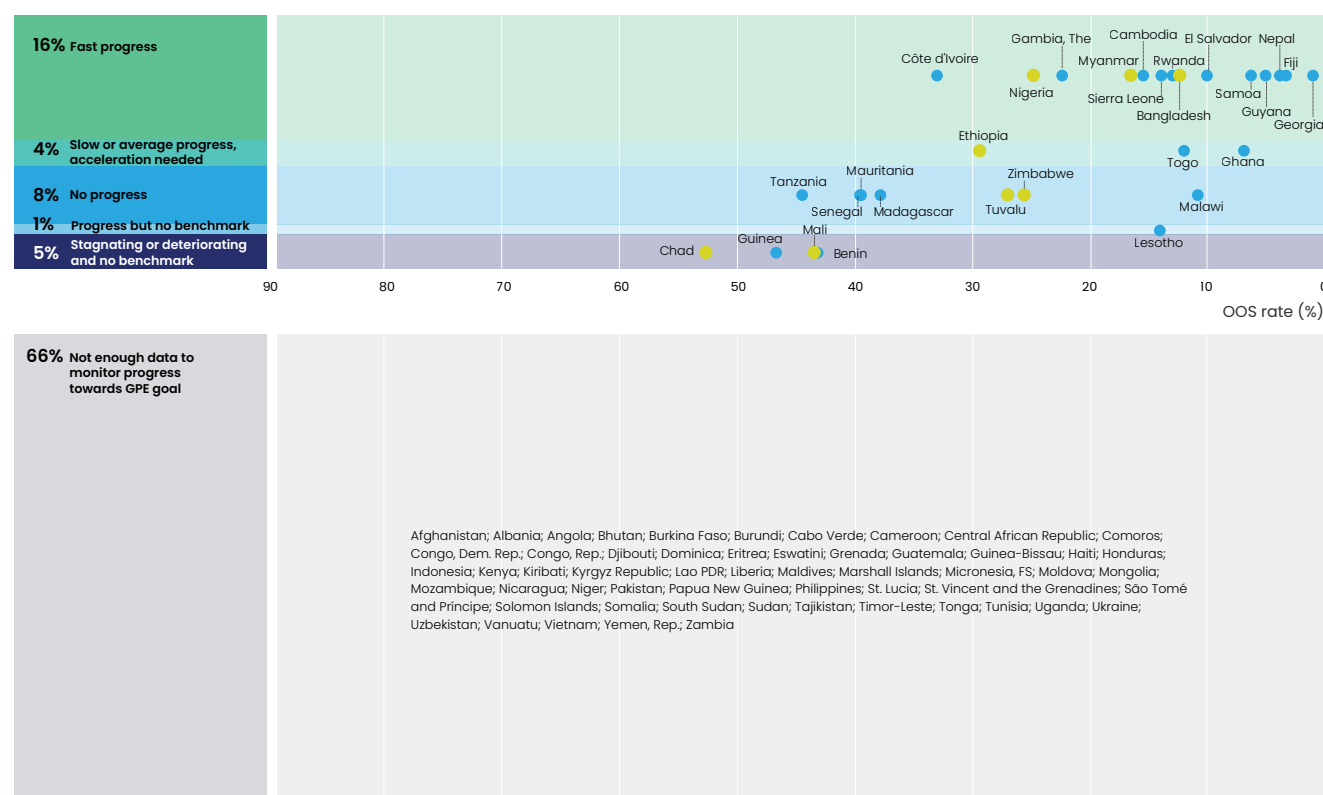
Most partner countries with data available are making progress towards their out-of-school rate targets.

Distribution of partner countries according to the likelihood of achieving their GPE 2025 targets on out-of-school (OOS) rates

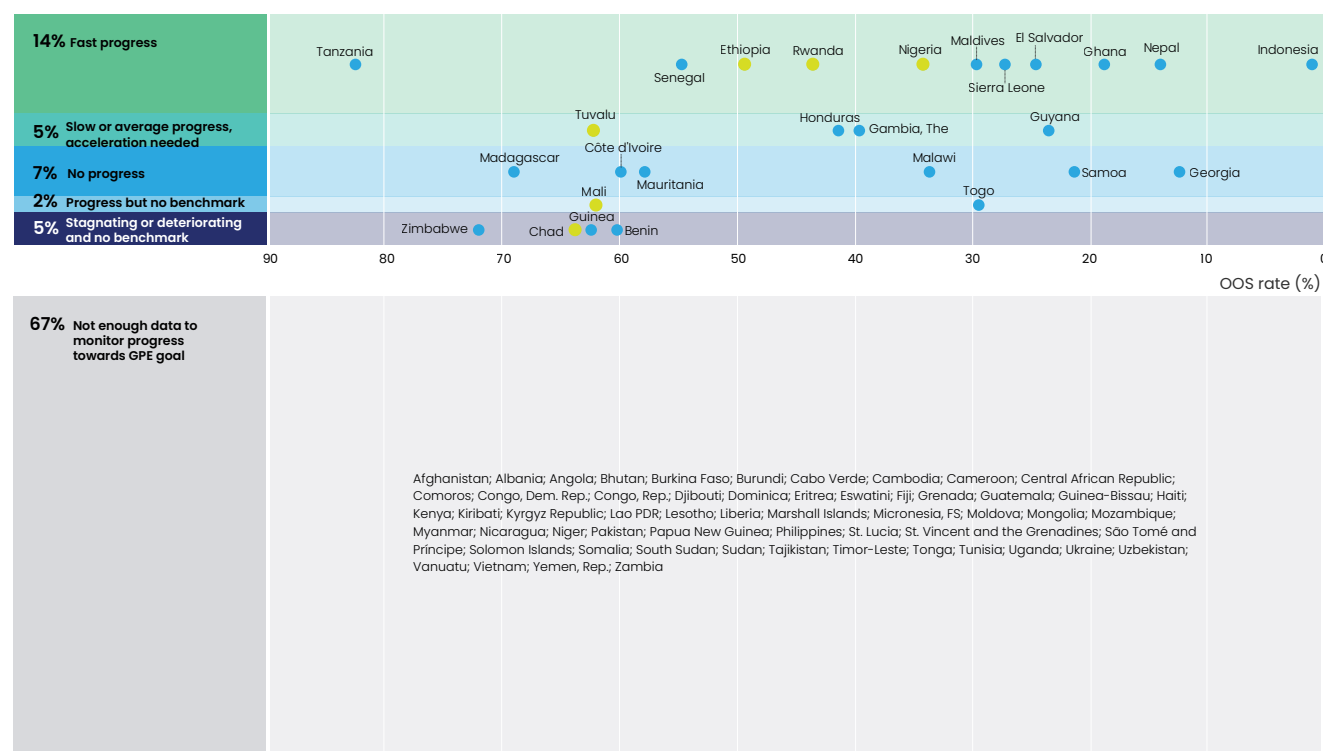
a) Primary



b) Lower secondary



c) Upper secondary



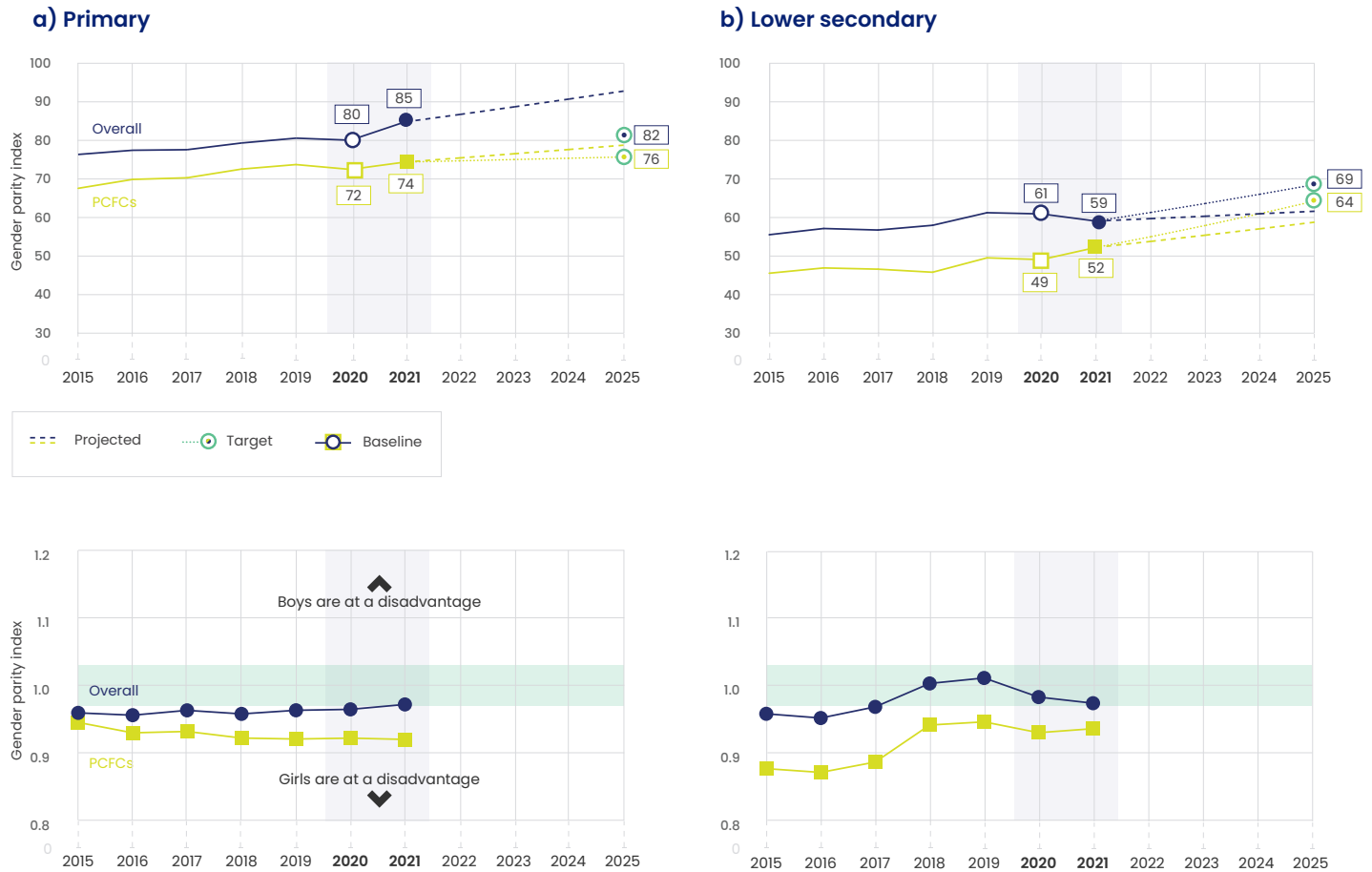
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, SDG4 Scorecard: Progress Report on National Benchmarks—Focus on Early Childhood (Montreal: UIS and Paris: Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384295>.

Note: Country classification follows the SDG 4 Scorecard. Fast progress means that countries have a 75 percent probability of achieving their national target (or have already achieved it). Slow or average progress means that countries have less than a 75 percent probability of achieving their national target. No progress means that countries have been regressing. Countries with new benchmark data at the time of this report have been reclassified accordingly. Progress for countries that did not submit benchmark values has been assessed against feasible benchmark values.

FIGURE 1.10.

Partner countries are more on track to meet their primary completion targets compared to their lower-secondary completion targets.

Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, boys and girls (percent), 2015–21 and 2025 target and gender parity index (percent)



Source: Global Education Monitoring Report analysis based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data.

Note: Targets for 2025 are estimated on the basis of the level of effort expected to reach the completion rate targets.

Several countries that reduced their out-of-school rates saw an increase in their out-of-school populations due to demographic growth. Overall, between 2015 and 2020, the number of out-of-school children, adolescents and youth of primary- and secondary-school age in partner countries increased by an estimated 6 million (from 148 million to 154 million). PCFCs account for almost the entire increase, whereas the out-of-school population in other partner countries has remained stagnant. In countries such as Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and Niger, the number of primary-school-age children is expected to grow by more than a quarter during the current decade, according to the United Nations Population Division.

Partner Countries Are Overall on Track to Meet Their National Target for Primary Completion Rate

Indicator 3i, the gross intake ratio (GIR) into the last grade, monitors progress in school completion. For this indicator, 2025 targets were reestimated because the SDG 4 global indicator uses the completion rate and national SDG 4 benchmarks are set with respect to that indicator (see box 1.4 in GPE's *Results Report 2022* for more details).

In 2021, the GIR into the last grade of primary stood at 84.8 percent on average in partner countries and at 74.4 percent in PCFCs (figure 1.10). The GIR into the last grade of lower secondary was 59.1 percent overall and 52.2 percent

in PCFCs. These averages mask large variations between partner countries. In Burundi, Chad, Guinea, Mozambique and Niger, less than 60 percent of children of primary school graduation age are enrolled in the last grade. In comparison, more than 90 percent of children of primary school graduation age are enrolled in the last grade in 25 countries, including Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, Tonga and Vietnam.

Partner countries met their 2025 target of 82.1 percent for primary education but not their target of 68.5 percent for lower-secondary education. Overall, GIR into the last grade of lower-secondary education has stagnated since 2015.

Of partner countries with data, four out of 10 have a high probability of achieving their GIR national targets in primary education and one out of four of achieving their GIR targets in lower-secondary education (figure 1.11). Several countries with low initial GIR levels have set ambitious yet realistic targets for 2025 and are improving at a pace that matches their ambition. For instance, the

Republic of Congo and Sudan set national targets at 87 percent and 74 percent, respectively (both from a GPE 2025 baseline of 65 percent on average in 2020).

Improvements in gender parity have accompanied progress in overall levels of completion. Partner countries, on average, have achieved gender parity in primary education. The gender parity index in lower-secondary education in PCFCs has improved from an average of 0.88 in 2015 to nearly 0.95 in 2021.

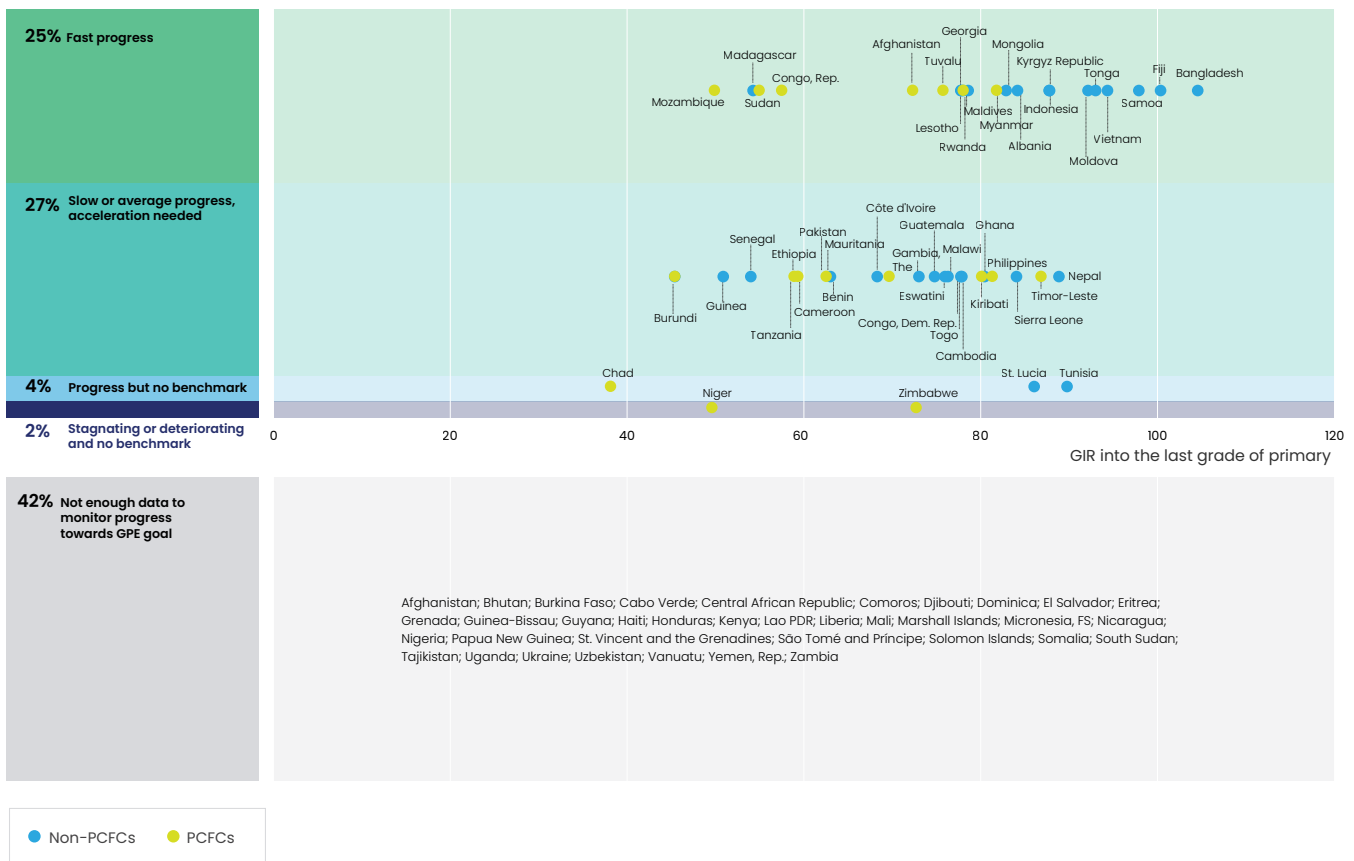
Progress toward gender parity may be an early sign that progress can be expected for Indicator 5i (SDG indicator 5.3.1), the proportion of women aged 20–24 years old who were married or in a union before age 18. In the 50 countries with available data for Indicator 5i in 2021, an estimated 18 million girls (or 26.6 percent of girls) were married or had entered a union before the age of 18. However, additional data and evidence are needed at country level to assess the impact of education on reducing harmful social norms.

FIGURE 1.11.

Many countries are on track to achieve gross intake ratio targets at the primary level, but fewer at the lower-secondary level.

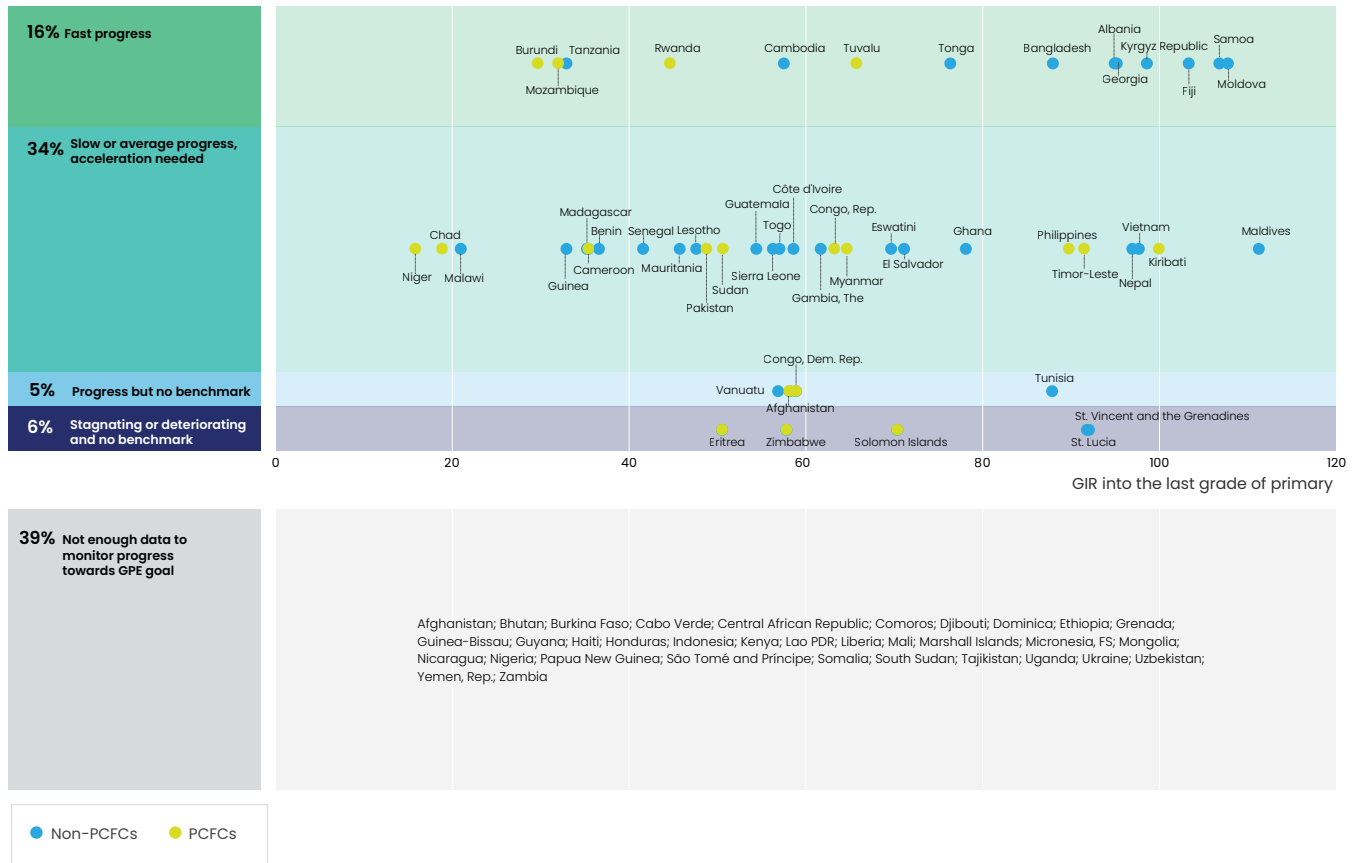
Distribution of partner countries according to the likelihood of achieving their GPE 2025 targets on gross intake ratio (GIR)

a) Primary



Continued

b) Lower secondary



Source: Global Education Monitoring Report analysis based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data.

Note: Countries have been classified following their classification in the SDG 4 scorecard. Countries with new benchmark data at the time of this report have been reclassified accordingly. Progress for countries that did not submit benchmark values has been assessed against feasible benchmark values. For more details, see UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, SDG4 Scorecard: Progress Report on National Benchmarks—Focus on Early Childhood (Montreal: UIS and Paris: Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384295>.

Early marriage remains a barrier to girls' school completion. In Nigeria, an estimated one in five adolescents is not in school because of early marriage or pregnancy.²¹ Many countries with low levels of completion have higher proportions of early marriage. For instance, Chad's lower-secondary GIR does not exceed 20 percent, and an estimated 61 percent of women aged 20–24 were married or in a union before the age of 18. Similarly, Malawi has a GIR of 21 percent and early marriage prevalence of 38 percent.

1.4. TEACHING FOR LEARNING: ARE TEACHERS QUALIFIED AND SUPPORTED?

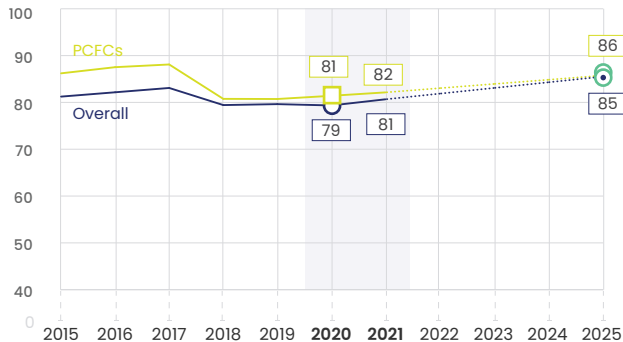
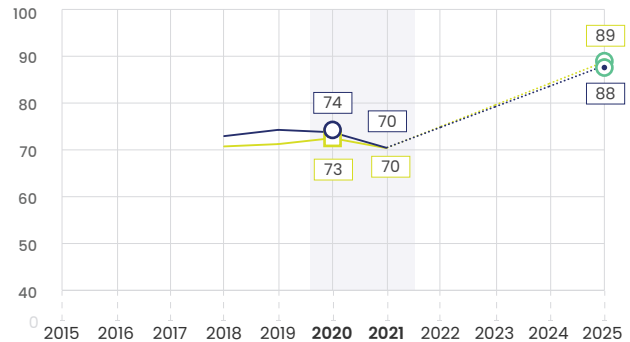
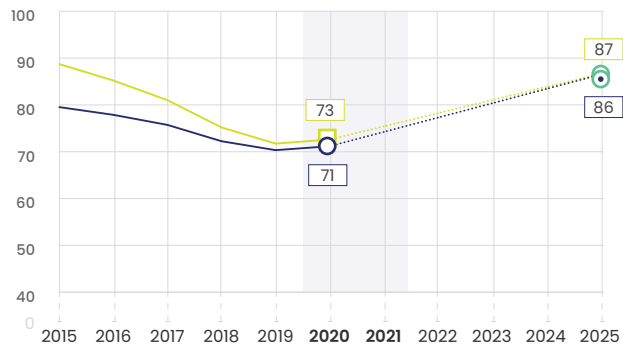
(Indicator 7i)

Accelerating improvement in learning requires translating policies and interventions into quality teaching. Indicator 7i (SDG indicator 4.c.1), the proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications at each level of education, monitors whether teachers in partner countries have the required training and

²¹ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/22: Non-state Actors in Education: Who Chooses? Who Loses?* (Paris: UNESCO, 2022), <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/non-state-actors>.

FIGURE 1.12.

At the current pace, partner countries will meet their target at the primary level but are off track for all other levels.
Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by level, 2015–21 and 2025 target (percent)

a) Primary**b) Lower secondary****c) Upper secondary**

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://uis.unesco.org>.

qualification for the level at which they teach. On average, the share of teachers trained according to national standards in partner countries was 80.7 percent in primary and 70.5 percent in lower-secondary education (figure 1.12).

Teacher shortages present an important barrier to foundational learning. In many instances, reforms and interventions seeking to improve foundational learning have neglected teacher development and support.²² Interventions—such as changes in pedagogical approaches, curriculum or language of instruction—will work only if teachers are available and if they receive the appropriate training and support. The shortage of

teachers, as illustrated by high student-teacher ratios, continues to jeopardize the quality of education in many partner countries.²³ Sub-Saharan Africa needs to recruit an estimated 2.3 million new teachers to meet SDG 4 by 2030—on top of the 3.8 million needed to replace teachers who will have left the profession by 2030.²⁴

Low data availability hampers reporting on progress against GPE 2025 national targets. About 65 percent of partner countries do not have enough data to assess progress in secondary education and 43 percent do not have enough data to assess progress in primary education (figure 1.13).

²² UNESCO, *Born to Learn*.

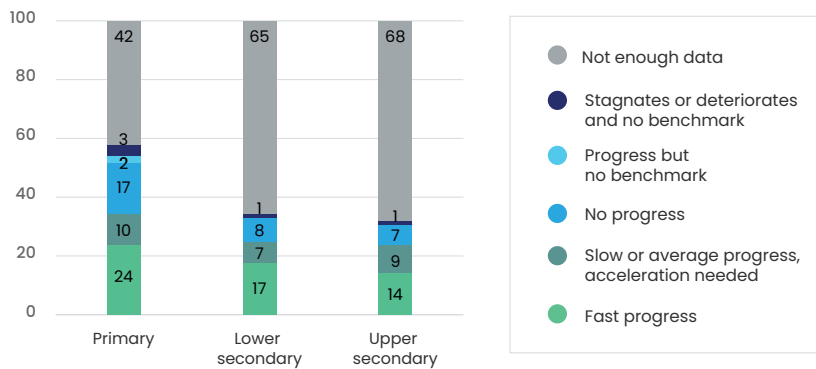
²³ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/22*.

²⁴ International Task Force on Teachers for Education, "Closing the Gap: Ensuring There Are Enough Qualified and Supported Teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa," (UNESCO, Paris, 2021), https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Closing%20the%20gap%20-%20Ensuring%20there%20are%20enough%20qualified%20and%20supported%20teachers_TTF%20advocacy%20brief%20July%202021_v2.pdf.

FIGURE 1.13.

In secondary education, less than 20 percent of partner countries are on track to achieve targets and less than 60 percent have data to report on trained teachers.

Distribution of partner countries according to the likelihood of achieving their GPE 2025 targets on teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by level, 2021 (percent)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, *SDG Scorecard Progress Report on National Benchmarks: Focus on Early Childhood*, (Montreal: UIS, 2023), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384295>.

Notes: Country classification follows the SDG 4 Scorecard. Fast progress means that countries have a 75 percent probability to achieve their national target (or have already achieved it). Slow or average progress means that countries have a less than 75 percent probability to achieve their national target. No progress means that countries have been regressing. Countries with new benchmark data at the time of this report have been reclassified accordingly. Progress for countries that did not submit benchmark values has been assessed against feasible benchmark values.

GPE supports partner countries to develop sound policies to address teacher needs in GPE partner countries. Out of the 84 grants active as of fiscal year 2023, 75 grants financed activities related to teachers, with a total allocation of \$491,289,408. These activities mainly include pre-service education, in-service training, teacher coaching and mentoring, teacher management, teaching tools, assessment of teaching quality and social dialogue involving teachers. Future GPE grants will likely continue to support teachers because several partner countries that completed a partnership compact included teachers as part of their priority reform to support system transformation (box 1.4).

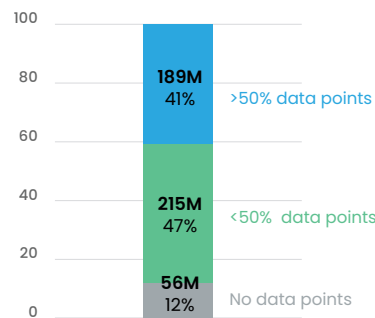
1.5. ADDRESSING LONG-LASTING CHALLENGES FOR THE MONITORING OF GPE 2025

A recurrent finding across this chapter is the critical lack of data available through the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) to monitor progress toward the GPE 2025 goal. Only a few partner countries report data to UIS on foundational literacy and numeracy. With two years to go until 2025, many partner countries will likely not have enough data points available to assess the pace at which their children's foundational learning skills have improved since the start of the GPE 2025 strategy.

FIGURE 1.14.

For 56 million children in partner countries, not a single data point is available from UIS to monitor progress toward foundational learning.

Distribution of primary- and lower-secondary-school-age children living in partner countries, by availability of data to monitor progress toward foundational learning, 2021 (percent)



Source: GEM report analysis based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data.

Note: Five indicators are included (Indicators 2, 3i, 3ii, 5 and 6) with their respective disaggregations (3i.a, 3i.b, 3ii.a, 3ii.b, 6.i, 6.ii and 7.i.a, 7.i.b) for a total of nine data points.

Figure 1.14 shows the extent to which UIS lacks data to monitor progress in five of the results framework indicators (Indicators 2, 3i, 3ii, 5 and 6). These are the most basic indicators against which foundational learning could be monitored, covering school readiness, access and completion, minimum proficiency levels and teacher training. GPE partner countries account for 460 million children, 302 million of whom are primary-school age and 157 million lower-secondary-school age.

BOX 1.4. Support to teachers, teaching and learning is among the priority reforms in several partnership compacts

An analysis of partnership compacts showed that four (Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal and Tanzania [Mainland]) out of the 15 compacts included priority reforms to support teachers and teaching. Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania (Mainland) suggest focusing on teacher professional development while also prioritizing teacher recruitment, deployment and planning. Chad's compact includes an axis focused on teacher mastery of content and pedagogy through improved pre-service and in-service training and ongoing support in school and class by principals and educational advisors. It also includes an axis focused on improved teacher management, including recruitment, deployment and motivation, and more gender parity in the teaching force. The Democratic Republic of Congo's compact focuses on teachers and teaching for quality education. The compact has three axes, including revalorizing the profession and strengthening the teaching core, recruitment and teacher professional development and the school- and class-room-level teaching environment. Tanzania's compact includes strong attention to teacher workforce planning and management. Action areas span from recruitment to deployment, teacher professional development, motivation and accountability, as well as broader planning issues.

Even in countries where teachers and teaching are not the priority reform area, there is still a strong focus on teachers to operationalize goals related to learning in general and foundational learning in particular. A total of 13 compacts included priority reforms related to learning (of which several have a strong focus on foundational learning), with teachers as a key pillar. In Sierra Leone's compact, teachers are one of the pillars supporting the reform, with attention to pre- and in-service teacher professional development, teacher management information systems and teaching and learning materials. Kenya similarly includes a strong focus on teachers, including attention to reforms of teacher education and ongoing teacher professional development, as part of its focus on learning. Uganda includes attention to teacher recruitment, allocation, management and teacher professional development, including on foundational learning and remedial education. The Gambia aims to improve foundational learning through teacher training and continuous professional development, the provision of teaching and learning materials and early grade learning assessments.

Twelve partner countries, representing 56 million children of primary-school age and lower-secondary-school age, still do not have enough data on any of these indicators to monitor progress toward the GPE 2025 goal. Only one country, Senegal, has data on all five indicators. And, for 60 percent of all primary-school-age and lower-secondary-school-age children in partner countries, monitoring of progress is feasible against only four or fewer of the needed data points.²⁵

Monitoring progress in basic numeracy and literacy is particularly difficult. At the primary level, only 15 countries—accounting for 16 percent of all primary-

school-age children in partner countries—have enough learning data and targets to assess the pace at which children are learning foundational skills. And partner countries have just enough data to monitor learning for one out of five lower-secondary-school-age children. Furthermore, because most of the data come from regional (PASEC and ERCE) and international (TIMSS and PIRLS) large-scale learning assessments, monitoring relies on the frequency and quality of externally led assessments. This dependence does not sustainably reinforce partner countries' capacity to carry out their own national learning assessments.

²⁵ The lack of data from the UIS does not mean that data are not available at country-level. Chapter 2 reports that data may be available in partner countries but not reported to UIS. The reasons for non-reporting country-level data to UIS will be the subject of an upcoming blog by the GPE Secretariat and UIS.

BOX 1.5. The Learning Data Toolkit, a global public good to rapidly improve monitoring of learning at national, regional and international levels

Some initiatives, such as the Coalition for Foundational Learning^a founded in 2022, have started to address the issue of learning data availability. The coalition, which aims to “support countries to monitor learning progress and improve availability of learning data” and is led by UIS, has taken steps in this direction. In particular, UIS and its partners, including GPE, have developed a global public good, the Learning Data Toolkit,^b with tools and methods to enable partner countries at any stage of development to measure proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, and subsequently to report at the international level. The Learning Data Toolkit comprises a global framework to measure minimum levels of proficiency in numeracy and literacy, several methods to link national learning assessments with regional and international reporting and learning assessment modules, such as the Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels, which can be used as standalone assessments or integrated into existing national assessments.^c Several countries—including Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Senegal—have already used the Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels to report nationally and internationally. Kenya has already reported data to UIS using the Learning Data Toolkit, and Burkina Faso and Senegal are expected to report some learning data to the next UIS data release. The GPE results framework uses data from UIS to monitor progress in learning outcomes in partner countries.

a. For more information, see UNESCO's web page, “The Coalition for Foundational Learning,” <https://transformingeducationsummit.sdg4education2030.org/Coalition-Foundational-Learning#:~:text=Introduction,to%20drive%20change%20more%20quickly.>

b. For more information, see the Learning Data Toolkit website, <https://learningdatatoolkit.org>.

c. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), “Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPLs): Ground-Breaking Tools to Produce Internationally Comparable Data on SDG 4.1 Indicators,” (UIS, Montreal, no date), <https://milo.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2022/10/ampl.pdf>.

Even with external support, partner countries often struggle to establish national assessment units. In Sierra Leone, GPE supported in 2021 the creation of a national assessment unit in charge of overseeing the development and implementation of national learning assessments. By the end of 2022, however, the unit had recruited only two of the eight staff planned. Furthermore, development partners did not align their activities with the national education strategy. As a result, the focus was put on short-term objectives for data collection and publication of results rather than on long-term objectives such as the development of national institutional capacity for collecting, analyzing and using data.²⁶

These difficulties reinforce the value of GPE's joining the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning. They also call for innovative actions to rapidly improve partner countries' ability to monitor levels of learning, on par with the pace of progress expected by GPE 2025. Several partners, led by UIS and including GPE, have started to move forward (box 1.5), yet ensuring that countries see improvements before the end of GPE 2025 will require sustained efforts.

²⁶ UNESCO, *Born to Learn*.