**Forum:** Special Conference on Education

**Issue:** Mitigating the disparity in the quality of education in the developing world

**Student Officer:** Deniz Yücel

**Position:** Deputy Chair

## Introduction

As a basic human right and a major force behind social cohesion, economic prosperity, and sustainable development, education is the cornerstone of human development and societal advancement. Education based on the idea of empowerment, provides individuals with the knowledge, and skills they require to live contentedly contribute lasting improvements to their communities, and successfully negotiate the challenges of a world that is becoming more linked by the day. However, differences in the quality of education persist, especially in developing countries, despite global treaties and notable advancements in increasing educational access. These disparities show themselves among various dimensions, causing increased poverty levels and lowering income potential, increased human capital flight in developing countries, and suppressing social mobility.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Developing country:** countries working towards accomplishing a high quality of life, advanced economic development, and new technological infrastructure

**Educational inequality:** the unequal allocation of academic funding and resources

**Quality education:** educational experiences that support the cognitive and social development of students

**Right to education:** the right to affordable and accessible quality education

**Digital Divide:** the gulf between those who have ready access to computers and the internet, and those who do not.

**Literacy Rate:** the percentage of the population of a given age group that can read and write.

**Gender Disparities in Education:** unequal access and opportunities for education between males and females

**Social Mobility:** refers to change in a person's socio-economic situation, either in relation to their parents (inter-generational mobility) or throughout their lifetime (intra-generational mobility)

## Background Information

Many children around the world face inequity in education to this day, while progress has been made to improve the absolute number of enrolled students and the efficiency and accessibility of education, the difference between those in developed countries and those in developing countries has not diminished. These differences correlate with the level of development of various countries and regions. Around the world, the number of out-of-school children on a global scale has risen by 6 million since 2021 and now totals 250 million or 16 % of children and youth (covering primary to upper secondary) and it is estimated that without additional measures taken approximately 84 million children will stay out of school by 2030 and an estimated 300 million students will lack the basic numeracy and literacy skills necessary for success in life. The proportion being significantly larger in developing countries. The issue encompasses a variety of interconnected elements that lead to disparities in educational attainment among various geographic locations, demographics, and socioeconomic classes.

### Socioeconomic factors

Socioeconomic determinants hold a profound influence on educational disparities as poverty emerges as a major factor in shaping educational outcomes. In certain

countries, the interaction of gender and wealth influences significant disparities in education. For example, Comoros is a country heavily influenced by traditional gender roles, affecting the educational opportunities of girls as they are more likely to be kept at home or married as children. Considerable variations in educational achievement between various demographic groups may result from this interaction. Female disadvantage in education is prevalent among countries across Western and Central Africa, North Africa, and West and South Asia.

## Geographical Factors

A country's geographical condition has a large effect on the quality of its education. In developing countries, rural areas face significantly more challenges as opposed to urban areas. Communities in rural areas are more often than not preoccupied by poverty, the scarcity of basic services, unemployment, and problems with transport, and their living conditions affect children, teachers, and families. Research showed that community expectations from children often crash with school timetables and as a result, children may go to school hungry and unable to concentrate. It is also estimated that teachers tend to live an average 36km distance from their workplace, mostly in nearby towns. The physical conditions of schools are also inadequate for a safe and quality education with many lacking clean water and electricity. One of the most prominent problems affecting rural schools is the issue of transportation, with inadequate means of transport such as walking limiting access to education for children with disabilities and younger students and creating safety hazards as children have to navigate through dangerous routes to reach schools.

## Educational disparity in conflict zones

Many developing countries have been facing conflict for a prolonged amount of time. From these conflicts arise various educational disparities that affect the development and shaping of the future. According to UNICEF, the number of children out of school in conflict zones such as Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Nigeria and Niger is 27 million. One of the most recent examples of this is the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rooting from the early 20th century and continuing with the attacks on Gaza, the humanitarian crisis in the country has affected education severely. Forced evictions, demolitions, military operations, and access restrictions are a few of the challenges children in Palestine face to continue their education.

### Long Term Effects

Countries who have been facing a crisis for an extended period of time suffer from long-term effects as a result. Ongoing violence and feelings of insecurity in their living environment leave trauma and lasting psychological effects on children, resulting in high stress levels that lead to physiological discomfort in their daily lives, struggle with learning and concentration leading to poor academic performance, and high dropout rates. Interrupted education leads to low literacy rates perpetuating underdevelopment and poverty. High dropout rates result in individuals taking low-paying jobs that further reinforce the cycle of poverty as a lack of educated workers and the skill gap hinder economic growth. Individuals raised in an uneducated environment are more vulnerable to being exploited as child laborers. An example for this could be the children in CAR often being recruited into the army. Young people with a lack of education often struggle with unemployment and in some cases may turn to criminal activities, this raises social prejudice and discrimination as many who fall into crime are made up of disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities which get further marginalized.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Organizations

### United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As the leading organization on education in the United Nations, UNESCO has established numerous initiatives and policies aimed towards achieving global educational goals. Leading and Supporting many global frameworks including

Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) regarding the issue. Global Monitoring Reports by UNESCO have provided insight into education trends and challenges as well as critical data that help shape the goals of upcoming policies.

## United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Focusing on children's rights and well-being worldwide, education is one of the core components of UNICEF's mission. Guided by the principle of education being every child's right, UNICEF has introduced many programs to provide quality education to children in emergencies and conflict zones, worked on improving innovative education using technological means, and has experience in improving gender disparities in education and building educational infrastructure.

## Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

A multi-stakeholder partnership that brings together governments, international organizations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and mobilizes funding towards education systems and technical support, helping developing countries build towards a stronger education system and adapt to the 21st century. The organization has successfully increased enrollment rates and quality of education as well as implementing systemic reforms.  Working with 90 partner countries, GPE has mobilized more than 11 Billion dollars for education and has most recently provided funding to help countries respond to educational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

## Countries

## Central African Republic (CAR)

With the ongoing armed conflict and high levels of violence, CAR is facing a humanitarian crisis that affects all levels of life quality including quality of education. Many schools have been closed due to threats to the lives of school staff and pupils.

Access to education is exceedingly low and research shows that the overall literacy rate for youth is 21% and the overall average of out-of-school children is 26%.

## Palestine

Palestine's issue of educational disparity is deeply tied to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict resulted in political instability within the country along with widespread destruction as well as long-term psychological effects and trauma on children all of which hindered the opportunity for increased education quality significantly.

## Afghanistan

During the continuous state of conflict, many educational infrastructures in Afghanistan have been destroyed, causing prolonged interruptions in schooling and threats to the lives of educators and pupils. In a country where systematic gender discrimination is very prominent, gender disparities are a strong barrier to women's and girls' access to education.

## Timeline of Events

| | |
|---|---|
| **1948** | **Universal primary education was codified as a human right in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.** |

| 1960 | The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination is adopted to help ensure equal access to education for all |
|------|------|
| 2000 | The United Nations sets the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include achieving universal primary education by 2015. |
| 2015 | The United Nations adopts sixteen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including educational initiatives |
| 2022 | The United Nations holds the Transforming Education Summit in response to the ongoing global education crisis |

## Relevant International Documents

- ETUCE- European Region of Education International 2012 Regional

Conference Promoting Public Sector Education in an Age of Austerity Resolution on Privatisation and Educational Inequality

ResolutiononPrivatisationandEducationalInequalityEN.pdf (csee-etuce.org)

- UN Chronicle - Recognizing and Overcoming Inequity in Education

[Recognizing and Overcoming Inequity in Education | United Nations](Recognizing and Overcoming Inequity in Education | United Nations)

- The Institute of Human Development and Social Change - Combating Inequality in Education

[Combating Inequality in Education | NYU Steinhardt](Combating Inequality in Education | NYU Steinhardt)

- Inequality In Education. Dimensions And Solutions

[Inequality In Education. Dimensions And Solutions (repec.org)](Inequality In Education. Dimensions And Solutions (repec.org))

- A Policy Framework For Education And Training

African National Congress

https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Govern_Political/ANC_Education.html

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### Education for All (EFA) Movement:

Launched at an international level in 1990, the EFA Movement with the support of intergovernmental agencies promoting the program and various international and non-governmental organizations raised global awareness about the importance of education and mobilized efforts to expand access to schooling. While there were

results, the movement ultimately fell short of achieving all it set out for, the inequality steadily increased over the course of 15 years with the less developed countries taking most of the burden. the poor quality of learning at the primary level affected millions of children.

## Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

Adopted in 2000, addressing a range of global issues, one of the goals of the MDGs aimed to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. While significant progress was made, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the disparities persisted due to reasons such as inadequate data and monitoring, funding shortfalls, and focus on quantitive targets over quality.

## 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is made up of "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) and is an inter-governmental commitment adopted in 2015 that compromises 17 Goals in total including Goal 4 which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Gathering valuable experience from the previous attempts, the SDGs took up a more comprehensive and inclusive approach.

## U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education

Coordinated among various U.S. government agencies, most notably The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education set out to enhance access to education, especially in developing countries, strengthening systems and supporting opportunities for lifelong learning. The program has provided more than 24 million children in over 50 countries access to education, assisted more than 93,000 public and private schools at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels, and has trained more than 300,000 education officials, administrators, and teachers.

## Possible Solutions

Possible solutions may include targeted and specialized support provided for vulnerable populations such as girls, refugees, indigenous communities, and disabled children through assistive technologies and tailored and inclusive education programs. Addressing gender disparities in education by implementing gender-based equality policies and incentives for female teachers in schools is crucial for inclusive learning. New education policies could be implemented with clear objectives and dedicated strategies along with curriculum reforms and teacher training. Providing transportation for children in rural areas could improve access to education. Education financing should be made to be a priority to provide said measures. Community engagement-based approaches involving parents and stakeholders may be implemented. The issue of Mitigating the disparity in the quality of education in the developing world is not a basic one to solve, adopting a multi-faced approach that combines all targeted issues would be the way to advance and solve them.

## Bibliography

"Social Mobility." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., www.britannica.com/topic/social-mobility.

Schmelkes, Sylvia. "Recognizing and Overcoming Inequity in Education." United Nations, United Nations, 22 Jan. 2020, www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/recognizing-and-overcoming-inequity-education.

"250 Million Children Out-of-School: What You Need to Know about UNESCO's Latest Education Data." UNESCO.Org, 19 Sept. 2023,

www.unesco.org/en/articles/250-million-children-out-school-what-you-need-know-about-unescos-latest-education-data.

Global Education Monitoring Report Team. "Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges; EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015; Summary." Unesdoc.Unesco.Org, UNESCO, 2015, unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232565.

"Wide Education Inequalities." The World Inequality Database on Education, UNESCO, www.education-inequalities.org/.

"Transforming Education." Global Partnership for Education, www.globalpartnership.org/what-we-do/transforming-education.

"Right to Education : Situation around the World." Humanium, 22 Feb. 2018, www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/.  6

"Wide Education Inequalities." World Inequality Database on Education - Home, UNESCO, www.education-inequalities.org/countries/c-a-r/literacy_1524#ageGroups=%5B%22literacy_1524%22%5D&years=%5B%222019%22%5D.

Chandni Desai, Assistant professor, Chandni. "The War in Gaza Is Wiping out Palestine's Education and Knowledge Systems." The Conversation, 2 May 2024, theconversation.com/the-war-in-gaza-is-wiping-out-palestines-education-and-knowledge-systems-222055.

"Education in Conflict Zones: An Unmet Need - World." ReliefWeb, 23 Apr. 2018, reliefweb.int/report/world/education-conflict-zones-unmet-need?gad_source=1&gclid=CjoKCQjwgJyyBhCGARIsAK8LVLM-Awazjp2jPHSifcP1wIlZ6SzIIgAoPA-LCZ18iUrYqS3JbRApLT4aAiTHEALw_wcB.

Gabriela Cristea, 2019. "Inequality In Education. Dimensions And Solutions," Logos Universalitate Mentalitate Educatie Noutate - Sectiunea Stiinte Sociale/ Logos

Universality Mentality Education Novelty - Section: Social Sciences, Editura Lumen, Department of Economics, vol. 8(1), pages 37-48, July.

Haelermans, Carla, et al. "Sharp Increase in Inequality in Education in Times of the COVID-19-pandemic." *PLoS ONE*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0261114. Accessed 17 May 2024.

*Gardiner, M. (2008) Education in Rural Areas. Issues in Education Policy No. 4, Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD). - References - Scientific Research Publishing*, Centre for Education Policy Development, www.scirp.org/(S(lz5mqp453edsnp55rrgjct55))/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=2017192.