



EdData II: Education Data for Decision Making

Education as a Means of Reducing Extreme Poverty

Extreme Poverty Globally and in Sub-Saharan Africa

The World Bank defines extreme poverty as a global threshold based on an average per capita consumption of \$1.25 (U.S. dollars) per day based on 2005 purchasing power parity-adjusted dollars.ⁱ Currently, extreme poverty affects approximately 1.2 billion people in the world. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other donors aim to reduce the number of individuals living in extreme poverty through program and policy support to ensure basic human rights for all and to promote global stability.

Although the prevalence of people living in extreme poverty has decreased globally, most of the progress has been made in South and East Asia and is related to economic growth in China and India. Global donor efforts have also contributed and need to continue because overall poverty rates are still too high. Work remains to be done in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, where, despite some drop in prevalence rates, the absolute numbers of extreme poor are still increasing because the population is increasing faster than the prevalence rates are decreasing. Currently, the population is approximately 414 million.ⁱⁱ

Although economic growth and donor activities are contributing to recent improvements, these gains tend to impact those living closest to the \$1.25-per-day line

(Figure 1). The further below this extreme poverty threshold an individual is, the more difficult it is to lift him or her out of poverty.ⁱⁱⁱ Populations in rural areas are more likely than those in urban areas to live in extreme poverty.^{iv} Likewise, a disproportionate number of the extreme poor are women (approximately 70%).^v

Quality Education as a Means of Helping the Poorest Out of Extreme Poverty

Education is one of the most valuable tools for increasing an individual's earning potential and, in this way, lifting him or her out of extreme poverty. This is particularly the case for girls.^{vi} Research suggests that each additional year of school translates into productivity gains that are associated with a 10% increase in individual earnings.^{vii}

However, the question is what can we do to help ensure that children benefit from the potential gains from education? We know that children living in extreme poverty face barriers to the elements needed to attain a successful education. These barriers include education access, readiness to learn, school retention and completion, and quality education. Table 1 provides an explanation and some examples of the types of schooling barriers faced by those living in extreme poverty. Table 1 also describes some steps that governments or donors can take to help mitigate the impact of these barriers.

Figure 1. Number living below \$1.25 per day by region by year.

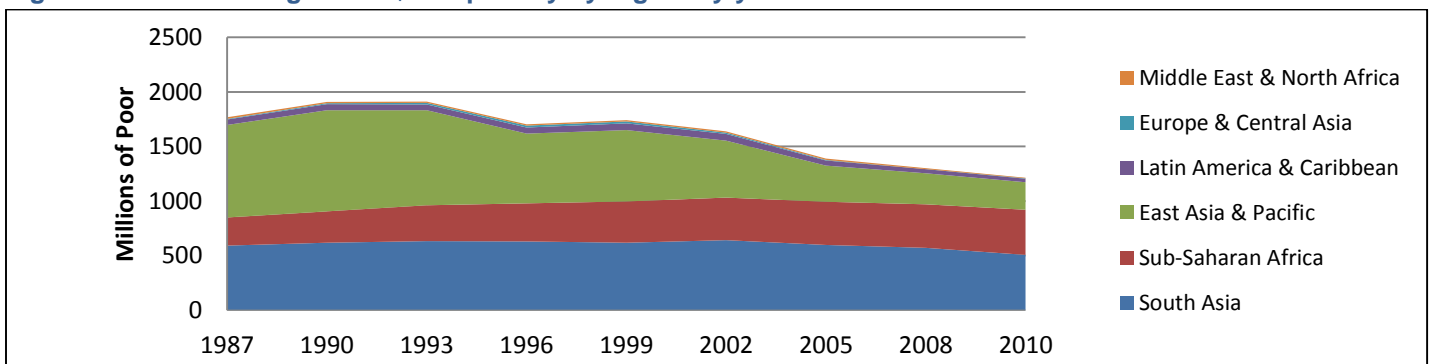


Table 1. Explanation and examples of the types of schooling barriers faced by those living in extreme poverty.

| Component | Barriers | Evidence | Solutions |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct costs: This includes school fees, uniforms, and materials. • Opportunity costs: These costs include labor and wages lost to school attendance rather than working. • Value perception: Families not directly benefitting from schooling are less likely to see the value of their children attending school. • Distance: The poorest are unlikely to have transportation besides walking. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) 2010: 39% of children in lowest 5% income category who dropped out reported cost as the reason.^{viii} • NEDS 2010: 57% of children in lowest 5% income category who never attended school cited concern of lost labor as the reason; 31% of children in the lowest income category who dropped out of school reported loss of interest or believed that they had enough schooling. Also, 39% of students in this income group cited distance as the reason for dropping out. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School fees: Waiving school fees lessens the direct cost burden. • Conditional cash transfers: Using incentives to offset the direct and indirect costs of schooling and can be targeted to those living in extreme poverty. Transportation allowances can help mitigate the distance barrier to promote school attendance. Quality improvements increase access and completion because they make it worthwhile to attend school and increase the likelihood of not failing. |
| Readiness to Learn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral language development: Children in poverty have less exposure to oral language, resulting in smaller vocabulary and lower cognitive development than less poor peers. • Nutrition deficiencies: Insufficient nutrients stunt physical and mental development and impair cognition, attention, and overall health. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income quintiles: Children from lowest income quintiles have lowest oral language abilities.^{ix} • NEDS 2010: Children from lowest income quintiles had high rates of stunting (evidence of long-run poor nutrition) and low weight compared to children from higher income quintiles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental involvement: Parents involvement by telling stories, singing, and involving children in conversations prepares children for school and learning. Parental involvement may require organized interventions to overcome existing inertia. • School feeding programs: Combining school and nutrition service delivery have shown positive impacts on student readiness. Community-based pre-school care can also help. |
| Retention and Completion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of household participation: Families in low-income households are less likely to seek extra tutoring and to spend time helping children with homework or reading with them. • Materials availability: Pupils are less likely to have access to reading materials at home or at school, hindering their ability to practice and master reading skills and reducing exposure to text. • Community empowerment: Families in low income areas are more likely to lack political skills and the power needed to extract the accountability from schools to improve quality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tanzania 2013 Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness (SSME): Children from the lowest income quintile were less likely than high-income quintile children to have family participation (e.g., help with homework [45% versus 67%]). Children from the lowest income quintile were more likely to report that no one ever read to them at home (45% versus 17% for the wealthiest income quintile). These children were also more likely to report that they never read to anyone at home (45% versus 9%).^x • Resource disparities: Children from the lowest income quintile also were less likely than students in the top income quintile to have reading materials at home (39% versus 80%). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental involvement: Independent of whether parents are literate, parents should ask children to read aloud daily, ask older siblings or other friends or neighbors to read aloud to their children, encourage children to complete their school work, and encourage daily, on-time attendance. • Reading resources: Reading materials that children can use at home should be provided through the school or a community-based pre-school. • School feeding programs: These help children succeed at school by ensuring adequate nutrition. Such programs also serve as an incentive for pupils to stay in school. • Service standards: Help organize parents and develop standards so that it is easier to demand good services. |
| Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher quality: Attracting, recruiting, retaining effective teachers improves quality of education in rural, poor areas. • Scarce school resources: Rural areas where concentrations of poverty are highest often have fewer qualified teachers and fewer resources and teaching and learning materials. • Parental participation: Low parental participation, or power, to demand quality from the schools hinders quality improvement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO: A 2011 study in Mozambique by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization showed that rural schools that are typically low resource and low income had difficulty attracting and retaining qualified teachers. The study's findings showed that 8% of teachers in urban areas were unqualified versus 58% in rural locations, and the pupil to qualified teacher ratio was higher in rural areas (162:1) versus urban areas (59:1). • SACMEQ: Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality student reading and math scores were lower in rural vs. urban areas.^{xi} • Teacher support: Those in rural areas were served less by support services, and they often had fewer print resources for teaching and learning materials.^{xii} | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- and in-service teacher training: Teachers need training to manage classrooms and offer quality pedagogy. • Teacher allocation systems: Better teachers can sometimes be moved to rural areas through incentives. • Monitoring and accountability systems: These help teachers, families, and communities to better understand the ongoing state of schools and schooling in their area. The systems also hold teachers and administrators accountable for maintaining or improving school quality. • Resource distribution: Systems can be developed to specifically target the equitable distribution of school resources (e.g., school repairs, desks, and tables, chalkboards, teaching and learning materials). |

- ⁱ Yoshida, N., H. Uematsu, and C.E. Sobrado. 2014. *Is Extreme Poverty Going to End? An Analytical Framework to Evaluate Progress in Ending Extreme Poverty*. Policy Research Working Paper 6740. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- ⁱⁱ Olinto, P., K. Beegle, C. Sobrado, and H. Uematsu. 2013. *The State of the Poor: Where Are the Poor, Where Is Extreme Poverty Harder to End, and What Is the Current Profile of the World's Poor?* Economic Premise No. 125. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Chandy, L., N. Ledlie, and V. Penciakova. 2013. *The Final Countdown: Prospects for Ending Extreme Poverty by 2030*. Policy Paper 2013-04. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. Available at http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/04/ending%20extreme%20poverty%20chandy/the_final_countdown.pdf
- ^{iv} Olinto, P., K. Beegle, C. Sobrado, and H. Uematsu. 2013. *The State of the Poor: Where Are the Poor, Where Is Extreme Poverty Harder to End, and What Is the Current Profile of the World's Poor?* Economic Premise No. 125. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- ^v McFerson, H.M. 2010. Poverty among women in sub-Saharan Africa: A review of selected issues. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 11(4):50–72.
- ^{vi} Hunter-Gault, C. (Narrator). 2006. African women and the struggle against poverty. (Radio broadcast special series). In *Africa: Portraits of Poverty*. Washington, DC: National Public Radio. Available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5627508>
- ^{vii} USAID. 2011. Infographic: *Learning out of Poverty*. Available at <http://50.usaid.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/4N8b.USAID-FINAL2.pdf>
- ^{viii} National Population Commission (Nigeria) and RTI International. 2011. *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) EdData Profile 1990, 2003, and 2008: Education Data for Decision Making*. Washington, DC: National Population Commission and RTI International.
- ^{ix} Engle, P.L., L.C. Fernald, H. Alderman, J. Behrman, C. O'Gara, A. Yousafzai, et al. 2011. Strategies for reducing inequalities and improving developmental outcomes for young children in low-income and middle-income countries. *The Lancet* 378(9799):1339–1353.
- ^x RTI International. 2014. *National Baseline Assessment for the 3Rs (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic) Using EGRA, EGMA, and SSME in Tanzania*. Washington, DC: RTI International. (Not yet available for public distribution)
- ^{xi} Adedeji, S.O., and O. Olaniyan. 2011. Improving the conditions of teachers and teaching in rural schools across African countries. *UNESCO—Fundamentals of Teacher Education Development*. Addis Ababa: International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa.
- ^{xii} Adedeji, S.O. and Olaniyan, O. 2011. Improving the conditions of teachers and teaching in rural schools across African countries. P. 21 in *UNESCO—Fundamentals of Teacher Education Development*. Addis Ababa: International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa.

USAID's EdData II project is led by RTI International.

The project Web site is www.eddataglobal.org.

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