

Iraq's progress towards education goals

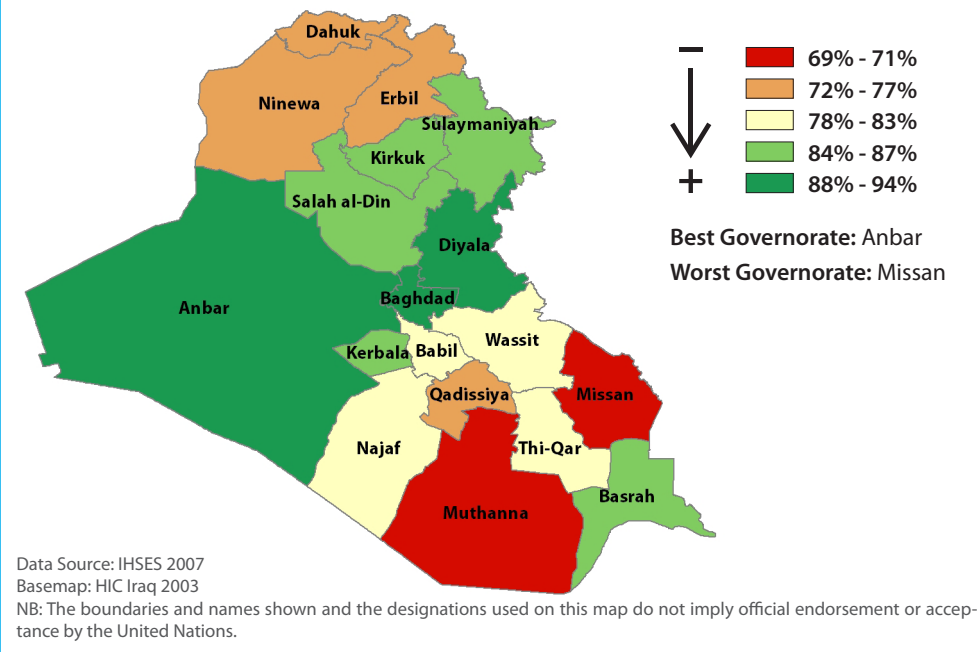
Following the drop in net primary school enrolment⁵ rates from 91% in 1990 to 85% in 2007, Iraq faces challenges in its efforts to meet the 2015 target of 100% net primary enrolment. Equal enrolment rates for girls and boys (MDG Three, EFA Goal Five) have nearly been achieved in urban areas (99% girls-to-boys net primary enrolment ratio), but in rural areas the already-low enrolment rate of 77% drops to 70% among girls.⁶ The proportion of children starting 1st grade who eventually continue to 5th grade has risen from 76% to 95% between 1990 and 2006,⁷ but just 44% of children finish primary education at the standard age (11 years old).⁸ The poor state of primary education leads to a high drop-off in enrolment rates going into intermediate and secondary education. The net intermediate enrolment ratio is 37%, while the ratio at secondary level is even lower at 21%.⁹ Gender parity (MDG Three and EFA Goal Five) will be difficult to achieve in rural areas, where boys outnumber girls by around two-to-one at both levels.¹⁰

One in five Iraqis aged over 15 years is illiterate. Illiteracy rates among women (28%) are over double those among men (12%).¹¹ Just 1% of those aged over 15 are enrolled in literacy classes.¹² Girls

make up just a quarter of participants in accelerated learning classes aimed at out-of-school children and adolescents.¹³ Iraq will therefore have to exert considerable effort to improve adult literacy by 50% by 2015 (EFA Goal Four). The drop in primary school enrolment also means that Iraq will have difficulties in meeting the target of 100% literacy among Iraq's youth by 2015 as part of MDG Two. Literacy rates among 15-24 year olds have shown a slight improvement from 79% in 1990 to 84% in 2007, but further progress is still required. The lowest rates are to be found in the northern and southern governorates, and young women aged 15-24 (20% of whom are illiterate) suffer more than their male counterparts.¹⁴

These issues highlight the need to improve early childhood development and the quality of education. Early childhood development (EFA Goal One) is essential to providing the most basic literacy and numeracy skills for children as they commence their primary school education. Preschool enrolment among 3-5 year olds is just 3%.¹⁵ While teachers are universally trained,¹⁶ the quality of education (EFA Goal Six) is hampered by poor learning environments – caused by poor quality infrastructure and overcrowding – and a curriculum that does not adequately prepare youth for the labour market optimize learning and requires moderniza-

Literacy rate of segment of population aged 15-24 years



tion in order optimize learning.

External factors such as malnutrition, child labour and early marriage also inhibit child and youth education and development. Chronic malnutrition, which affects one in five Iraqi children below the age of five, is undermining cognitive development, causing irreversible losses in opportunities for learning.¹⁷ In rural areas, 10% of children aged 5-14 work, with

little difference between genders, while 5% of boys in cities are employed. In addition, one in five young women currently aged between 15 and 19 is married but with greater prevalence in the south of Iraq. There is little difference between rates in urban and rural areas.¹⁸



By 2014, the UN aims for an increase in the proportion of schools with a child-friendly learning environment from 2.5% to 30% (EFA Goal 6). Aimed at continuing enhancements in school infrastructure, UNICEF and UN-HABITAT's "child-friendly schools" model will provide an inclusive, participatory, academically effective, healthy and safe learning environment. The model will be implemented in 21 schools in eight governorates in preparation for further expansion.

Education is an essential service and fundamental human right which will continue to influence all aspects of Iraq's development. The UN with the Government of Iraq and its partners will continue to provide its full support and commitment to increase access to quality education as a lifelong experience in accordance with Iraq's development goals.

Endnotes

1 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 26 (www.un.org/en/documents/udhr)

2 UN site for MDG Two: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education; EFA Goals: www.unesco.org/en/efa/the-efa-movement/efa-goals; UNESCO, Education for All: Global Monitoring Report 2010 – Reaching the Marginalized (2010) www.unesco.org/en/efareport/reports/2010-marginalization and the CRC <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

- 3 Government of Iraq Ministry of Finance/Geopolicity
- 4 World Bank/COSIT/KRSO Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007
- 5 The net primary enrolment ratio is the percentage of children aged between six and 11 years old that are enrolled in primary school.
- 6 1990 data from the Directorate of Social and Educational Statistics; 2007 data from World Bank/COSIT/KRSO Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007
- 7 1990 data from COSIT, Millennium Development Goal Report 2007; 2006 data from UNICEF/COSIT/KRSO/MoH Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006
- 8 2006 data for net primary school completion from UNICEF/COSIT/KRSO/MoH Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006
- 9 World Bank/COSIT/KRSO Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007
- 10 World Bank/COSIT/KRSO Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007
- 11 World Bank/COSIT/KRSO Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007
- 12 World Bank/COSIT/KRSO Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007
- 13 Government of Iraq Ministry of Education
- 14 World Bank/COSIT/KRSO Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey 2007
- 15 UNICEF/COSIT/KRSO/MoH Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006
- 16 UNESCO, Education For All: Mid-Term Review for the Arab States (2008)
- 17 UNESCO, Education For All: Global Monitoring Report 2010 – Reaching the marginalized (2010)
- 18 UNICEF/COSIT/KRSO/MoH Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006
- 19 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/IRFFI/Resources/IraqPovertyReductionStrategyPressReleaseEnglishandArabi.pdf>



Achieving the EFA goals will contribute to meeting Iraq's international obligations under:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1976)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1976)

International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, 1970)

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1986)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1994)

Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No.182. Adopted by ILO)

