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Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) through Advocacy in Education Out Loud – Synthesis Report

Paola De Munari, Geeta Gambhir, Maria Pia Iocco, Katarzyna Kubacka and Gustavo Henndel Lopes

With contributions from Maria Jose Guevara, Juliet Kyoshabire Kotonya and Sarah Lynch

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GPE Transforming Education

Education Out Loud is the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) fund for advocacy and social accountability. Education Out Loud supports stronger civil society engagement to transform education systems. Education Out Loud strengthens civil society organisations to mobilise citizens and influence policy change in the education sector. It also helps make advocacy more effective at the global, regional, and national levels, promoting transparency efforts around education policies and practices.

Visit www.educationoutloud.org

Executive Summary

Background

This report seeks to understand how Education Out Loud (EOL) has supported Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in advocacy and examines progress and challenges that undermine inclusion in education. Its insights aim to inform and strengthen the advocacy strategies, policy engagement, and education planning efforts of EOL grantees, and contribute to the wider dialogue on equity and inclusion in education systems.

EOL is the advocacy and social accountability fund of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), supporting more than 80 alliances and coalitions of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) across the world to mobilise citizens, influence policy processes, and enhance accountability mechanisms within the education sector. The report is part of the National Foundation for Educational Research's (NFER) work as EOL's Global Learning Partner (GLP) for the period 2024-2026, supporting evidence-based learning to strengthen civil society advocacy within education systems.

NFER work focused on GESI, including in fragile and conflict affected contexts through research aligned with EOL's strategic learning. NFER's activities spanned the synthesis and analysis of data, facilitation of interactive learning events, and case study research to generate actionable insights that enhance grantees' advocacy and accountability efforts.

GESI in Education Out Loud

GESI approaches aim to promote equal and inclusive access to education and address the exclusion of marginalised groups. The educational experiences of these groups are often compounded by the intersectionality of multiple factors of exclusion, particularly in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts (FCAC). GESI is central to EOL's objectives and goals, and its conceptualisation is grounded in the GPE and Oxfam Denmark approaches. **In 2023, to strengthen grantees' understanding and application of GESI in their work, EOL developed a Policy Guidance Note on Inclusion and Gender Equality, informing programme documents and frameworks.**

The conceptualisation of social inclusion in EOL is guided by identifying five main dimensions of exclusion. Gender equality and social inclusion are understood to be intrinsically connected, with gender being an issue within inclusion. However, this connection is presented in different ways across EOL's outputs and reporting templates. **In some cases, 'gender' and 'social inclusion' are presented as separate across the EOL documents and are reported under different categories.**

Global data, such as that on learning outcomes, reveals persistent and entrenched inequalities in education access and learning outcomes, with EOL countries having relatively lower scores than upper middle-income countries, particularly in FCAC. **Socioeconomic status is the foremost driver of access and learning outcomes, with rurality and disability further compounding disadvantage.** Children with disabilities are more vulnerable to long-term exclusion, being more likely to be out of school, to have lower attendance rate or to never attend school. **Data availability remains a significant challenge in addressing exclusion, with many countries lacking sufficient data to effectively monitor progress or design targeted interventions.**

GESI as a thematic advocacy strategy in Education Out Loud's work

EOL grantees engage in advocacy initiatives to drive change in policy, generate research and evidence including through locally-led initiatives, share and build knowledge in global and regional events and take part in learning collaboratives. Their work across topics and territories focuses on eliminating the context-specific barriers to education for marginalised groups. Advocacy work has involved coalition-building, policy reform, community engagement and testing sustainable solutions for FCAC settings, targeting multiple dimensions of marginalisation. Our analysis shows that EOL grantees have driven measurable change in advancing right to education for all, worldwide. **EOL grantees have influenced 11 policy changes at regional and global levels (between 2022–2025), and**

245 national policy reforms across 51 countries (between 2020–2025). This included reforms in difficult regions and countries, including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, alongside key regional and global declarations on educational equity.

Grantees have also leveraged regional and global events to amplify marginalised voices and push for systemic reforms. Learning collaboratives and research activities have created opportunities for the generation of knowledge and learning in support of advocacy and policy dialogue efforts for inclusive education. These have fostered thematic knowledge sharing using culturally responsive and participatory methods and integrating local perspectives into policy dialogue. EOL grantees are also building local data systems using citizen monitoring and scorecards, helping to bridge data gaps and ensure responsive education systems.

Grantees face multiple challenges in their work, including limited funding for sustained advocacy, lack of supportive national legal frameworks, inadequate technical expertise, restricted data access, entrenched social norms, and shrinking civic space. These obstacles hinder their ability to generate evidence and influence policy, limiting their success in advancing inclusive education nationally, regionally and globally.

Conclusions

EOL has deepened its commitment to GESI and the foundations for a more consistent approach are now in place, to be applied consistently across the programme. EOL and learning partners need data systems to track social inclusion so that marginalisation and intersectionality are fully captured. Grantees have driven measurable change in education policy through advocacy, knowledge exchange, coalition-building, participatory research and locally-generated data but face barriers in their work. This underscores the importance of EOL's facilitation and capacity-building. Global data shows persistent inequalities in access and learning across EOL countries, highlighting the extent of exclusion and confirming where advocacy and data efforts are most needed.

Recommendations

Our analysis informs key recommendations for EOL, learning partners and grantees, in order to foster their work on advancing GESI-informed advocacy.

These Include:

For EOL: harmonise GESI terminology and frameworks, and strengthen how the programme tracks grantees' advocacy and knowledge sharing on social inclusion and intersectional marginalisation.

For EOL and learning partners: support data systems and case-study learning that capture how and why change happens, including in contexts of entrenched social norms and limited civic space.

For EOL and CSOs: build shared data repositories and standards on social inclusion, so coalitions can access, compare and reuse evidence and avoid duplication.

For EOL and GPE: sustain funding for long-term advocacy and alliance-building, and support grantees to complement policy wins with deeper work on underrepresented groups for whom change takes longer.

Acronyms

ABE	Accelerated Basic Education
AFE	All for Education
ACEA	Arab Campaign for Education for All
ACLO	Fundación Acción Cultural Loyola
AP	Asia and Pacific (region)
ASPBAE	The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CEMSE	Fundación Privada de Fieles Centro de Multi Servicios Educativos
CLADE	Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación
CONFINTEA	International Conference on Adult Education
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
EFASOM	Education For All Somalia
EOL	Education Out Loud
FCAC	Fragile and Conflict Affected Contexts
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GEM	Global Education Monitoring (report)
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GLP	Global Learning Partner
GMU	Global Management Unit
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HESA	Horn, East and Southern Africa (region)
HLSC	High-Level Steering Committee
HOPE	Helping Our People Excel
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean (region)
LEG	Local Education Group
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other identities
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MEPT	Movimento de Educação Para Todos
NEC	National Education Coalition

NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPGE	National Policy on Girls' Education
OC	Operational Component
ReLus	Lusophone Network for the Right to Education
RMU	Regional Management Unit
RNCEPT-CV	Rede Nacional da Campanha de Educação Para Todos, Cabo Verde
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCA	West and Central Africa (region)
WIDE	World Inequality Database on Education

1. Background

Education Out Loud (EOL) is the advocacy and social accountability fund of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), designed to strengthen the role of civil society in shaping more inclusive, transparent, and effective education systems. The programme supports alliances and coalitions of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in building capacity to mobilise citizens, influence policy processes, and enhance accountability mechanisms within the education sector. Operating across global, regional, and national levels, EOL seeks to improve the transparency of education policies and practices while contributing to more informed and impactful advocacy efforts.

The programme is structured into three Operational Components (OC) which, as of June 2025, supported 63 National Education Coalitions (NECs) operating at a country level (OC1), 14 National civil society alliances working nationally (OC2) and six transnational civil society alliances (OC3). The programme also supports the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) as well as three Regional Coalitions as part of OC1 and OC3.

This report seeks to understand work on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) supported by EOL, to examine progress achieved as well as gaps that persist in advancing GESI, and present key findings and recommendations. The report is framed within the broader global context on social inclusion and gender equity in education. Its insights aim to inform and strengthen the advocacy strategies, policy engagement, and education planning efforts of EOL grantees, while contributing to the wider dialogue on equity and inclusion in education systems. The synthesis report was firstly circulated as a draft in May 2025 and published in its updated and final version in November 2026.

We explore how EOL-supported initiatives contribute to advancing equitable access to education and learning opportunities for marginalised groups. Our data sources included global reports and datasets, as well as evidence produced by EOL grantees, learning partners, and EOL's Management Units from 2020 to present.

Building on the recommendation of an internal Rapid Review of GESI in OC1 extension proposals in 2024, we unpack the factors of marginalisation that EOL-supported organisations tend to focus on, and how they limit access to and participation in education for different groups. Mindful that many EOL grantees operate in environments considered fragile and conflict-affected, we have paid particular attention to outlining the specific barriers in these contexts.

We focus on social inclusion and gender equality as thematic advocacy areas for grantees, being primarily guided by the five dimensions of marginalisation prioritised by EOL: gender; disability; rurality and remoteness; migrants, refugees, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); and poverty. We recognise the limitations of focusing on a reduced number of factors, however, we used an intersectional lens to investigate contexts where grantees' work has attempted to address different factors of marginalisation that exacerbate barriers to education.

In the remainder of **Section 1**, we present NFER's role and activities as Global Learning Partner (GLP) to EOL. In **Section 2** we present an overview of EOL's approach to GESI, situated in global data on access to education and learning outcomes for marginalised groups across EOL countries. In **Section 3** we synthesise existing evidence of practices around social inclusion in grantees' work, successes and challenges. We provide our key conclusions in **Section 4**. In **Section 5** we outline recommendations for EOL as well as the wider education community.

Our research methodology is provided in **Appendix A**. It details our approach to quantitative analysis, in which we use data from international education databases covering 63 EOL countries or territories to explore educational access and learning outcomes. Our analysis focused on access indicators (primary and lower secondary completion, out-of-school children, and mean years of education) and learning indicators (mathematics and reading achievement at the end of primary school) by gender, location, wealth and disability. Our qualitative analysis uses desk research and a case study approach to identify grantees' work on advancing GESI. **Appendix B** includes additional quantitative analysis of marginalised groups that are not included in the main report. The analysis is presented by EOL region, and access and learning indicators (i.e. primary and lower secondary completion rate and learning in reading and mathematics).

We strongly encourage readers to explore the information presented in the appendices, where the detailed and disaggregated data provide a valuable evidence base for developing advocacy documents and initiatives, while also offering a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of educational marginalisation.

1.1 NFER's role as Global Learning Partner

Learning is a core element in EOL. It aims to strengthen the capacity of grantees and share lessons from programme implementation with the broader education community, contributing evidence-based knowledge as a global public good. Underpinned by EOL's Global Learning Plan 2024–2027, NFER's learning partnership aimed to support strategic research themes across the entire EOL portfolio, contributing to the generation of knowledge and evidence-based learning.

The overall aim of our learning initiatives was to generate lessons and learning to inform advocacy and accountability activities implemented by selected EOL's grantees. We have done so by (i) undertaking research guided by questions on gender equality and social inclusion in education, including in Fragile and Conflict Affected Contexts (FCAC); (ii) aligning our approach to international guidelines on gender and social inclusion and paying attention to the specificities of FCAC; and (iii) supporting the use of research designs which maximise the use of existing data and offer improved flexibility and opportunities for triangulation.

1.1.1 Synthesis and analysis of grantees data

One of the aims of our partnership was to help generate evidence and insights to support evidence-based policy that can trigger change in relation to gender equality and social inclusion, particularly in FCAC. We carried out research exploring how initiatives supported by EOL have helped advance equitable access to education and learning opportunities for marginalised groups, analysing and synthesising both qualitative and quantitative data. We investigated successful equality and inclusion work resulting from grantees' activities in advocacy and awareness raising, generating research and evidence including building local data systems, sharing and building knowledge in global and regional events, and taking part in learning collaboratives.

The output of this work is this Synthesis Report, first shared in draft version in 2025 and published in 2026.

1.1.2 Interactive learning events

We supported and strengthened grantees' knowledge and skills through four learning events. The first learning event (June 2025) focused on sharing the findings of the draft Synthesis Report with grantees across all regions and operational components. The second learning event (October-November 2025) and the third (April-May 2026) explored how qualitative research can support advocacy and policy engagement on GESI in education, including in FCAC. Finally, we delivered a learning event in February 2026 aimed at supporting and strengthening EOL grantee organisations' skills and practices in using quantitative data related to GESI in education (as illustrated in more detail in Box 1).

Box 1: Learning Event to support the use of quantitative data for equality in education

NFER designed and delivered a learning event aimed at supporting and strengthening EOL grantee organisations' skills and practices in using quantitative data, reviewing commonly used indicators, data availability, and data related to GESI in education. The informative event consisted of three 45-minute webinars for EOL's grantees grouped by region and language, with each grantee organisation invited to one of them.

In each of the regional webinars we presented data and reports drawn from different sources that were relevant to the region/country of participants. The pre-event survey highlighted that the participants to the webinar are generally accustomed to the use of quantitative data, but have limited access to data or do not have the capacity to analyse it. A good number of organisations collect their own data. Presentation materials were shared in advance which allowed participants to prepare and ask a number of context- specific questions referring to the information presented during the webinar.

These events aimed to be interactive and engaging to meet the diverse needs of participants from CSOs supported by EOL and to provide them with succinct and practical information to support their work. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own research practices to ground the learnings

in their experiences and were offered the possibility to share examples of their work with the wider webinar audience. One of these case studies was selected for further research, as described in the **next section**.

1.1.3 Research into gender equality and social inclusion, including in FCAC

While we initially planned to work directly with grantees through participatory action research principles, we pivoted our approach after our initial desk research and consultations with EOL's management units to develop case studies of grantees' advocacy. We explored stories of progress in GESI in education by investigating grantees' work that contributed to improvements for vulnerable groups. Case studies were identified through programme publications and monitoring reports, or emerged from participants' contributions during learning events (see Box 2 for an example).

Box 2: Case study shared in a Learning Event on using qualitative research in advocacy

During one of NFER's learning events, the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) shared information about their successful work on education financing gaps affecting girls and children with special educational needs and disabilities. The Coalition provided information on how they researched the views from learners, parents, teachers and education officials on insufficient funding and materials, limited gender-sensitive budgeting practices and social norms and their impact on girls and children with disabilities in communities. They highlighted their experience of how research findings grounded in lived experiences were used to inform policy dialogue with the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service and development partners.

We selected case studies across different categories of marginalisation, and representative of different regions, including FCAC and non-FCAC settings. We did not aim to use the case studies in an evaluative or comparative manner. Rather, the choice was guided by their variety of themes and approaches. The full set of case studies and research methodology is available in a separate booklet (Lopes and Gambhir, 2026).

Key Takeaways

EOL as GPE's advocacy and social-accountability fund supports civil society to influence inclusive, transparent education systems.

EOL operates through three components (OC1, OC2, OC3) engaging national coalitions, civil society alliances and transnational networks.

Many grantees work in FCAC, where marginalisation is intensified and data is harder to access.

This report examines how EOL supports gender equality and social inclusion and identifies progress, gaps, and implications for advocacy.

The analysis focuses on social inclusion and gender equality as thematic advocacy areas, being primarily guided by the five dimensions of exclusion: gender, disability, rurality/ remoteness, displacement, and poverty, using an intersectional lens.

NFER's role as GLP includes research on gender equality and social inclusion, evidence synthesis, learning events and support to the programme's strategic research themes

2. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Education Out Loud

2.1 What is GESI and why does it matter?

Many learners are still confronted with exclusion or low-quality learning, despite the progress made in the last decades to advance access to education for all. Children and young people with disabilities, for instance, are still two-and-a-half times more likely than their peers to never attend school (Odeh and Lach, 2024). Additionally, approximately 122 million girls are out of school globally, with many unable to exercise their right to education due to gender inequality and discriminatory practices (UNESCO, 2019, 2024b). GESI approaches aim to promote equal and inclusive access to education and address the exclusion from education of marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities, girls, ethnic minorities, and those in fragile and conflict-prone settings. Over 473 million children live in FCAC, with 52 million children out of school due to disruption of educational cycles, school closures, the destruction of infrastructure or their use for military or humanitarian purposes, displacement, and security risks (UNESCO, 2024a). EOL supports organisations in FCAC through funding and specific guidance (see Box 3).

Box 3: GESI in Fragile and Conflict Affected Contexts (FCAC)

GPE states that almost half of its partner countries are affected by fragility and conflict. FCAC contexts are also where some of the most marginalised groups find it hard to access to and participate in education. EOL supports civil society groups in 25 FCAC countries and territories and nearly half (46%) of the EOL-supported NECs include at least one member organisation representing internally displaced people, refugees, or migrants. Learners in FCAC face a higher risk of dropping out of school, especially during emergencies. As well as marginalisation often being exacerbated in FCAC, these contexts often have changing and unstable governments where the space for civil society and the participation of EOL grantees is more likely to be hindered. EOL commits to supporting CSOs, grantees and learning collaboratives working on issues in the contexts through, for example, guidance in proposals for funding and learning on how to manage the risks of operating therein.



The educational experiences of marginalised groups are often compounded by the intersectionality of factors of exclusion, based on visible or invisible characteristics. These include socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, immigration status, displacement, remoteness, or religion and beliefs (UNESCO, 2020). The term intersectionality describes how multiple forms of exclusion impact the educational experiences of vulnerable learners, adding up the barriers they face in accessing quality education. For instance, children from indigenous or ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly in conflict-affected areas, face challenges rooted both in their cultural identity and their geographic location, compounded by a curriculum that does not reflect their mother tongue language (UNESCO, 2025).

The notion of GESI can be traced to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's commitment of 'leaving no one behind'. In education, the principle is

crystallised in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4): 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

There is no standard definition of GESI and the concept is frequently explained by presenting gender equality and social inclusion as separate definitions within it. Often, gender equality is seen as an issue within inclusion and / or marginalisation. For example, the GPE outlines GESI-related terms such as equity, inclusion and marginalisation separately, with marginalised groups, including girls and boys, being those who are commonly out of school or have low learning outcomes (GPE KIX, 2023). Other actors, such as Social Development Direct (2019), more explicitly situate gender equality as both discrete from, but also part of, social inclusion.

2.2 GESI's definition and operationalisation in the EOL programme

As the GPE's advocacy and social accountability fund, EOL's conceptualisation of GESI is grounded in the GPE approaches as well as those of Oxfam Denmark, building on Oxfam's decades of experience in enabling human rights-based, transformative education for all in the Global South (Oxfam Denmark, 2024). GESI is central to EOL's goal 'to contribute to the promotion of inclusive, gender responsive and equitable national education policies and systems through enhanced civil society capacities and participation in social accountability and policy advocacy processes'.

The synergies between EOL's, Oxfam's and the GPE's GESI approach extend to that of the GCE, which is also working in tandem with EOL's GESI-strengthening efforts. The GCE is a movement founded in 1999 as a platform for coordination and engagement of civil society organisations in education policy making. GCE is a former grant agent of EOL's predecessor - Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) - and now an EOL grantee and partner which sets out its commitment to achieve education for all and guides its members, many of whom are EOL grantees (GCE, 2022). The GCE works to support those left furthest behind, where there is often intersectionality of their specific characteristics, using a human rights-based approach.

The mid-term review of EOL found that a strengthened focus on GESI, including a GESI-specific policy was needed to mainstream the concept in grantees' work (Coventry and Gebremedhin, 2022). We reviewed key EOL documents to explore how they conceptualise and frame GESI and present the findings in the rest of this section.

In 2023, EOL developed a Policy Guidance Note on Inclusion and Gender Equality (Oxfam Denmark, 2024), to strengthen grantees' understanding and application of GESI in their work. The Policy Guidance Note presents a framework for how GESI is understood and operationalised through the EOL programme. Gender equality and social inclusion are understood to be intrinsically connected, with gender being an issue within inclusion, as stated in the Policy Note: "Gender issues are inclusion issues. EOL has a special focus on gender equality and girls' education as they are crucial topics in addressing exclusion." (Oxfam Denmark, 2024).

The Policy Guidance Note informed the revision of various frameworks, for example, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) frameworks, regional and global learning plans and templates for the 2023 NEC (OC1) Call for Proposals (Beardon, Collinson and Newman, 2024). Across these documents, EOL uses a variety of GESI-related terms, for example, 'inclusion and gender equality' in the Policy Guidance Note, 'gender and inclusion' and 'gender and social inclusion' in the EOL Learning Framework, and 'gender equality and social inclusion' in the Global Management Unit (GMU) consolidated report.

EOL's framing of social inclusion is guided by identifying the dimensions of exclusion. The Policy Guidance Note refers to five most common dimensions of marginalisation: gender; disability; rurality; remoteness and lack of infrastructure; migrants, refugees, and IDPs; and children from low-income households. It also recognises that exclusion and marginalisation are context-dependent and can occur on other grounds, for instance belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, sexual orientation, or orphan status (Oxfam Denmark, 2024).

These five dimensions are loosely matched to the EOL internal reporting, for instance, policy changes are classified into: girls' right to education; persons with disabilities right to education; poor peoples´ right to education; female adolescents' right to education; and education in emergencies. Any work targeting populations or individuals that do not belong to the categories mentioned above is recorded

under 'other'. These categories are exclusive, meaning that it is not possible to report activities under more than one category, despite targeting multiple vulnerabilities.

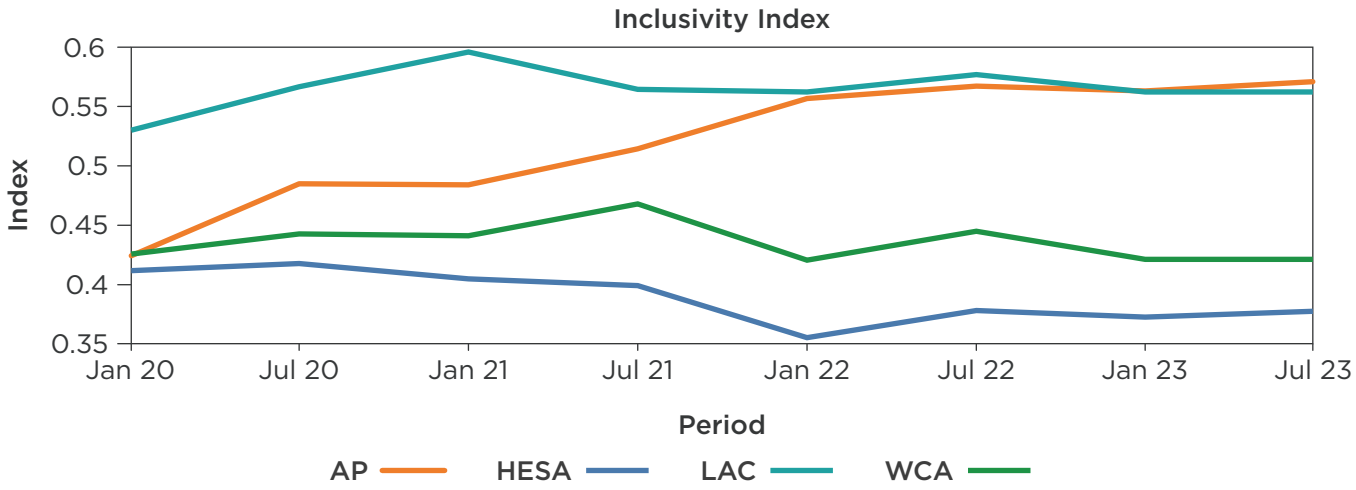
EOL supports three types of inclusion as thematic advocacy areas for grantees: inclusive education sector dialogue; inclusive coalitions and alliances; and social inclusion and gender equality. This third type focuses on grantees' knowledge and activities to support inclusion in education (Oxfam Denmark, 2024). 'Inclusivity' in relation to coalition and alliances is defined in Outcome Indicator 1.1.1 in the EOL's Results Framework. It looks at the composition of members of marginalised groups and their activities for promotion of the right to education for excluded groups including girls, people living in poverty and LGBTQIA+ youth, and children with disabilities (see Box 4)

Box 4: Monitoring the inclusivity of Education Out Loud grantees

EOL encourages grantees, especially national education coalitions, to have a diverse and inclusive member basis and tracks progress through the Inclusivity Index. The original Index, in use until 2024, presented the (unweighted) average of 7 components related of different inclusion dimensions of 13 marginalised groups, plus a question on the female composition of the NEC board. The Index is mapped to Outcome Indicator 1.1.1 in the EOL's Results Framework. In the first phase of the programme (January 2020 to December 2023), EOL's Inclusivity Index contained data on 61 EOL countries, including a baseline and half-year updates. In the Asia Pacific (AP), and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, the Inclusivity Index improved between January 2020 and July 2023, from 0.42 to 0.57, and from 0.53 to 0.56, respectively. In the other two regions, the Index slightly decreased in this period, with the Horn, Eastern and Southern Africa (HESA) Index moving from 0.41 to 0.38, while West and Central Africa (WCA) moved from 0.42 to 0.41, as shown in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: Education Out Loud's Inclusivity Index by region 2020–2023



Notes: The 13 marginalised groups are: Women/girls, marginalised or illiterate young boys and girls (aged 15–24), people with disabilities, discriminated ethnicity and caste, discriminated religious group, indigenous people, internal displaced/refugees, LGBT persons, people with discriminated caste/ ethnicity/ nationalities or migrants, people living below poverty line as defined by respective Government, students, parents, teachers.

Eight countries have the Index calculated in the baseline, while the rest use the values from the period January 2020–June 2020. A group of seven countries had their baseline assessment in January 2022 instead.

Source: EOL Technical Progress Reports

The new version of the Index includes 30 questions (as opposed to 76 in the previous version), spread across four dimensions: Inclusive organisational practices, Inclusive internal dialogue, Inclusive advocacy, and Inclusive coalition membership. The new Index also incorporates some changes into how each question is answered, moving from a Yes/No choice for each item, to having a scale of five choices for some questions. In the reporting period 2024–2025, 24 NECs recorded slight improvements and 23 maintained their previous scores, while 14 saw small declines, largely due to lower representation of women on their boards.

Despite being conceptually connected, 'gender' and 'social inclusion' are often presented as separate categories across EOL documents, with 'gender' appearing more consistently than 'social inclusion' or 'inclusion'. In the Results Framework, for instance, (see Table 1) 'gender-sensitivity' and 'inclusivity' are prominent in the Overall Objective, with wording around these concepts appearing in Specific Objective 1 but not in the other two objectives. In reporting and other templates, when 'gender' and 'inclusion' are present, they are reported under different sections or dropdowns; in other instances, only gender-sensitiveness is reported on, for example concerning policy changes. An overview of EOL documents and how GESI is referred to in these is presented in Table 1.



Table 1: GESI in EOL's key documents

	Document / tool	Definition/mentions of Gender Equality/Social Inclusion
General guidance	Policy Guidance Note on Social Inclusion and Gender Equality	A key document for conceptualising and understanding GESI. It includes: • Definitions of gender and key gender-related terms, for example, gender equality, gender equity, gender norms, intersectionality, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and terms around sexual orientation. • Non-exhaustive list of marginalised and excluded groups that are likely to be facing barriers to education to frame social inclusion. • Details on the three levels of inclusion: inclusive education sector dialogue, inclusive coalitions and alliances, and social inclusion and gender equality as thematic advocacy areas for grantees. • Information on a standing EOL working forum on inclusion and gender which is made up of a central focal point and regional representatives, to maintain ongoing dialogue and prioritisation of gender and inclusion issues.
Learning	Grantee Learning Plans (templates)	• Grantees document their approach to and/or need for learning or capacity building. They do so after they have done an internal reflection and a learning needs assessment with the EOL RMU. • Suggest a range of GESI themes for grantees to identify their learning and/ or capacity needs: gender transformative education, education in situations of crisis, and inclusion of marginalised groups.
	Regional Learning Plans	• Provide an overview of the contexts of grantees' learning plans and analysis and prioritisation of grantees' learning needs. • Gender-related issues, migration, education in emergencies (conflicts, natural disasters, climate change) are provided as examples of contextual issues, areas, challenges or opportunities that inform regional learning priorities.
	Global Learning Plan 2024 – 2027	• Reiterates that gender equality and social inclusion areas are focus of learning in EOL. • Outlines that social inclusion is often paired with gender equality but that it needs a specific focus as, despite improved school access, many children from marginalised groups face barriers to education.

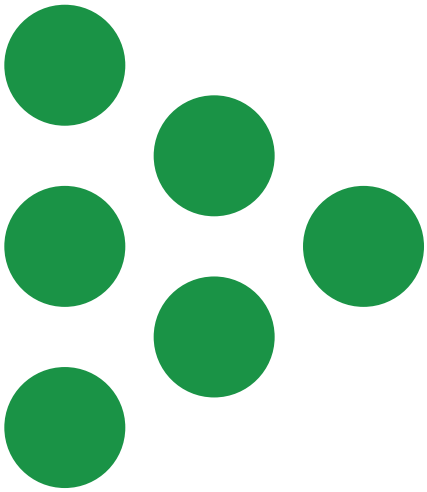
	Document / tool	Definition/mentions of Gender Equality/Social Inclusion
Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting	Results, Monitoring and Learning frameworks	• Concepts of 'inclusive' and 'gender responsive' education policies appear in the Overall Objective and Specific Objective 1 for OC1; but the corresponding indicators to measure 'gender responsive' education are not in the other two objectives for OC2 and OC3. • Outcome 1.1 measures the 'inclusivity of coalitions', in line with the definition of the Policy Guidance Note and refers to the Inclusivity Index for measurement. • In OC2 and OC3, mentions of 'inclusion' and 'gender equality' can be found only in outcomes 1.4, 2.4, and 3.5, related to Learning Collaboratives and outcome 3.2 related to capacity of transnational civil society alliances for policy advocacy and influence.
	Grantee reporting	Grantees submit narrative responses to GESI-related questions. • OC1 template asks whether a NEC has a policy on gender equality and for responses on the inclusion of special interest and marginalised groups. • OC3 template invites grantees to report on results achieved around social inclusion and gender equality, with a separate question for each.. • Includes a question on the level of gender responsiveness of any policy changes (high, medium or low).
	RMU to GMU reporting	• Same reporting template as GMU consolidated report (see next row). • In the "Cross-cutting issues" area grantees document RMU and EOL-supported approach and achievements in the promotion of gender equality and, separately, social inclusion.
	GMU consolidated report	• Grantees' GESI-related work on global and national policy changes; lessons learned; regional and global events; and publications are categorised by technical area including *Girls' right to education, Persons with disabilities right to education, Economically poor peoples´ right to education, Female adolescents' right to education, and Education in emergencies.* • When reporting grantees' global and national policy changes, there is a question asking How was gender equality and social inclusion integrated into the policy change. The 'lessons learned' area includes promoting GESI as one of the focus areas. • Narrative reporting allows for description of grantees' GESI-related successes and challenges in their work.
Funding applications	Proposal templates 2023 OC1 Call for Proposals	• Invite responses around the context for marginalised communities and the most urgent issues for gender equality. • Funding proposals are assessed based on their alignment with social inclusion principles.
	Proposal templates Thematic Fund to Strengthen Social Inclusion and Gender Equality 2025	• Grantees are signposted to the Policy Guidance Note.

	Document / tool	Definition/mentions of Gender Equality/Social Inclusion
OC1 Inclusivity	Inclusivity Index for NECs	• NECs are required to promote the right to education for marginalised groups. These include *Women and girls, Marginalised or illiterate young boys and girls (aged 15-24), People with disabilities, Discriminated ethnicity and castes groups, Internal Displaced/Refugees, and LGBTIA+ Groups.* • A binary yes / no response is required for questions around the inclusivity of the groups (grantees' board membership; whether they have at least one organisation that represents the groups). We analyse the Inclusivity Index in more detail in Box 3.
Other learning	EOL encourages the creation of Learning Collaboratives (groups of grantees from different OCs with common interests that aim to engage in peer learning) addressing gender and inclusion specifically, to develop synergies between groups of CSOs and to facilitate peer learning on failures and successes. Learning Collaboratives feature as outcomes in the three Specific Objectives, with mention of their role of promoting 'inclusion' and 'gender equality'.	

GESI-focused capacity building across all regions is embedded in EOL, including in learning frameworks and plans and through Regional Management Unit (RMU) support visits to build skills, better capture evidence on inclusion and gender equality and improve the inclusivity of organisations. A Global Gender and Inclusion Advisor has been appointed in June 2025 to strengthen inclusion and gender equality, supporting gender-transformative and inclusive practices and to systematise the generation of evidence across the programme (Newman et al., 2025).

In November 2024 EOL launched a specific call for proposals open to all existing grantees and aimed at funding activities intending to strengthen GESI across the portfolio. The 3.34M USD funding is now supporting 27 grantees across the different OCs to strengthen their work on gender and social inclusion (Anderson, 2025). This was the first GESI-specific call within the programme.

The remainder of this report examines social inclusion and gender equality as thematic advocacy areas for grantees. Our investigation focuses primarily on the five dimensions of marginalisation prioritised by the Policy Guidance Note. We recognise the limitation of focusing on a reduced number of factors. Exclusion factors are numerous and very context specific, hence any undertaking to cover them all would be unsuccessful. To reduce this limitation, we used an intersectional lens to analyse grantees' work. This allowed us to consider how different, overlapping forms of marginalisation increase barriers to education, including exclusion factors that are specific to each context.



2.3 Marginalised groups' access and learning outcomes in EOL countries

Reliable, disaggregated, and accessible data is fundamental for identifying inequities, advocating for inclusive reforms, and ensuring that no learner is left behind. Data plays a central role in guiding evidence-based advocacy strategies and ensuring that civil society engagement in education policy is meaningful and grounded in reality.

To examine the available quantitative evidence on learners' engagement in education in EOL countries, we used international education databases that include the most comprehensive disaggregated data available. Our aim was to understand the context in which EOL beneficiaries operate and to show patterns between regions, where relevant data exists, in terms of overall education attainment and education quality, where possible comparing results between marginalised groups. Consistently, with the available literature, we found that data about marginalised groups is fragmented in educational datasets and offers limited options to examine the intersectionality of exclusion factors (Odeh and Lach, 2024).

For the analysis of the challenges experienced by marginalised groups in education, we considered access to education and learning outcomes attainment, which serve as a proxy measure for education quality. We included all 63 countries or territories that have participated in at least one of the two EOL phases. Of these, 27 are included in the GPE's list of partner countries affected by fragility and conflict in the year 2025.

In the remainder of this section, we present our analysis of the data for all EOL countries by indicator and factor of marginalisation. In Appendix B we provide additional quantitative analysis of marginalised groups presented by EOL region, and access and learning indicators.

2.3.1 International education attainment and quality data in EOL countries

We first look at internationally comparable information to understand educational attainment and learning in EOL countries for all learners. Access to education in EOL countries reduces considerably between primary and secondary levels, as shown in Table 2, which breaks this down further by EOL region. The four EOL regions are: Asia and Pacific (AP), Horn, East and Southern Africa (HESA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and West and Central Africa (WCA). The overall figures show that 72% of young people have completed the primary level, and 55% have completed the lower secondary level. Almost one in five children of primary school age are not in school. The average number of years in education for people between 20 and 24 years is 10.1 years. To put this in perspective, the primary completion rate for upper middle-income countries is 98%, the lower secondary completion rate is 92%, 4% of children are out of school, and the average number of years of education is 12.3.

Table 2: Access outcomes by EOL region

EOL region	Completion rate (primary)	Completion rate (lower secondary)	Out-of-school children	Years of education
AP	85%	74%	12%	11.89
HESA	71%	52%	14%	9.85
LAC	83%	66%	5%	
WCA	58%	36%	29%	8.24
Total	**72%**	**55%**	**18%**	**10.14**

*Note: the blank cell indicates that data availability varies greatly across regions, for more detailed information see **Appendix A**.*
Source: WIDE database. Totals are calculated unweighted

The percentage of out-of-school children presents variation between the different EOL regions. LAC has only 5% of children of primary school age currently not in school, while in WCA almost 30% are not enrolled in school. Finally, there are also disparities across regions in the average number of years of education: AP, the region with the highest average years of education (11.89) has over 3.5 years more years, on average, than WCA (8.24), the region with the lowest figure. As shown in Table 3, FCAC territories have a lower primary completion rate (than non-FCAC countries (69% and 74% respectively, 5 percentage points lower). Similarly, the lower secondary completion rate is seven percentage points lower in FCAC countries. More children are out-of-school in FCAC than in non-FCAC territories: while one in seven in non-FCAC contexts are not going to school, the figure is almost one in four in FCAC areas.

Young people in FCAC settings spend, on average, one more year in education than in non-FCAC countries, as seen in Table 3. However, only 13 countries have valid outcomes, so it could be the case that only countries with higher values are present in the data.

Table 3: Access outcomes by FCAC status

FCAC status	Completion rate (primary)	Completion rate (lower secondary)	Out-of-school children	Mean years of education
Non-FCAC	74%	57%	14%	9.74
FCAC	69%	50%	24%	10.75

Note: Countries with available data for primary completion rate: 30 non-FCAC and 21 FCAC; lower secondary completion rate: 30 non-FCAC and 21 FCAC; out of school children: 31 non-FCAC and 23 FCAC; mean years of education: 20 FCAC and 13 non-FCAC. Totals are calculated unweighted.

Source: WIDE database

Learning data in EOL countries show low achievement levels. The proportion of children passing the lowest level in mathematics is less than 40% and in reading is 50%.[1] These numbers reduce to less than 20% in the second level of mathematics, and less than 25% in the second level of reading. However, there are some exceptions, like Vietnam, which has shown an outstanding performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (See for instance, Dang et al., 2023).

Between EOL's regions, Asia Pacific is again the region with the best results for most learning outcomes (Table 4). Almost half of the test takers passed the lowest level in mathematics, and almost 60% passed the lowest level in reading. WCA shows the lowest performance: 32% achieved the first level in mathematics, and 41% the first level in reading. Almost two-thirds (63%) of students in HESA achieved the lowest level in reading.

The figures for the second levels are generally lower: on average, less than one in five children passed the second level in mathematics, and less than one in four in reading (Table 4). However, data availability is limited: LAC has no learning data, no HESA country has data on the second level on any subject, and in AP, data for the second reading level is available for only three countries (see Appendix A).

1 *The learning achievement indicators at the end of primary for mathematics/ reading refer to the percentage of adolescents of lower secondary school age taking part in a mathematics/ reading assessment. We used the first two of the four levels of increasing difficulty included in the indicator.*

Table 4: Learning outcomes by EOL region

EOL region	Mathematics lowest level	Reading lowest level	Mathematics second level	Reading second level
AP	47%	58%	31%	34%
HESA	40%	63%		
WCA	32%	41%	11%	19%
Total	**38%**	**50%**	**17%**	**23%**

*Note: the blank cells indicate that data availability varies greatly across regions, for more detailed information see **Appendix A**.*
Source: WIDE database. Totals are calculated unweighted.

There is also a difference in learning outcomes between non-FCAC and FCAC countries, as shown in Table 5. In the lowest level in mathematics the difference is 6 percentage points, with non-FCAC countries outperforming FCAC countries. The results in the lowest level in reading show a bigger difference (13 percentage points). Data availability is a major limitation for analysing learning outcomes. The concern is that there is not enough information at the country level to have an accurate idea of the outcomes, and also that there are intrinsic differences in terms of resources between the countries that have learning data and the ones that do not, potentially leading to drawing incorrect conclusions.

Table 5: Learning outcomes by FCAC status

FCAC status	Mathematics lowest level	Reading lowest level
Non-FCAC	41%	55%
FCAC	35%	42%

Note: Countries with available data for lowest level in: mathematics 16 non-FCAC, 12 FCAC; in reading: 15 non-FCAC:, 11 FCAC.
Source: WIDE database. Totals are calculated unweighted

2.3.2 Access and learning for marginalised groups

Marginalised groups, including children with disabilities, girls, ethnic minorities, and those in conflict-affected areas, face significant barriers to accessing quality education. Our analysis delves into access and learning data by marginalisation characteristics in all EOL countries. In this section we look at educational attainment and learning data in EOL countries, disaggregated by gender, location, disability and wealth. Where possible, we look at intersectionality, for instance, girls who are in rural settings, or children in disadvantaged economic groups in urban areas.

Previous analyses of international data show persistent barriers, especially in terms of disability. For instance, while children without disabilities have experienced substantial gains in primary and secondary school completion rates in the last few decades, children with disabilities have not benefitted to the same extent. Many children with disabilities do not enrol in school, and the difference in primary completion rates between children with and without disabilities increased in the last decades from a few percentage points to 15.4 percentage points for girls and 17.6 for boys, respectively (Male and Wodon, 2017). Similarly, the gap in secondary completion rate increased to 10.4 percentage points for girls, and 14.5 for boys.

Internationally, significant progress has been achieved in terms of boys' and girls' attainment in education. The global educational attainment gap by gender stands at 94.9%, showing that women are still lagging behind compared to men (Pal et al., 2024). However, this figure changes between the different regions: at the top of the equality index is North America, with 100%, signalling no gap between women and men. At the bottom of the scale is Sub-Saharan Africa, with a figure of 86.7%, which is significantly lower than the second to last, which is Southern Asia (94.5%).

2.3.3 Access to education

Available data in EOL countries shows that marginalised groups access education differently. We compare rates of access to education across regions, for each marginalised group with relevant available data.

Gender

Girls are completing primary school at a higher rate than boys (73% for girls and 70% for boys), but the difference disappears by the end of lower secondary (54% for both). The out-of-school rate is the same between groups (18%), but boys complete an additional almost 0.6 years of education compared to girls (10.4 and 9.8, respectively).

Rural and urban contexts

The difference in completion rates between children in rural and urban contexts is substantial, with children in rural settings finishing education levels at a lower rate. For primary school, the urban completion rate is 82%, while the rural rate is 65%. This gap between these groups also appears in lower secondary, with an urban rate of 66% and a rural rate of 45%. In terms of children and school enrolment, around one in five children in rural contexts are not enrolled (21%), compared to one in ten children in urban areas (11%). Lastly, there is a 2.3 year gap in the years of completed education (11.4 years in urban contexts compared with 9.1 years in rural areas).

Wealth

Wealth shows significant differences amongst groups. Wealth is split into five groups, where the group labelled quintile 1 is the poorest, and quintile 5 is the richest. The primary completion rate ranges from 52% for the poorest quintile to 88% for the richest; a striking 36 percentage points difference. In lower secondary this gap increases to 42 percentage points: the completion rate for the poorest group is 33%, while the richest group has a rate of 75%. The out-of-school indicator follows the same pattern, with the poorest quintile being more likely to be excluded (29% not in school), compared to the richest (8%). Finally, the gap in years of education is almost 4.2 years, with children in the richest quintiles learning longer than those in poorer quintiles, almost doubling the difference that we found by location.

Disability[2]

Children with disabilities are slightly more likely to be out of school than their peers (there is a 3% difference; 14% for those without disabilities, and 17% for children with disabilities). The difference in attendance at primary school is also 3 percentage points (78% and 81%, respectively). Both groups have lower attendance at lower secondary level, and the difference increases to 8 percentage points, where the attendance rates are 46% for children with disabilities and 54% for children without. Finally, 8% of children without disabilities have never attended school, compared to just over 10% for children with disabilities.

2 *For disabilities, we used the UNICEF database, which has more comparable indicators than the WIDE database used for gender, wealth and location. For more detail, see* ***Appendix A****.*

Intersectionality

The intersectionality of multiple forms of marginalisation compounds the barriers these groups face in accessing quality education. Children who are in the poorest quintile and in rural areas underperform every other combination in the four variables presented. Decomposing the gap between location and wealth effect shows that rural children in the poorest group have a primary completion rate 38 percentage points lower than urban children in the richest group. This difference is largely driven by the effect of wealth (34 out of 38 percentage points), rather than differences in location between urban and rural children (4 out of 38 percentage points). The other three variables show a similar pattern, where the variation stems mainly from wealth and not from location.

2.3.4 Learning outcomes

When it comes to learning, our analysis shows that outcomes differ across marginalised groups, on average, across regions. We compare the scores between groups at the two lowest levels of proficiency in mathematics and reading, where relevant data is available.

Gender

Girls have a similar passing rate in the lowest level in mathematics as boys (39% and 38%, respectively), and better outcomes in reading (52% girls and 48% boys). Boys and girls perform the same in the second level in mathematics (17%), while slightly more girls pass reading than boys (24% for girls and 22% for boys).

Rural and urban contexts

Comparing the learning outcomes of children in rural and urban contexts tells a similar story to that of access outcomes: students in urban areas are passing the lowest level in mathematics at a rate 13 percentage points higher than their peers in rural contexts (33% and 46%, respectively). The gap in reading is 18 percentage points, with children in urban contexts performing better. The difference in the second levels of both subjects is also substantial (although scores are lower in general): while 13% of children in rural areas pass mathematics, 23% of children in urban contexts pass. In reading, children in urban areas also do better (34% pass) than their peers in rural areas (16%).

Wealth

Wealth is a determining factor for learning outcomes, similar to the results regarding access to education. The gap between the poorest group and the richest group is 22 percentage points in the lowest level in mathematics (30% and 52%, respectively), and 28 points in reading (38% and 66%). This gap remains significant in the second level of both subjects: 15 percentage points in mathematics and 24 in reading (in both cases the richest group outperform the poorest group).

Disability

There is insufficient availability of data across EOL countries to compare the learning outcomes for learners with disability.

Intersectionality

We analysed the results of the lowest level of learning in mathematics in terms of wealth and location, highlighting the intersectionality of barriers that marginalised groups face in accessing quality education. Children in rural contexts in the poorest quintile have a pass rate of 30%, while the richest children in urban areas have a pass rate of 55%. This 25 percentage point difference can be split by factors: 23 points come from wealth (this is the distance between the performance of the richest and poorest rural groups). The other two points come from location (the difference in results between the urban and rural richest children).

2.3.5 Reflections on global data trends in EOL countries

The analysis of the external quantitative data regarding EOL countries and territories shows that there is a data availability issue. Not all the countries have updated available data that allows us to understand their access and learning levels. This becomes even more salient when talking about learning performance, when around half of the countries do not have enough data.

Overall, access levels are low compared to upper middle-income countries, although there is variation within EOL regions and countries. AP is outperforming the other regions, except for out-of-school children, in which LAC has the lowest figures. Current FCAC data show, on average, lower access levels than non-FCAC countries.

Learning data in EOL countries also shows overall low-performance levels in mathematics and reading. AP leads in mathematics, and HESA in reading. However, the proportion of the children taking the assessment that can effectively pass the lowest level in each subject does not surpass 50% and these figures become even lower in the second difficulty level. Overall, FCAC territories have lower outcomes than non-FCAC territories.

According to the data analysed, women have the same or better results than men in terms of access and learning. Children in rural areas are at a disadvantage compared to their urban peers, but the highest gap usually comes from socioeconomic background. This factor is a strong driver of access and learning outcomes. Additionally, children with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from the educational system than their peers.

Key Takeaways

GESI is central in EOL. The programme recognises gender as part of broader social inclusion, though terminology varies across programme documents and reporting tools.

EOL focuses on five priority dimensions of exclusion: gender, disability, rurality/ remoteness, displacement (refugees/IDPs), and poverty, while acknowledging that intersectional marginalisation is broader and context-specific.

Three levels of inclusion guide EOL's approach: inclusive sector dialogue, inclusive coalitions, and thematic advocacy on gender and social inclusion.

Global data shows persistent inequalities in education. Access and learning remain low across EOL countries, particularly in FCAC, where primary and lower-secondary completion rates are substantially below non-FCAC.

Learning outcomes are weak. No more than half of learners across EOL countries reach basic proficiency in reading or mathematics; FCAC countries perform worse across all indicators.

Socioeconomic status is the strongest driver of exclusion, with large gaps in completion and learning between the poorest and richest households. Rurality and disability further compound disadvantage.

Children with disabilities face systemic exclusion across attendance, completion and likelihood of never attending school, though disability data remains sparse

Gender patterns vary by region. While girls often match or outperform boys in access to education and reading outcomes, gender gaps persist in some regions.

Data availability is a major limitation. Many EOL countries lack disaggregated, up-to-date data (especially on learning and disability) restricting the ability to track inclusion or understand complex patterns of marginalisation.



3. GESI as a thematic advocacy strategy in Education Out Loud's work

EOL supports national and regional education coalitions, transnational alliances, national civil society alliances and a global education coalition to mobilise citizens, influence policy processes, and enhance accountability mechanisms within the education sector. Our analysis shows that EOL grantees have engaged in strategic, multi-level advocacy to ensure that education policy and systems are inclusive. The programme also supports the generation of knowledge for guiding evidence-based advocacy strategies aimed at leaving no learner behind.

Our review of grantees' activity is organised around the following categories:

Policy achievements

Documenting concrete policy changes that resulted from advocacy efforts around gender and social inclusion.

Advocacy and awareness raising initiatives

Highlighting the various advocacy campaigns and efforts undertaken by civil society organisations in favour of different marginalised groups.

Learning collaboratives

Focusing on knowledge transfer and capacity building that foster thematic learning around gender and social inclusion.

Research and evidence generation

Showcasing the studies and evidence produced to support advocacy efforts, with a particular focus on work around **locally-generated data** to fill gaps in the available evidence on the inclusion of marginalised groups in education.

Global and regional events

Examining knowledge sharing and collaborative efforts focused on gender and inclusion across regions.

This categorisation serves for illustrative purposes, as often there is a strong interlinkage between the different types of efforts. For instance, policy change is strongly linked to advocacy efforts as well as learning and evidence. The examples below illustrate the diversity of EOL grantees' work across topics and territories where EOL-supported organisations engage in diverse efforts focused on eliminating the barriers to education for marginalised groups, which are often context specific. The examples in Box 2 (in Section 1), and Boxes 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 are summaries; the full versions and research methodology are available in the accompanying Case Study Booklet (Lopes and Gambhir, 2026)

3.1 Policy achievements

EOL grantees' advocacy strategies, knowledge generation and participation in working groups aim to influence global, regional and national education policies to incorporate inclusive education principles, as well as foregrounding education for all in global and regional events.

EOL grantees have influenced 11 policy changes at regional and global levels since 2022. For instance, in 2025, members of the Tax-Ed Alliance, supported by EOL, raised the importance of achieving structural change to support gender responsive financing for inclusive public education and other essential services leading to the Compromiso de Sevilla, which is the outcome document for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, a United Nations facilitated intergovernmental process.. The document includes strong language calling for policy measures that promote gender-responsive tax systems and public spending—an important area for continued advocacy.

Moreover, since 2020, EOL has supported a total of 245 national policy changes across 51 countries, of which 23 are in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (see Table 6). We analysed these following the classification of EOL reporting, and we found that 39 policy changes (16%) are associated with categories of marginalised groups such as gender (13), disabilities (17), and people with an economic disadvantage (9).[3] Another policy change, recorded under 'young men and women's right to education' can be classified as gender inclusion as well.

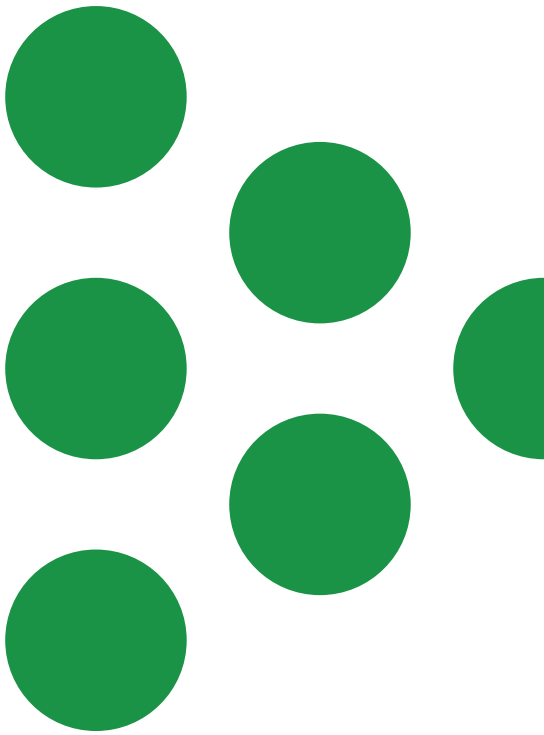
EOL's own research reports that in the period July 2023 to July 2024, 42% of the policy changes had a strong inclusion aspect, directly targeting an inclusion issue or mainstreaming inclusion into the policy (Edmond, 2025). These changes target different types of marginalised groups for instance youth, vulnerable children, women and girls, out-of-school children, impoverished and rural communities and people with disabilities (Edmond, 2025).

Table 6: National policy changes

FCAC status	# changes	# countries
AP	81	15
HESA	62	18
LAC	4	2
WCA	41	14

Source: EOL Consolidated Report October 2025

Internal EOL documents note that due to the set-up of the reporting, policy achievements seem to be mainly recorded under categories like gender and disabilities. However, grantees' work targets a broader range of marginalised groups (Edmond, 2025). These include LGBTQIA+, ethnic minorities and refugees, for which policy change may be less forthcoming and straightforward and hence not captured by the EOL's current reporting system (Edmond, 2025). An example of this is the Policy and Implementing Guidelines for Bilingual Education established to enhance the quality of education for the semi-nomadic ethnic and national minorities Kazakh and Tuvan children advocated for by the All for Education! National Civil Society Coalition (AFE) in Mongolia (see Box 5).



3 *The GMU report classifies policy changes in 11 technical areas. Four of these technical areas can be directly mapped into marginalised groups: 'Girls' right to education' and 'Female adolescents right to education (aged 12-17)', 'Persons with disabilities right to education', 'Economically poor people's right to education'. The last technical area, named 'Other area' can also include policy changes related to marginalised groups. In EOL reporting, Policy changes can be attributed to one area only.*

Box 5: Bilingual education policy reform for ethnic minority Kazakh and Tuvan children

The grantee All for Education (AFE) advocated for over 15 years for policy guidelines on improving the quality of education for ethnic minority Kazakh and Tuvan children in the western provinces of Mongolia. In 2025, their advocacy work finally led to the Policy and Implementing Guidelines for Bilingual Education. The policy spans a wide range of aspects of bilingual education for ethnic minority children, including curriculum development, textbook creation, teacher pre-service and in-service training, dictionaries, examinations, digital inclusion and teacher exchanges.

A 2011 study by the Mongolian Education Alliance found significant inequalities in education access, quality, and funding affecting ethnic minority children, particularly those from the Kazakh community. The research identified language of instruction as a key structural barrier. Many children entered school with limited proficiency in either Mongolian or Kazakh due to low preschool participation and a lack of bilingual learning materials. Other issues included inadequate teacher preparation and the absence of culturally contextualised curricula in Kazakh schools.

Over more than a decade, AFE built a strong evidence base on the educational marginalisation of ethnic minority children through a combination of monitoring, evaluation, and participatory research. Activities included youth-led documentation of educational barriers and rights violations, monitoring of minority-language textbook quality and distribution, and action research on ethnicity-based discrimination in schools. The evidence generated informed AFE's advocacy work and was widely disseminated through publications on research findings and those on education law revisions.

AFE's advocacy for bilingual education faced resistance. In 2021, media coverage of its work on triggered discriminatory and hostile online reactions, reflecting deep-rooted prejudice towards ethnic and linguistic minorities in Mongolia. Despite these challenges, AFE continued its advocacy by working closely with government bodies, research institutions, and parliamentarians, while repeatedly submitting evidence-based policy recommendations. The organisation also used national and international accountability mechanisms to highlight violations of the right to education. These sustained efforts contributed to the establishment of a Ministry of Education working group on bilingual education policy in 2025, which included three AFE representatives, thus enabling continued monitoring of the issue.



3.2 Advocacy and awareness raising initiatives

Grantees have strategically advocated for inclusive education across various dimensions of marginalisation. Disability-focused advocacy has successfully leveraged coalition-building and transnational partnerships to influence national policy frameworks, as evidenced in East Africa and Southeast Asia. Gender-focused advocacy has pursued dual tracks: promoting systemic policy reforms for girls' access while simultaneously addressing the gender-based violence, and challenging restrictive gender norms affecting boys' participation. This approach recognises gender norms and stereotypes as a dynamic social construct.

Finance-focused advocacy has concentrated on eliminating economic barriers through strategic targeting of institutional policies (fee abolition), protective measures (anti-discrimination provisions) and inclusive planning of resources (gender-responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming). These efforts reflect an understanding that economic exclusion often operates through indirect mechanisms that require multi-level policy interventions. There have been many efforts focused on raising awareness about indigenous, rural and displaced groups facing marginalisation. At times, this has strengthened direct representation of marginalised voices in policy dialogue, reflecting a shift from advocacy on behalf of these communities to advocacy by and with them.

Advocacy in FCAC has increasingly focused on connecting immediate humanitarian responses with longer-term systemic reforms, particularly in creating flexible pathways for out-of-school children and young people. This represents an important evolution beyond crisis-oriented approaches towards sustainable system transformation in challenging environments (see Box 6).

Box 6: The formal inclusion of internally displaced persons in Somalia's TVET planning



Education For All Somalia (EFASOM) works in an environment where a generation of older children in Somalia have never stepped into a classroom due to years of conflict, drought and displacement. In 2023, EFASOM succeeded in advocating for the formal inclusion of displaced adolescents and youth within the remit of Somalia's newly re-established technical and vocational education and training (TVET) technical working group. The coalition's advocacy supports adolescents aged 15-18 who have missed out on basic primary education and youth aged 19-25 who require immediate vocational skills to enter the labour market.

The grantee develops evidence-based advocacy through research and community engagement. It analyses advocacy reports and education financing data to identify funding gaps and barriers affecting marginalised groups. This research highlights critical shortages of training facilities and qualified staff for TVET programmes, limited access to vocational training due to financial constraints, and the negative impact of conflict and instability on education access and quality. EFASOM uses qualitative methods including KAP surveys in IDP camps, as well as interviews and case studies with learners and families to understand both systemic challenges and lived experiences. These findings reveal how poverty, displacement, and orphanhood create significant barriers to education and training opportunities.

EFASOM has advocated for pathways that enabled over 100,000 graduates of United States Agency for International Development-funded Accelerated Basic Education (ABE) programmes to transition into TVET or formal education. A key achievement has been supporting the development of Somalia's unified national TVET curriculum, which aims to standardise training and provide recognised certification for ABE graduates.

As Somalia rolls out its unified TVET curriculum, EFASOM plans to monitor its accessibility and effectiveness, generating lessons that could inform vocational education reforms in other crisis-affected contexts.

3.3 Learning collaboratives

Learning collaboratives have emerged as essential mechanisms for knowledge transfer and capacity building between grantees from different OCs with common interests. EOL has facilitated 42 learning collaboratives since 2020 that provided tailored capacity-building opportunities to grantees. These regional platforms facilitated either by grantees, regional learning partners, regional coalitions or GCE, and supported by RMUs, are increasingly structured around thematic priorities, including for the promotion of gender and inclusion, rather than geographic areas alone.

These structures show increasing potential for action, moving from information sharing towards enhanced collective capacity to advocate for gender equality in education and in some instances, joint advocacy planning and coordinated implementation. They have served as powerful platforms for peer learning, knowledge exchange and capacity building among civil society organisations on inclusive education and equity strategies fostering strategic communication and coalition-building, or for the exchange of best practices and strategic approaches among grantees, as the case of Cabo Verde's NEC illustrates well (see Box 7). Many of them focus on GESI-related themes within regions (see Box 8).

Box 7: Peer learning through ReLus strengthened advocacy for inclusive education in Cabo Verde

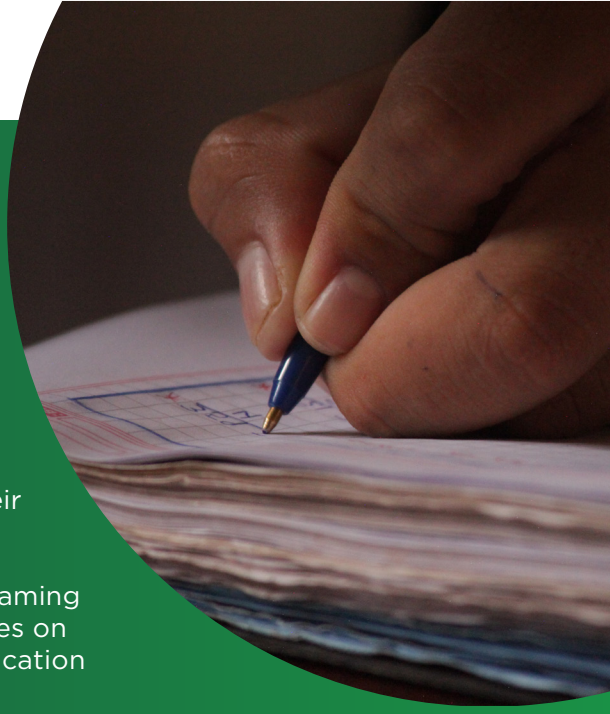
For Cabo Verde's grantee, the NEC Rede Nacional da Campanha de Educação Para Todos, Cabo Verde (RNCEPT-CV), participation in the Lusophone Network for the Right to Education (ReLus) enhanced the coalition's advocacy for inclusive education for learners with special educational needs, a right that lacked a legal basis in Cabo Verde until 2024. Facilitated by the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education (a regional learning partner to EOL), ReLus acts as a learning collaborative for Portuguese-speaking education coalitions. Through it, RNCEPT-CV exchanged experiences with peer organisations from other countries and gained practical insights into context-specific advocacy strategies.

The experiences shared by Mozambique's NEC, Movimento de Educação Para Todos (MEPT), were particularly influential. Inspired by them, RNCEPT-CV broadened support for its own agenda by engaging influential figures from across the Cabo Verdean society, including academics, artists, social activists, youth representatives, former ministers of education and first ladies. RNCEPT-CV notices that this engagement helped amplify the coalition's message and strengthen its legitimacy.

The grantee explained that participation in ReLus improved the organisation and strategic orientation of RNCEPT-CV's advocacy, while solidifying its credibility with decision-makers and partners. These gains supported the coalition's long-running efforts to secure a legal framework to include learners with special educational needs in Cabo Verde's education system.

In 2024, the country adopted Decree Law No 9 of 29 February 2024, formally establishing this and guaranteeing fee-free education for these learners. While this achievement reflected years of sustained advocacy and evidence gathering, RNCEPT-CV identified peer learning through ReLus as an important contributor to its ability to influence policy. The learning collaborative helped translate regional knowledge exchange into practical advocacy strategies that advanced social inclusion in education in Cabo Verde.





Box 8: Examples of learning collaboratives focused on GESI areas

GESI themes are reflected within learning collaboratives across all EOL regions, however with a different emphasis on the topics in specific regions.

For instance, in LAC, the Gender Working Group of the Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE) aims to sensitise grantees in gender issues to raise their capacities in the area and includes many of CLADE's members. In AP, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) learning collaborative on Gender Mainstreaming in Education includes all the 17 NECs from the region and focuses on capacity raising to advocate for gender responsive national education sector plans.

In HESA, there is a learning collaborative focused on social inclusion with 20 grantees participating in a dedicated platform that focuses on any forms of exclusion. The collaborative facilitates joint work to advance inclusive education systems and advocate for the rights of marginalised groups.

Additionally, grantees are also participants in GCE's learning communities. Within GESI themes, there is a specific community focused on gender and also one on inclusive education and early childhood.

Some collaboratives transcend traditional regional boundaries to address shared contextual challenges. The Arab Network for Popular Education is planning to launch regional learning collaboratives in 2026 focusing on refugees, children with disabilities, and girls in rural or crisis-affected areas, identifying inclusion and gender barriers, amplifying community perspectives thus contributing to inform advocacy for more inclusive and gender-responsive education policies.

Learning collaboratives also strategically use cultural and artistic approaches (theatre, indigenous language materials), with a growing recognition that technical solutions alone are insufficient without culturally responsive implementation strategies. In AP, a learning collaborative uses inclusive theatre as a form of education for children and young people with disabilities. It was initiated by a grantee in Kyrgyzstan, and includes NECs from Tajikistan, Moldova and Uzbekistan, aiming to support learning and joint reflection on advocacy efforts to promote inclusive education.

3.4 Research and evidence generation

Research initiatives have strengthened evidence-based advocacy through methodological innovations that mainstream marginalised perspectives. Participatory approaches involving communities, as in the case of a Bolivian OC2 grantee (see Box 9) represent a significant advancement beyond traditional expert-led studies. In several cases, youth researchers have been at the forefront of these studies. The strategic dissemination of findings directly into policy processes demonstrates increasing sophistication in using evidence for influence rather than merely documentation.

Box 9: Documenting indigenous education practices to strengthen their implementation in Bolivia

In Bolivia, the alliance between Fundación Privada de Fieles Centro de Multi Servicios Educativos (CEMSE) and Fundación Action Cultural Loyola (ACLO), which are an EOL grantee, harnessed research and evidence generation to advance more equitable and culturally responsive education for Indigenous learners. CEMSE-ACLO involved many local participants throughout the research phases and prioritised indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Between 2022 and 2023, the grantees captured and synthesised local approaches to implementing Quechua, Aymara and Guarani curricula by documenting the knowledge and experiences of indigenous elders, parents, teachers, students, school board members, education officials and CEMSE-ACLO staff. The approach drew on key indigenous knowledge perspectives underpinning the study, including intercultural, intracultural, plurilingual and feminist approaches to education and research, following the influence of indigenous organisations on Bolivian political life and education policy since the mid-2000s. Also importantly, the research was led by practitioners themselves, who oversaw its conceptual, technical and logistical dimensions.

Responding to gaps in guidance, capacity and resources for Indigenous education in Bolivia, the study focused on pedagogy, learning materials, teacher professional development and school governance. It included mainstream public schools across pre-school, primary and secondary education in urban and rural settings. It took place as part of a wider EOL-funded initiative to evaluate the implementation of regional curricula in Bolivia.

A methodology guide published in 2024 disseminated the findings. Many of these are also accessible through a digital repository. Together, these resources compile examples of indigenous educational practices and offer educators and school leaders practical ways to apply them.

CEMSE-ACLO reports that the work has attracted support from local, regional, national and international education stakeholders and informed school actors beyond those directly involved in the study, thereby broadening the uptake of Indigenous education practices across Bolivia and beyond.



Cross-cutting research examining the intersections between different forms of marginalisation reflects growing recognition of how exclusion factors compound in practice. This intersectional approach generates a more nuanced understanding of barriers and enables more targeted intervention strategies.

Grantees have undertaken participatory budget analysis and monitoring exercises of domestic resource allocations and research on gender-responsive budgeting. This work has generated actionable evidence to support advocacy on education financing by identifying gaps and shortcomings in policies and highlighting gaps that disadvantage marginalised groups.

Research in fragile contexts has expanded beyond problem identification to document innovative local solutions and adaptation strategies, providing practical models for implementation in challenging environments. This solution-oriented approach represents an important evolution in the evidence base for inclusive education in crisis-affected regions.

3.4.1 Locally-generated data for advocacy

Grantees' systematic data collection and multi-level monitoring efforts have been instrumental to keep track of education policies and ensure accountability at local, national, and regional levels, compensating for the lack of reliable, disaggregated and accessible learner data, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Locally-led initiatives have tracked education budgets, assessed policy implementation, and identified gaps in service delivery for marginalised groups, thus improving accountability and holding duty bearers to account.

School budget noticeboards and complaint boxes have been introduced to promote transparency and feedback mechanisms. These initiatives have helped report service gaps and resource misuse to local education authorities monitoring service delivery and educational expenditure in line with local needs.

Citizen surveys have documented differences in the participation in education of children from marginalised and displaced backgrounds, including in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Citizen-led school monitoring, participatory audits and surveys, and community scorecards, have not only critically involved local communities in monitoring education policy implementation and accountability but also elevated marginalised voices in education (see Box 10).



Box 10: Improving access to data to monitor the implementation of Liberia's girls' education policy

Helping Our People Excel (HOPE), leads the Educate HER consortium with Paramount Young Women's Initiative in Liberia. Since 2021, the consortium works to improve the availability of and access to timely data, with a key focus on girls' retention and completion of school, by supporting the government in maintaining a quality education management information system across 15 counties.

The HOPE-led consortium is involved in quarterly monitoring of the National Policy on Girls' Education (NPGE) 2021-2026. It works with the government and significantly, local actors, such as parent-teacher associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), are also engaged in the process. Furthermore, local rural women in the 15 counties where HOPE works are trained and mentored to become advocates for girls' education. They are equipped to monitor schools and track and raise awareness of girls' participation, which allows them to engage with the local government and participate in decision-making spaces to help improve educational outcomes in their communities. Therefore, HOPE benefits from strengthened citizen monitoring capacity.

With these local actors, at the school level, the grantee monitors girls' school retention and completion by conducting quarterly school visits to track enrolment and attendance over time. It also assesses factors affecting attendance, including gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health issues, support for pregnant students, and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. During these visits, local teams engage with school leaders, teachers, and students to identify policy implementation gaps, which are then flagged to the Ministry of Education. HOPE also works at the national level to contribute to improved school environments for girls. For example, with support from the National Teachers Association of Liberia, HOPE introduced a school record-book system to track girls' attendance, retention, and completion rates. The resulting data informed discussions with education stakeholders and helped advance NPGE measures supporting pregnant students' school retention, while also encouraging the MoE to recruit more female teachers.

HOPE report that their involvement with EOL since 2021 has strengthened its visibility, credibility, and influence within Liberia's education sector, enabling it to continue expanding its advocacy for girls' education.



3.5 Global and Regional events

EOL supports grantees in leveraging global and regional forums to raise awareness and shape dialogue on education marginalisation (see Boxes 11-12 for examples of initiatives). Grantees have used regional and global events to elevate the voices of indigenous communities and forefront dialogue on gender-transformative education, economically disadvantaged, advocating for greater equity and representation in national education systems, reinforcing cross-country collaboration on sustainable education reforms.

In FCAC, grantee engagements have helped secure recognition of FCAC-specific needs within global education forums, facilitating international collaboration for emergency response planning and funding alignment such as implementation of emergency learning solutions and education resilience particularly when it comes to vulnerable groups.

Civil society participation in high-level forums shows strategic evolution from general awareness-raising to advocacy on specific policy mechanisms, and particularly targeted to financing frameworks and implementation safeguards. This represents an important shift from visibility-focused engagement towards substantive policy influence in regional and global governance structures. The lessons learned by more experienced CSOs have then often fed back to other EOL's organisations. For instance, GCE[4] and ASPBAE held a capacity building workshop on spotlight reports for the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2022.

Box 11: Grantees' engagement in regional and global events

Latin American regional coalition CLADE, through its participation in UNESCO's Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) in 2022, contributed to shaping the content of the Marrakech Framework for Action, which urges UNESCO Member States to ensure equitable access to quality, inclusive education for all adults.

In Somalia, the NEC participated in the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) continental research symposium aimed at promoting dialogue and learning among national policy actors, researchers and practitioners. The symposium focused on evidence, research and strategies to improve children's learning outcomes. As a result of its participation, the grantee recognised the importance of conducting innovative, country-level research to strengthen their evidence-based advocacy.



4 *The GCE, with Regional Coalitions, annually support a selection of NECs to participate in the HLPF process. Holding workshops and preparation meetings for the preparation of spotlight reports is one form of such support.*

Box 12: GCE's collaborative model supports NECs to shape global agendas

GCE's coordinated advocacy with the regional coalitions Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA), Africa Network Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA), ASPBAE and CLADE amplifies national CSOs' priorities and supports their influence in global education policy fora.

In 2022, regional workshops co-convened by GCE and the regional coalitions brought together NEC representatives to strengthen skills in education financing and engagement with Local Education Groups (LEG). The NECs stressed the need for practical tools to support strategic engagement in decision-making spaces and asked for GCE to prepare a monitoring and evaluation framework and a LEG handbook.

Also in 2022, GCE, alongside ACEA, ASPBAE and CLADE, helped bring national CSOs' voices to the Transforming Education Summit. These were integrated into the Education Financing Action Track 5 paper, which positioned education as a contributor to sustainable development and was co-authored by GCE and the three regional coalitions. GCE and ASPBAE then brought these contributions to the 2023 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC) SDG4 and Sherpa group meeting, where they secured commitments from Member States that directly impact national education policy processes: advancing decisions taken in intergovernmental processes and ensuring regular participation of CSOs and teachers in education policy development.

GCE also worked directly with national CSOs. In 2023, it supported 25 NECs and youth organisations to strengthen their voice on equitable financing and conduct advocacy actions in their countries under the theme 'Investing in a Just World: Decolonising Education Financing Now!'. These initiatives focused on global education financing commitments and on strengthening national budget processes, particularly within the framework of the Southern African Development Community Model Law on Public Financial Management.



3.6 Common barriers to grantees' work

Despite promising local efforts, grantees supported by EOL face significant barriers in their work on gender and social inclusion. Collectively, these challenges emphasise how supporting GESI work requires partnerships, sustained political engagement, cultural sensitivity, and systemic approaches that address power imbalances within educational systems and broader societies.

Resources to support long-term advocacy efforts

While EOL provides vital support for grantees' work, making long-lasting change often requires far-reaching resources. For instance, evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue necessitates sustained funding, yet many organisations have limited resources to support longer term advocacy efforts, including the generation and management of longitudinal data for evidence-based influencing on educational access of marginalised groups, particularly those groups that have been underrepresented and under researched such as migrants, refugees and LGBTQIA+.

Limited political support and/or national legal frameworks

UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM) found that worldwide only about 50% of countries have general or inclusive education laws focused on gender equality and less than three quarters of countries have laws on learners with disabilities (UNESCO, 2024b). The lack of institutional frameworks can stimulate grantees to advocate for these rights, however, without wider political support grantees' work might not achieve the expected change at national and global levels. In some cases, at national level, limited government collaboration can restrict CSOs' access to national datasets, for instance due to bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Specific technical expertise on social inclusion and intersectionality

Technical expertise regarding specific issues concerning learners at risk of exclusion (for example, health-related accommodations for certain disabilities) or ways to monitor inclusion, can be a challenge for coalitions who struggle for resources or are early on in their social inclusion work. A meaningful measurement of inclusion outcomes needs to go beyond access metrics. For instance, capturing and analysing qualitative dimensions of inclusion, such as sense of belonging, discrimination reduction, and power redistribution, requires evaluation approaches that many CSOs lack the resources or methodological expertise to implement effectively.

Furthermore, while organisations increasingly recognise the importance of intersectional approaches, operationalising this understanding presents profound methodological challenges. Developing interventions that effectively document and address multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities requires sophisticated analysis and programme design beyond the capacity of many organisations.

Limited access to disaggregated data

Limited government collaboration often restricts CSO access to national datasets, citing data privacy concerns or bureaucratic inefficiencies. Where data is accessible, it is often not available with disaggregation regarding disability, gender, and displacement. Scaling efforts to generate local data requires stronger institutional support, enhanced data literacy, and sustained funding. Some coalitions lack technical expertise in data analysis and visualisation, limiting their ability to analyse and present compelling evidence to policymakers.

Entrenched social norms and resistance

CSOs can encounter resistance from communities, religious institutions, and sometimes governments when challenging deeply embedded social norms around gender, disability, and other dimensions of exclusion. This resistance can manifest itself in both passive non-implementation of policies and active opposition to transformative and intersectional inclusion initiatives.

Shrinking civic space

In many contexts, increasing restrictions on CSOs limit advocacy possibilities and stakeholder engagement, especially when marginalised groups might be facing prejudice and negative social norms. Additionally, politicisation of inclusion and government sensitivity to criticism, particularly regarding marginalised groups' rights, can create tensions between maintaining access to policy dialogue and pursuing transformative advocacy agendas.

Key Takeaways

EOL grantees use advocacy as a core strategy to advance GESI, working across policy reform, evidence generation, awareness raising and advocacy, and participation to learning collaboratives, and global and regional events.

Grantees contributed to 245 national policy changes (2020–2025) and 11 policy changes at regional and global levels (2022-2025), including in gender, disability, education in emergencies, and economic disadvantage. Some of these changes relate to changes tackling exclusion.

Advocacy and awareness raising spans different dimensions of marginalisation, including gender equality, disability rights, education financing, and barriers faced by rural, migrant, refugee, and indigenous populations. Grantees increasingly promote advocacy by and with marginalised groups.

Learning collaboratives strengthen knowledge sharing across countries and regions, many focusing directly on GESI themes. Collaboratives are becoming more action-oriented, moving from information exchange to coordinated advocacy and shared strategies for promoting GESI.

Grantees generate and use evidence, often locally collected, increasingly effectively to inform policy and hold authorities accountable. Locally-generated data helps address national data gaps, especially in FCAC where official datasets are limited, and community-led monitoring amplifies marginalised voices in policy processes.

Grantees also leverage global and regional platforms, such as UNESCO and other UN events, KIX symposiums, and GCE alliances, to elevate GESI issues and influence international policy agendas.

Grantees face major barriers in advancing GESI, including limited resources, weak or unsupportive legal frameworks, gaps in technical expertise, restricted access to disaggregated data, entrenched social norms, and shrinking civic space, all of which hinder sustained, evidence-based and transformative inclusion work.



4. Conclusions

EOL has deepened its commitment to gender equality and social inclusion.

Since the 2022 Mid-Term Review, the Policy Guidance Note on Inclusion and Gender Equality has provided a clearer, unified framework that now guides grantee action, and GESI considerations are built into proposal templates, outcome indicators and reporting formats.

What this means: the foundations for a stronger, more consistent approach to GESI are now in place; the task ahead is to apply them consistently across the programme.

EOL's GESI terminology is used inconsistently across its key documents.

Framings vary between 'inclusion and gender equality', 'gender and inclusion' and 'gender equality and social inclusion'; in reporting instruments gender and social inclusion are treated as separate areas. This mirrors the diversity of framing and practice that grantees themselves face.

What this means: inconsistent framing makes it harder to compare progress across grantees and to give targeted support, which is why harmonising GESI terminology is our first recommendation to EOL.

Tracking of social inclusion does not fully capture the spectrum of marginalisation or its intersectionality.

Framing inclusion through fixed dimensions of exclusion, together with data approaches that do not systematically record information on marginalised groups, limit the ability to capture initiatives reaching learners who face several disadvantages at once, including gender, disability, poverty, displacement and rural disadvantage.

What this means: learners facing overlapping disadvantages risk being missed in monitoring. EOL and learning partners need data systems and reporting that can capture intersectionality and guide where support is prioritised.

Global data shows persistent inequalities in access and learning across EOL countries.

Progress towards SDG 4 is uneven, with wide gaps between regions, between fragile and conflict-affected contexts and other countries, and between advantaged and disadvantaged groups within countries. Socioeconomic status is the strongest driver of exclusion, with rurality, disability and conflict deepening disadvantage. Gaps in disaggregated data continue to limit monitoring.

What this means: the scale and pattern of exclusion confirm where advocacy and data efforts are most needed, and underline the value of locally generated, disaggregated data.

Grantees have driven measurable change in education policy.

Between 2020 and 2025 they influenced 245 national policy reforms across 51 countries, including in fragile contexts, alongside regional and global declarations promoting equity, spanning gender equality, disability inclusion and poverty reduction.

What this means: EOL's model of supporting civil society advocacy is delivering concrete policy results that are worth sustaining and generate learning.

Grantees advance GESI through advocacy, knowledge and locally generated data.

Their work targets multiple dimensions of marginalisation through coalition-building, policy reform, community engagement and solutions for FCAC settings. Learning collaboratives support cross-country exchange using culturally responsive methods, research draws on participatory and intersectional approaches, and citizen-led monitoring and scorecards help bridge data gaps and hold authorities to account.

What this means: these practices foster positive change and nurture learning between the grantees, and support from EOL contributes to strengthening them.

Significant barriers continue to constrain grantees' work on gender and social inclusion.

These include limited funding for sustained advocacy, weak or unsupportive legal frameworks, gaps in technical expertise, restricted access to disaggregated data, entrenched social norms and shrinking civic space.

What this means: through addressing these barriers, EOL's facilitation and capacity-building add most value to grantees' work and should be continued.



5. Recommendations

These recommendations are addressed to EOL and CSOs and aim to offer advice on how to strengthen the support to the grantees' work on gender equality and social inclusion. Our analysis recommends focus on the following four main areas:

1 Build technical expertise on social inclusion and intersectionality

Technical expertise on specific issues, such as learners with disabilities or ways to monitor intersectionality of exclusion, can be a challenge for coalitions that are short of resources or early in their social inclusion work. Meaningful measurement needs to go beyond access, capturing qualitative dimensions such as belonging, reduced discrimination and shifts in power, which many CSOs lack the methods or resources to assess. Operationalising intersectionality is harder still, since interventions that address several overlapping disadvantages at once require sophisticated analysis and design.

For EOL: harmonise GESI terminology and frameworks across the programme. Inconsistent use of terms, definitions and tracking persists across programme documents. Addressing this fragmentation, and mainstreaming GESI across all operational components would support programme-level monitoring and help EOL give grantees targeted support in capturing and analysing data on marginalisation.

For EOL: improve how it tracks grantees' advocacy for social inclusion. Reviewing GESI work from grantees' proposals through to their reporting, including Thematic Fund proposals alongside the original proposals from all three groups of operational components would build learning at programme and grantee level on the practices that help reach excluded learners in different contexts.

For EOL and learning partners: systematically monitor the GESI-focused learning collaboratives. The revised results framework places more weight on collaboratives in strengthening CSOs and promoting inclusive, gender-responsive policy and data. Maintaining an overview of the excluded groups that collaboratives target, the programme could capture the practice and lessons they share, and encourage collaboration between groups.

2 Explicitly consider the entrenched social norms and shrinking civic space in the planning and execution of the GESI work

CSOs can meet resistance from communities, religious institutions and sometimes governments when they challenge embedded norms around gender, disability and other dimensions of exclusion. This can take the form of passive non-implementation or active opposition. At the same time, restrictions on civil society, the politicisation of inclusion and government sensitivity to criticism narrow the space for advocacy, creating tension between keeping access to policy dialogue and pursuing more transformative agendas. Worldwide, only about half of countries have general or inclusive education laws focused on gender equality, and fewer than three quarters have laws on learners with disabilities. Gaps in institutional frameworks can prompt grantees to advocate for these rights, but without wider political backing their work may not achieve lasting change at national or global level. At national level, limited government collaboration can also restrict access to datasets, for instance, through bureaucratic delay.

For EOL and learning partners: strengthen guidance and mechanisms to track and address intersectional marginalisation. Supporting data systems, learning frameworks and grantee reporting that capture intersectionality would allow resources and support to be prioritised for groups facing double or triple exclusion.

For EOL and learning partners: use case studies to learn how and why change happens. The current monitoring system records a broad range of activity but often misses the contextual insight that explains change. Open-ended prompts inviting reflection on the specific situation reported, rather than general background, would surface the factors that help advocacy where norms are entrenched or civic space is limited, and support learning across organisations.

For EOL and grantees: sustain engagement in education groups and alliances. Continue supporting grantees to take part in Local Education Groups and in regional and international fora, and to build alliances that strengthen their influence. The tax justice and education financing alliances are a good example, showing how coalitions can pool expertise and speak with a stronger collective voice on the resourcing of inclusive education.

For EOL and grantees: stay flexible at national level. Support grantees to combine policy dialogue with relationship-building, so they can adapt their approach as political openings and constraints shift.

3 Focus on improving access to disaggregated data

Limited collaboration from government often restricts CSO access to national datasets, whether on grounds of data privacy or through bureaucratic delay. Where data is available, it is frequently not disaggregated by disability, gender or displacement. Scaling local data generation calls for stronger institutional support, better data literacy and sustained funding, and some coalitions lack the technical capacity to analyse and present compelling evidence to policymakers.

For EOL and CSOs: create shared data repositories and strengthen data standards. Establishing standards for data quality, and shared, verified directories where CSOs can upload quantitative data, methods and findings, would let grassroots organisations access, review and reuse each other's data, encouraging exchange and avoiding duplication. EOL could also continue to advocate for stronger international efforts to collect education data in the regions, which needs regional and global coordination to ensure quality and representativeness.

4 Deploy EOL resources to support long-term advocacy

EOL's support is vital, but lasting change often needs far-reaching resources. Evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue depend on sustained funding, yet many organisations have limited means to maintain longer-term advocacy, including the generation and management of longitudinal data for influencing on the educational access of marginalised groups. This is especially true for groups that have been underrepresented and underresearched, such as migrants, refugees and LGBTQIA+ learners.

For EOL: continue funding GESI and deepen the focus on harder-won gains. Complement support for policy change with deeper analysis of the harder advocacy wins for underrepresented marginalised groups, where change is likely to take longer.

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UNESCO (2025) Inclusion in education: what you need to know. Available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/inclusion-education/need-know (Accessed: 10 April 2025).

Appendix A: Methodology

Quantitative methodology

We used data from international education databases which include the most comprehensive disaggregated data available.

The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) compiles data from over 160 countries and includes two sets of indicators: one related to educational access, and the other one related to learning outcomes. The main sources regarding access to education are Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). The main sources for learning are MICS, Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatif de la CONFEMEN (PASEC), Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

We included all the 63 countries or territories that have participated in at least one of the two EOL phases (from 2019). Of these, 27 are included in the GPE's list of partner countries affected by fragility and conflict in the year 2025.[5] These 63 countries are spread in four regions: HESA (21), WCA (19), AP (18), and LAC (5).[6]

We restricted the data from 2015 to 2023 to avoid having data older than a decade. For each EOL country, we keep the latest observation. In case a country has more than one on the same year, we keep the observation that contains more data.

Our analysis includes four access indicators, and two learning indicators. In the case of access, we focus on the primary level (as opposed to upper secondary level, or early grades). These are the definitions according to WIDE's website.

- Primary completion rate: Percentage of (i) children and young people aged 3-5 years above primary school graduation age and (ii) young people aged 15-24 years, who have completed primary school.
- Lower secondary completion rate: Percentage of (i) young people aged 3-5 years above lower secondary school graduation age and (ii) young people aged 15-24 years, who have completed lower secondary school.
- Out-of-school children: Percentage of children of primary school age who are not in school.
- Mean years of education: Average number of years of schooling attained for the age group 20-24 years.

The two learning indicators are the following:

- Learning achievement in mathematics (End of primary): Percentage of adolescents of lower secondary school age taking part in a mathematics assessment passing four levels of increasing difficulty.
- Learning achievement in reading (End of primary): Percentage of adolescents of lower secondary school age taking part in a reading assessment passing four levels of increasing difficulty.

We did not use a learning indicator on achievement in science because is not as commonly available as those in mathematics and reading. Both learning indicators have four levels each, with increasing difficulty. Our analysis includes the first two levels in each subject, thus, four variables in total.

We looked for data on the five marginalised groups prioritised by the EOL Policy Guidance Note: gender, disability, location (urban or rural area), poverty or wealth, and displacement status. No data is available on the displacement status of the children in the WIDE database. WIDE disability data contains figures for children with disabilities, but not for children without. Therefore, we cannot compare these two groups. However, the WIDE data allows us to evaluate intersectionality to some extent because some of the data can be broken down by a combination of categories (for instance, gender and location, or wealth and location).

5 *Somalia and Somaliland are counted separately as two EOL countries and territories, and both are included in the FCAC classification.*

6 *EOL regions do not always correspond to historical or geographical classifications. For instance, Moldova is under Asia and Pacific (AP), and Sierra Leone is part of the Horn, Eastern, and Southern Africa (HESA), which also includes grants to National Education Coalitions across the Middle East and North Africa region.*

To compare children with and without disabilities, we included in our analysis a second dataset from UNICEF. The UNICEF data availability is somewhat more limited than WIDE, with only 25 EOL countries in this dataset. The information is more up-to-date, with data spanning from 2017 to 2023.

UNICEF data is slightly different than data contained in WIDE, thus limiting our capacity to draw comparisons. It contains attendance data instead of completion rate (primary and secondary levels). UNICEF's "child out of school" is comparable to the WIDE indicator out-of-school children. We have decided to include one outcome that is not in WIDE: "never attended school", which refers to a more permanent type of exclusion.

There is not a variable in the UNICEF data that contains the number of school years. UNICEF data does not include learning indicators, and the set of countries included is different. Lastly, UNICEF database does not have any breakdown by other categories (such as gender, location, etc.).

The indicators used from the UNICEF database are the following:

- Adjusted net attendance rate for primary school: Number of children of official primary school age who are attending primary or secondary or higher levels of education, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary school age.
- Adjusted net attendance rate for lower-secondary school: Number of children of lower secondary school age who are attending lower secondary or upper secondary or higher levels of education school, expressed as a percentage of the population of official lower secondary school age.
- Out of school, primary level: Number of children of official primary school age who are not enrolled in pre-primary, primary or secondary school, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary school age.
- Never attended school: Percentage of children aged 10 to 17 years who have never attended school.

Availability of data

The analysis of the external quantitative data regarding EOL countries and territories shows that there is a data availability issue. Not all the countries have updated available data that allows to understand their access and learning levels. This becomes even more salient when talking about learning performance, when around half of the countries do not have enough data.

Access data

The WIDE database includes data on access to education from 54 EOL countries that have had at least one survey conducted since 2015 containing information on access to education. Of these 54 countries, 23 are FCAC. Regarding learning indicators, the WIDE database includes data from 28 countries or territories, 12 of which are FCAC. The UNICEF database on disability includes information for 25 EOL countries, with 8 falling under the FCAC classification.

Among the 54 EOL countries, 51 have data on both primary and lower secondary completion rates. All countries in the sample provide information on out-of-school children. However, data on mean years of education is more limited, with only 33 countries reporting on this outcome.

Disaggregation by gender is consistently available across all indicators. Similarly, data disaggregated by location is widely present, with 51 countries reporting completion rates by area of residence. Wealth quintile breakdowns are available in the majority of countries, with 47 providing data disaggregated by socioeconomic status.

For more granular analysis, gender and location disaggregation is also available for a majority of the 54 countries. Specifically, completion rates for rural women are available in 50 countries, out-of-school rates in 53 countries, and mean years of education in 33. While data for other combinations, such as urban women, are somewhat less complete, coverage still exceeds half of the dataset. For completion rates, the number of observations ranges between 25 and 46 countries, with primary education showing the highest coverage. The out-of-school children indicator is the most complete, with data available for 39 to 47 countries depending on the subgroup. Mean years of education is the most limited, with disaggregated data available for 23 to 30 countries.

The dataset on disability, sourced from UNICEF, is more restricted in scope. It provides only a binary classification indicating whether a child has a disability, without additional breakdowns by gender, location, or socioeconomic status.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes data is the most limited among the three dimensions in the WIDE database. Only 28 EOL countries report on the proportion of students achieving the lowest proficiency level in mathematics, and 26 on the equivalent level in reading. For the second proficiency level, data availability drops to 16 countries for mathematics and 14 for reading. The number of FCAC countries reporting on these indicators is even smaller, with 12 reporting the lowest level in mathematics, 11 in reading, 9 for the second level in mathematics, and 8 for the second level in reading.

Similar to the access indicators, gender-disaggregated learning data does not reduce the number of reporting countries. Location-based disaggregation shows a similar pattern. Wealth breakdowns are widely available for the lowest learning proficiency levels but are less commonly reported for the second proficiency level.

UNICEF data does not include learning indicators.

Qualitative methodology

Our qualitative methodology was based on secondary review of EOL documents. This included: the EOL Policy Guidance Note on Inclusion and Gender Equality; the 2022 Mid-term review, and the INTRAC Reviews of phase 1 and phase 2 of EOL; learning outputs produced by the other GLPs and internally to EOL, EOL reporting templates and indicator descriptions for 2024-2027; proposal templates; learning needs assessments and learning plan templates; EOL Technical Progress Reports (2020-2025); and the GMU consolidated report. Additionally, we gathered high-level information on learning collaboratives. Within these documents, we focused on descriptions of and references to GESI and FCAC. We complemented our analysis by looking at publications from the GPE and GCE to contextualise the concepts of gender equality and social inclusion, as well as general literature on marginalised groups in education.

To identify activities, achievements and challenges in EOL's advocacy work on social inclusion, we firstly identified the technical areas within the reporting that relate to marginalised groups, GESI and FCAC: 'Economically poor peoples´ right to education'; 'Education in emergencies, including Covid-19'; 'Female adolescents´ right to education'; 'Girls' right to education'; 'Young men and women's right to education'; 'Persons with disabilities right to education'; and 'Other area'. We then categorised activities into broad groups: advocacy and policy change, research and learning and global and regional events. Finally, we synthetised relevant examples from each category to illustrate the achievements of the grantees, highlighting their efforts to advancing the educational rights of marginalised populations.

Box 2 in Section 1 and Boxes 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 in Section 3 of this synthesis report are snapshots highlighting specific aspects of broader case studies of positive change in GESI in education. The full case studies are presented in a separate booklet produced by NFER as part of its Global Learning Partnership with EOL (Lopes and Gambhir, 2026). As outlined in Section 1.1, these case studies document changes to which grantees across all EOL regions contributed substantially. The case studies' methodology drew on both secondary and primary qualitative data and included validation by grantees; it is described in full in the booklet.

Appendix B: Further Quantitative Analysis

Before we present the main outcomes, we would like to discuss one of the main challenges regarding quantitative data: availability.

Data availability across EOL countries

Table B.1 shows the access data availability for each EOL region in the WIDE database by counting countries or territories with valid data on each indicator and region. Whilst completions rates, both primary and lower secondary and also the out-of-school children information are widely available, the data related to years of education is scarcer and not easily found. For instance, none of the EOL countries located in the LAC region have this indicator.

Table B.1: Access data availability by EOL region

EOL Region	Completion rate (primary)	Completion rate (lower secondary)	Out-of-school children	Years of education
AP	14	14	14	11
HESA	18	18	18	14
LAC	4	4	4	0
WCA	15	15	18	8
Total	**51**	**51**	**54**	**33**

Source: WIDE database

There is limited learning data availability amongst EOL regions, as shown in **Table B.2**. In mathematics and reading at the second level, none of the HESA countries has information. And for instance, Asia Pacific, which has ten countries with data on Mathematics at the lowest level, only has five of them with data for the second level of such subject. This points to the fact that not all countries participate in international standardised assessments, which are the main source of the learning data. Countries located in the LAC region are missing this piece of information.

Table B.2: Learning data availability by EOL region

EOL Region	Mathematics, lowest level	Reading, lowest level	Mathematics, second level	Reading, second level
AP	10	8	5	3
HESA	4	4	0	0
WCA	14	14	11	11
Total	**28**	**26**	**16**	**14**

Source: WIDE database

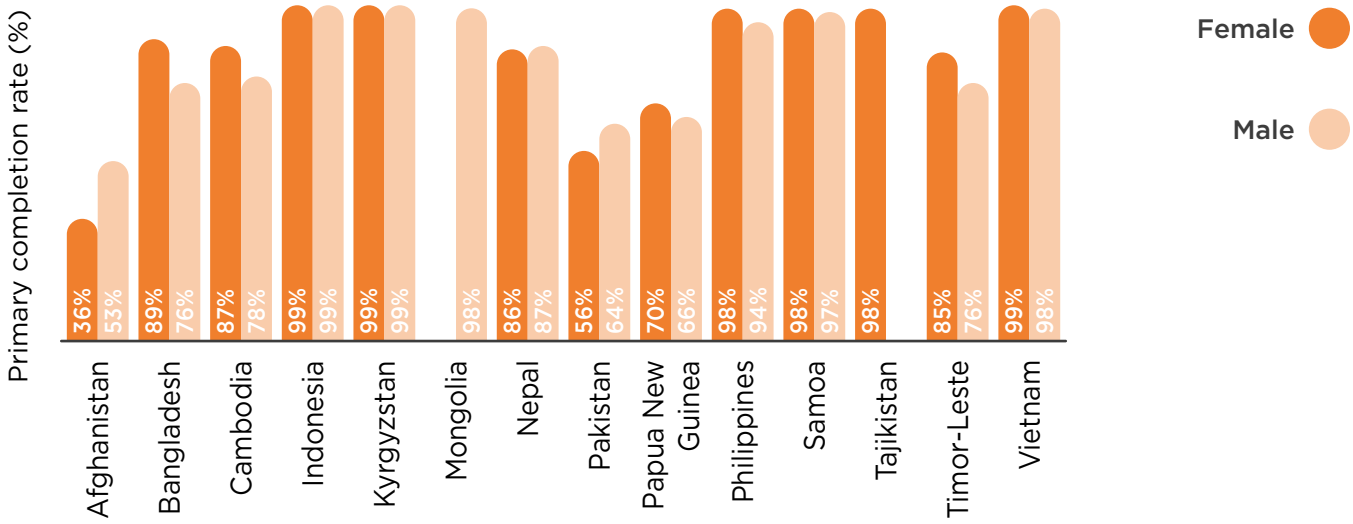
Further analysis

In the following section we include further analysis of marginalised groups within countries. We present these outcomes by EOL region and indicator to make it easier to navigate and to provide insightful comparisons between similar countries.

We analysed two access indicators (primary and lower secondary completion rate), and two learning indicators (learning in reading and mathematics, both in the lowest level). Additionally, we included three factors of marginalisation: gender, wealth (or income), and area (urban or rural sectors). As stated above, the Latin America and the Caribbean region does not have learning outcomes data.

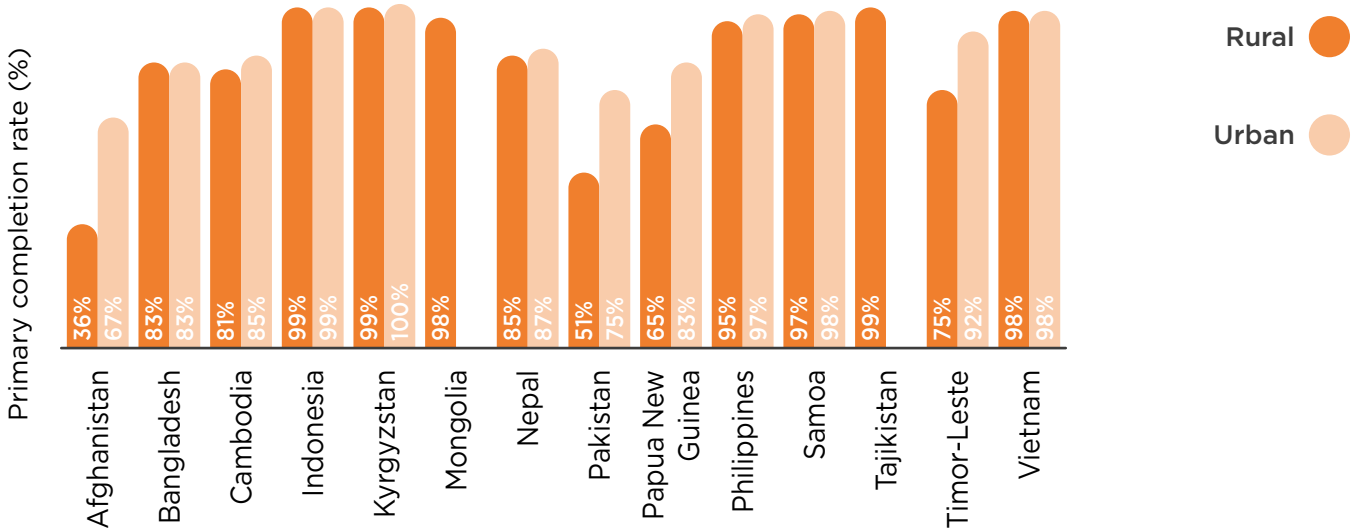
Asia Pacific (AP), Access

Region: AP



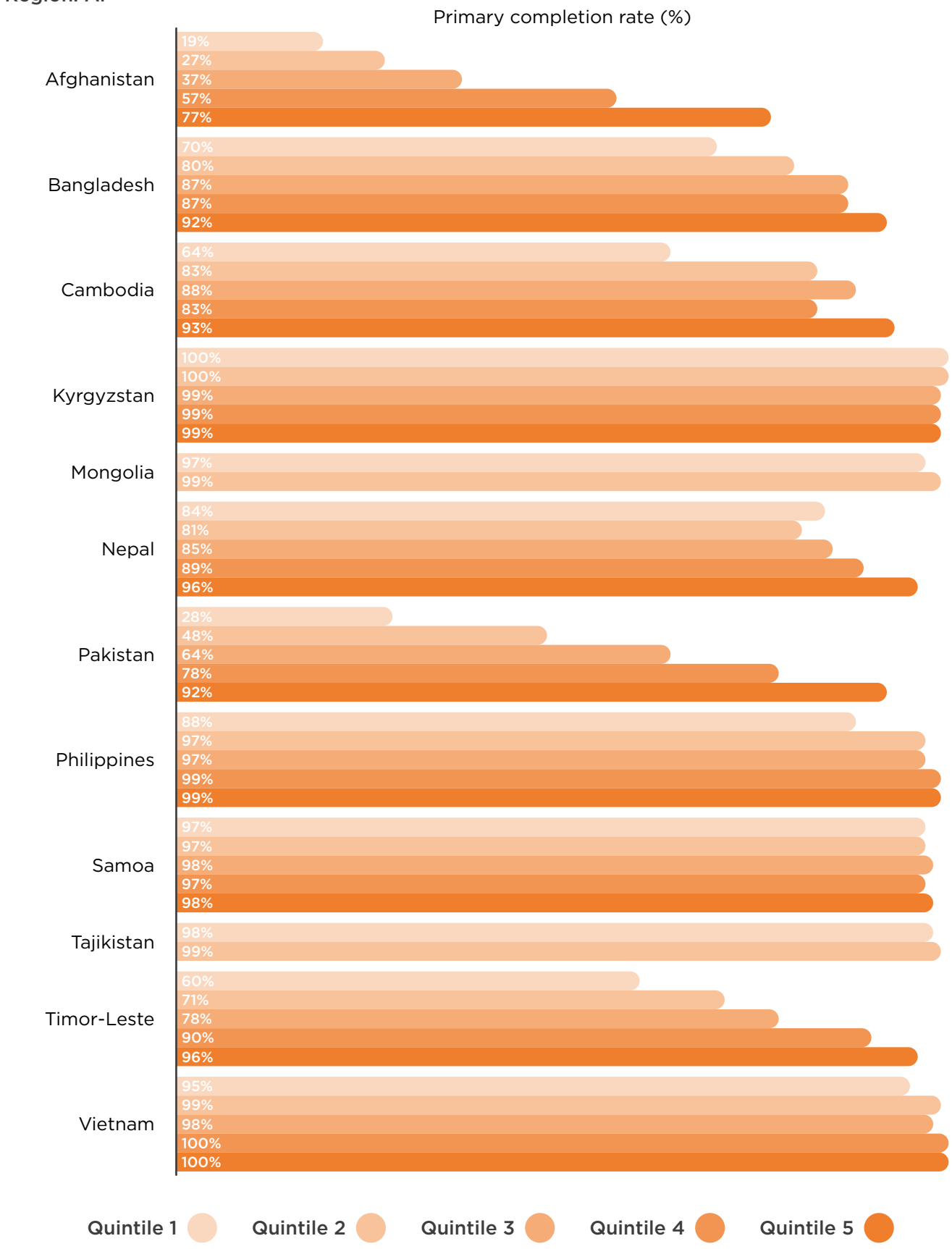
Within the region, a few countries have a gender gap: Afghanistan and Pakistan present a significant gap in primary level completion rate between women and men, with women having lower outcomes. For instance, Afghanistan has a completion rate of 36% for women and 53% for men. Afghanistan is also the country with the lowest completion rate for women in the Asia Pacific region.

Region: AP



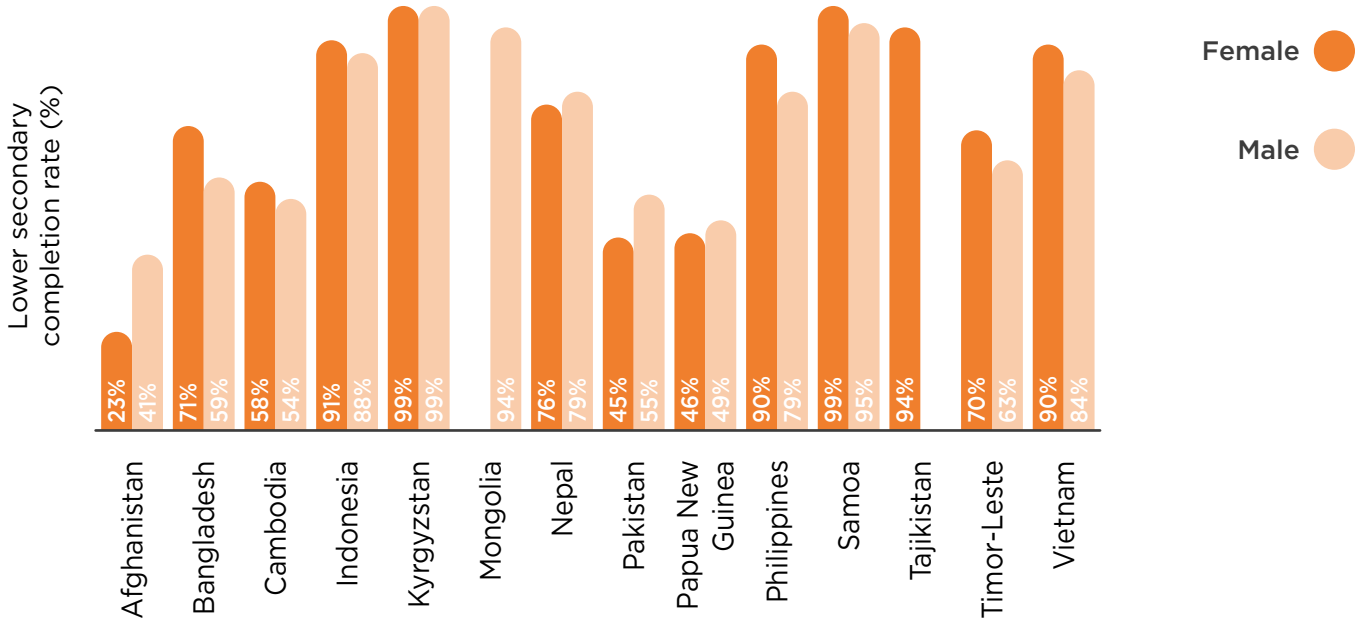
Four countries have especially lower outcomes for children in rural areas compared to urban areas (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, and Timor Leste). Surprisingly, in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam, the outcome is the same for rural and urban children.

Region: AP



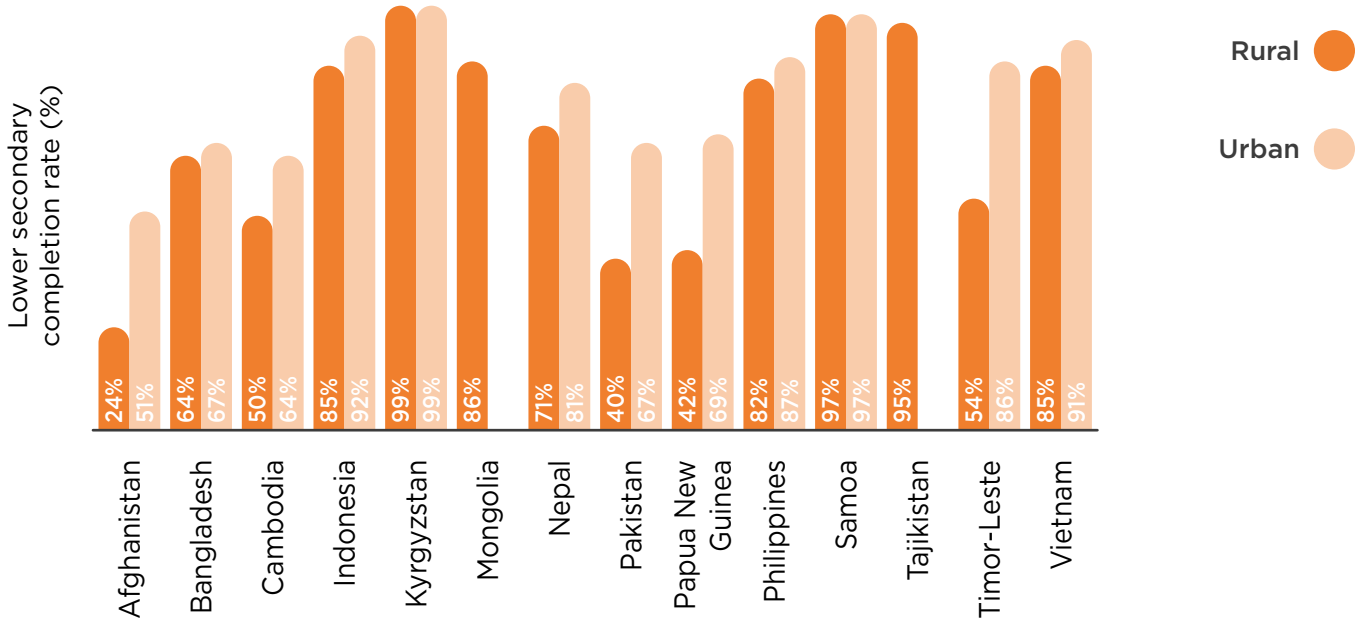
Analysing the outcomes by wealth shows a striking pattern: children in lower quintiles finish primary school at lower rates than their wealthier peers in the Asia Pacific region. If we focus on Pakistan or Timor Leste, we can see that as we go from the poorest to the richest group, the rate increases systematically. However, there are a few exceptions: Kyrgyzstan, where completion rates are almost universal; and Samoa, with a similar scenario.

Region: AP



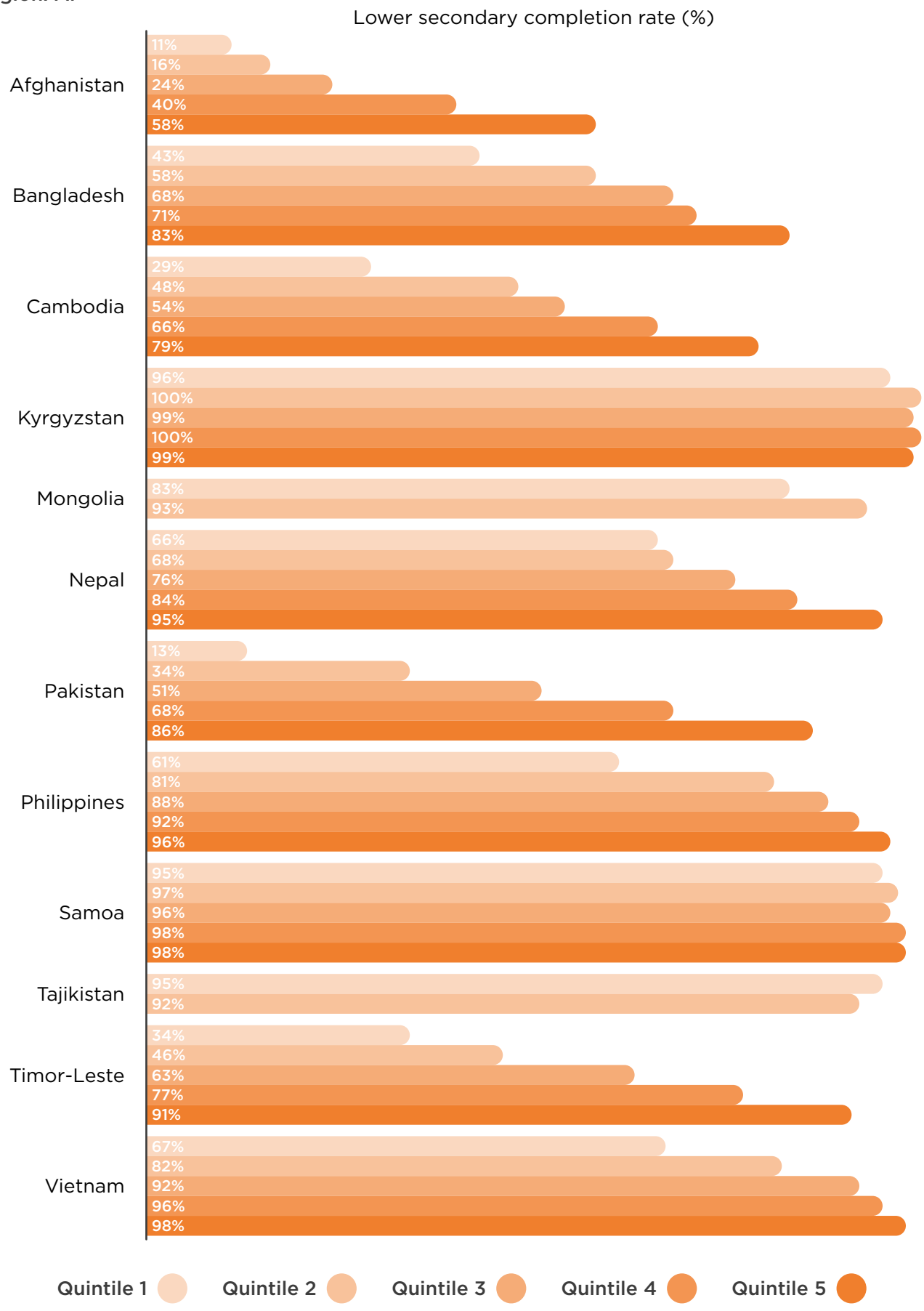
The lower secondary completion rates again show that there are countries with a gender gap in the region; where a handful countries have a lower completion rate for women than men: Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Papua New Guinea. Afghanistan stands out having a gap of 18 percentage points between women and men. Additionally, it has the lowest completion rate for women: only 23%. On the other side, in Samoa and Kyrgyzstan not only women have similar or higher completion rates than men, but these are also almost universal.

Region: AP



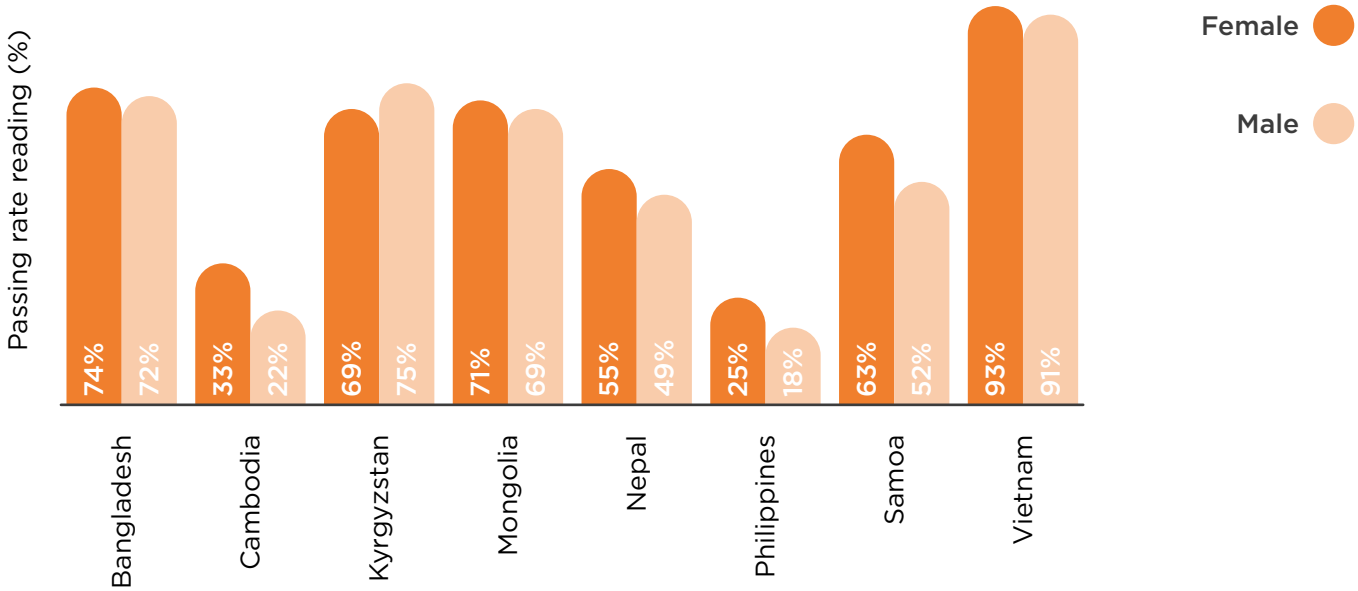
There is a location gap in Asia Pacific as well: people in rural areas have, in almost every country, a lower secondary completion rate than individuals in urban areas. However, there are two exceptions: Kyrgyzstan and Samoa, where the rates are similar across all groups.

Region: AP



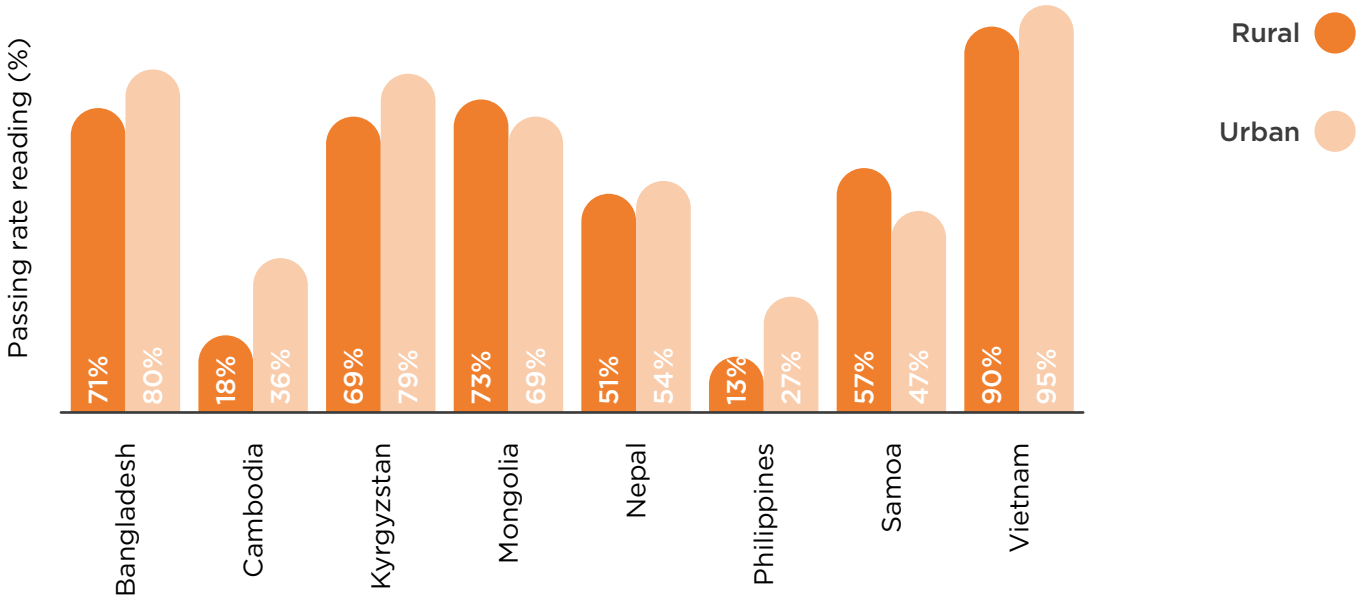
As expected, richer quintiles finish lower secondary at higher rates. Again, there are two countries in which this rule does not apply: Kyrgyzstan and Samoa, because in both the completion rates are almost universal (especially in the former one), and thus, are not associated to wealth.

Region: AP



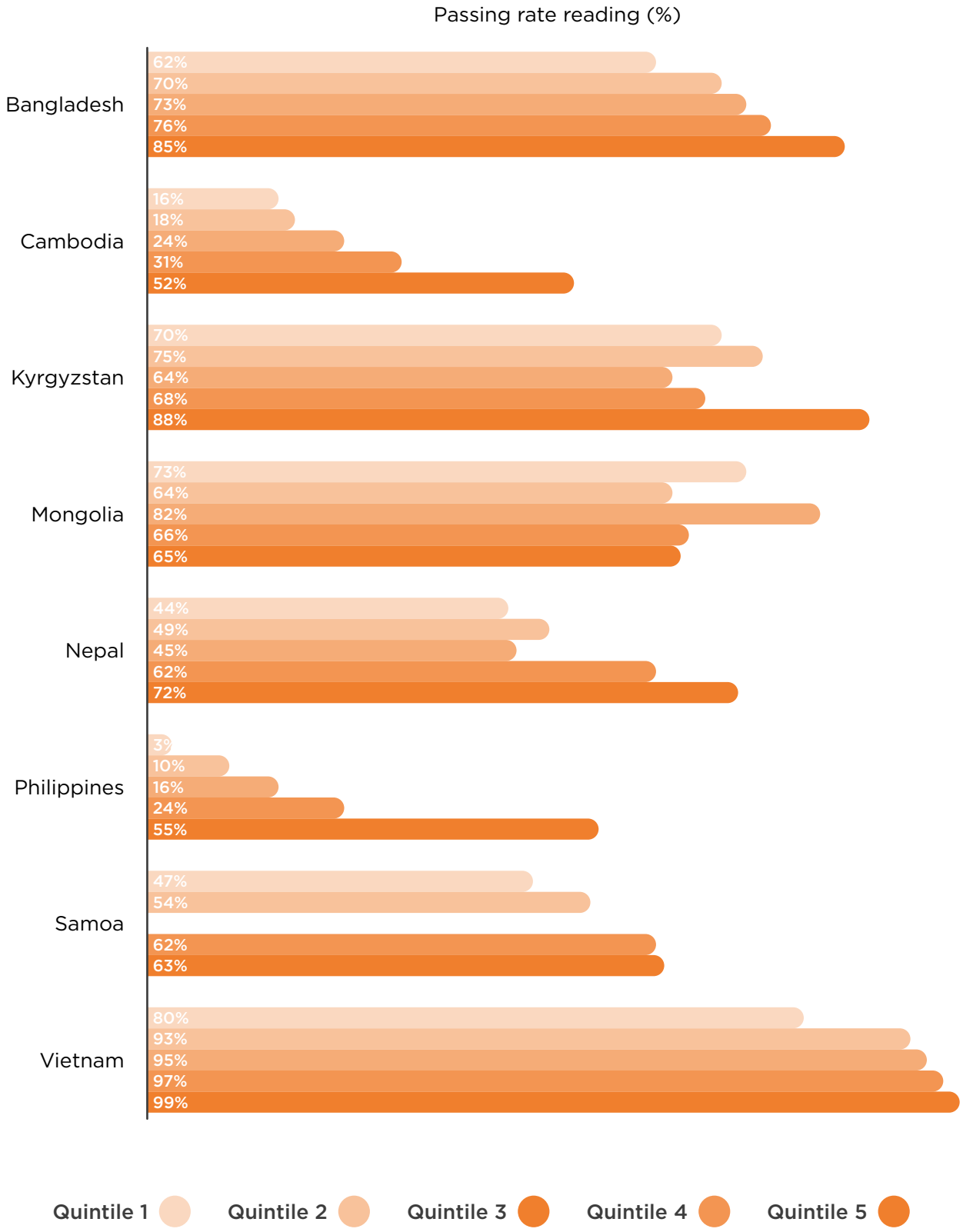
In the lowest level of reading, in AP, girls are outperforming boys in 7 out of 8 countries. The only exception is Kyrgyzstan, where boys pass the test at a rate six points higher than girls. Vietnam stands out for its overall higher passing rates.

Region: AP



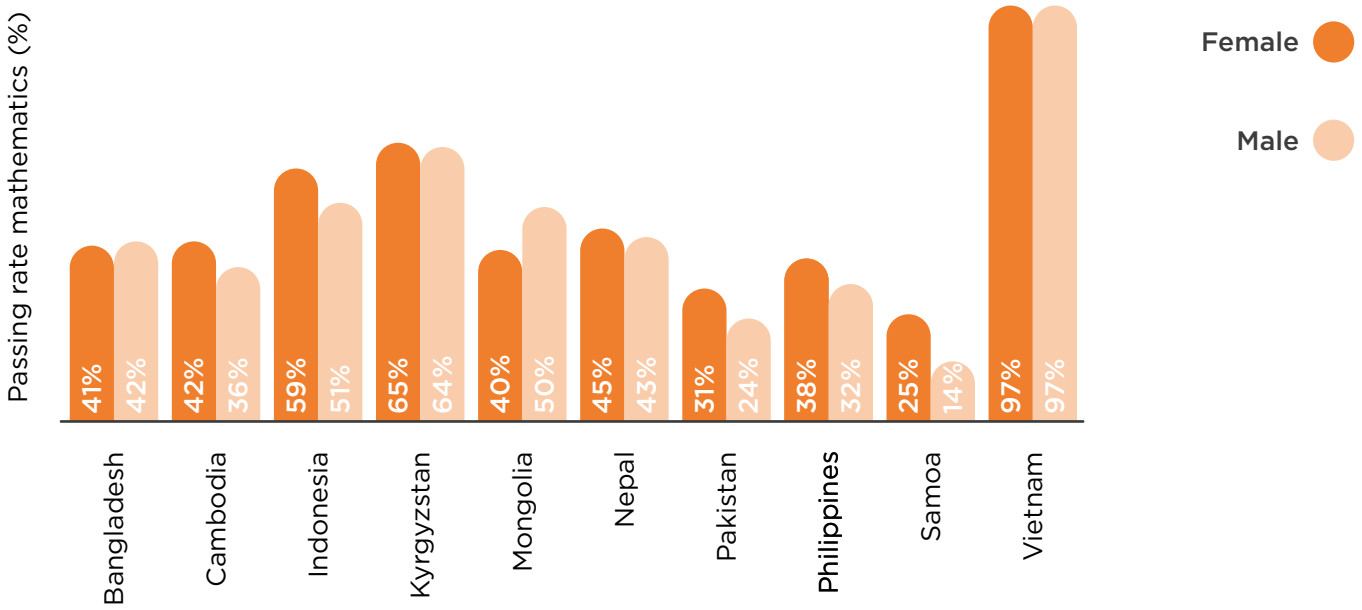
By location, in AP, most countries see higher passing rates for children in urban areas than in rural ones, except for Mongolia and Samoa. In Nepal we find the smallest gap between those two groups: 3 percentage points, while the largest one is seen in Cambodia: 18 percentage points (and one of the lowest passing rates in the region, only behind the Philippines).

Region: AP



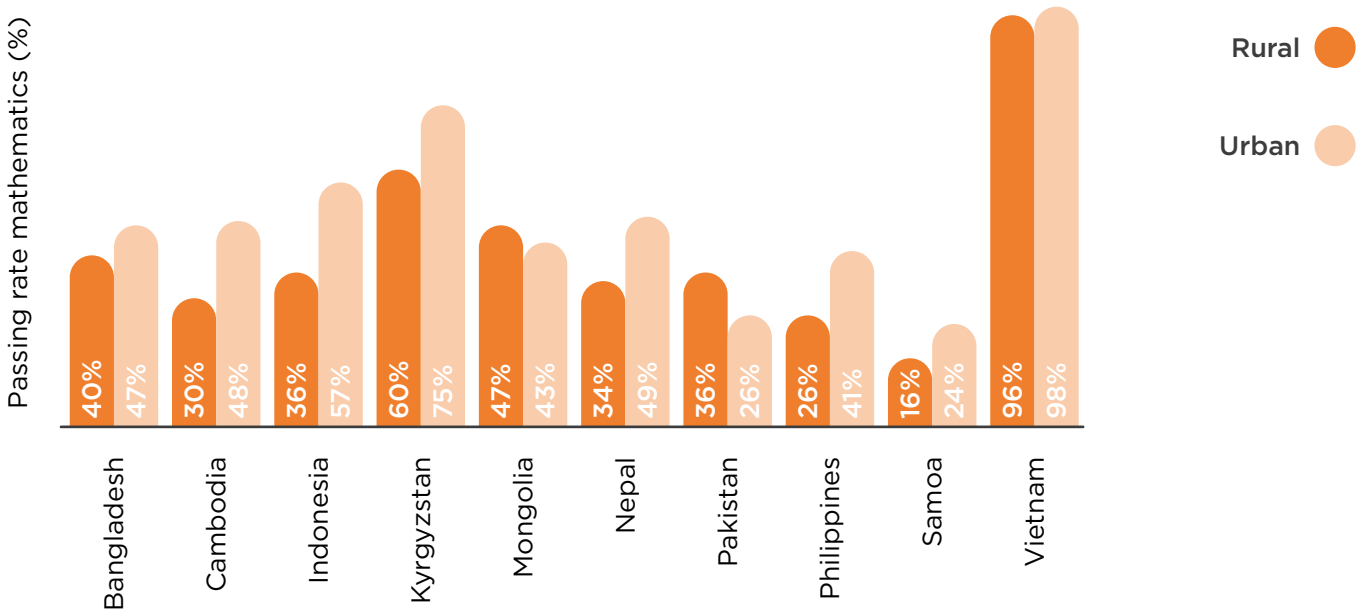
The analysis by wealth group shows that this factor matters when it comes to learning outcomes. The extreme country in the Asia Pacific region is the Philippines, where the poorest group pass the test 3% of the time, while the richest one does it 55% of the time. Other countries have somewhat different patterns. And again, Vietnam stands out for its relative higher passing rates, although there is a significant gap between first- and fifth-income groups.

Region: AP



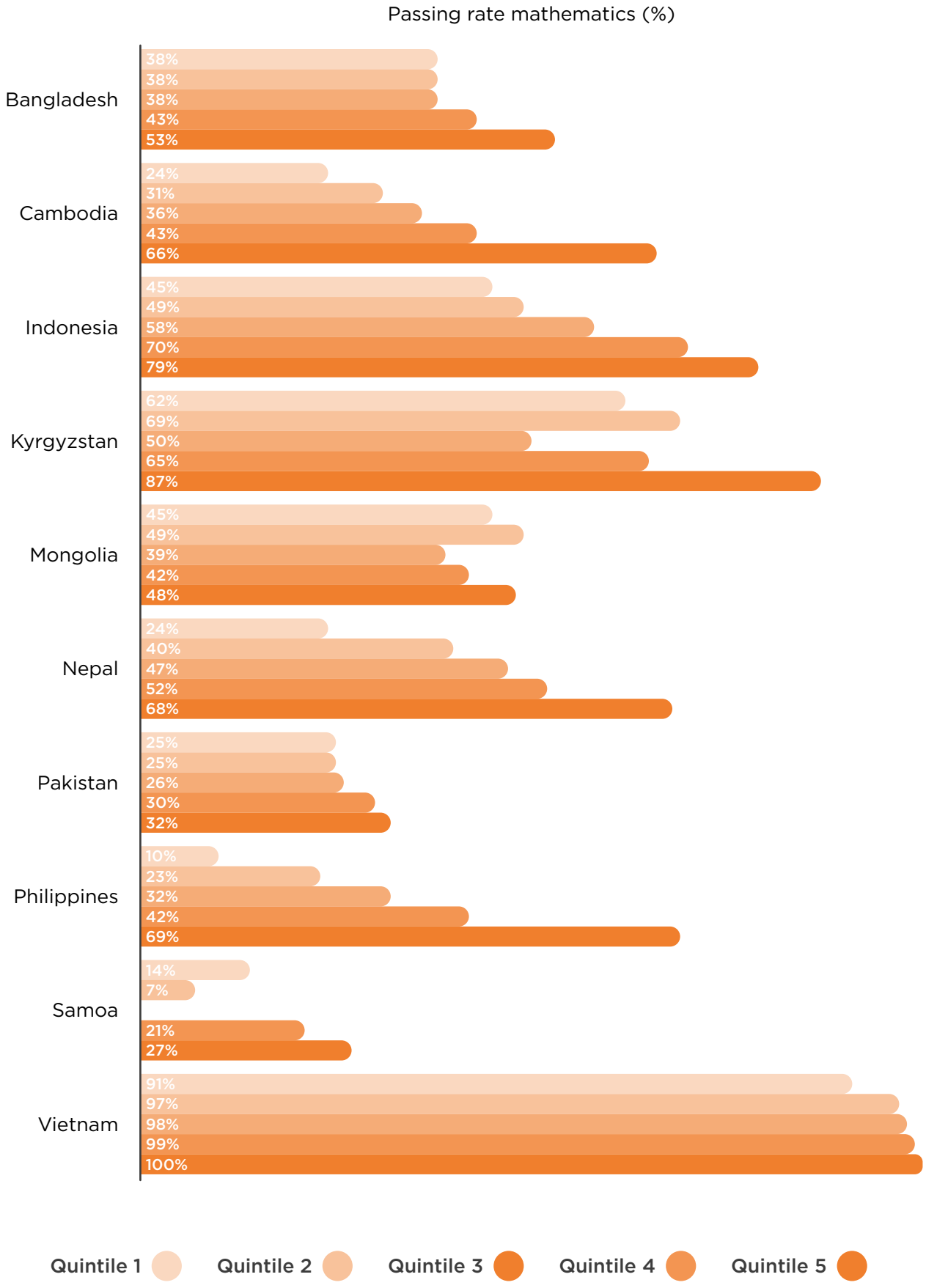
In mathematics, girls are passing the lowest level in math at similar or higher rates than boys. The exceptions are Bangladesh (with a gap of one percentage point) and Mongolia (a gap of ten percentage points). Moreover, except for Vietnam, overall regional results are on the lower end with most of the passing rates being 65% or less.

Region: AP



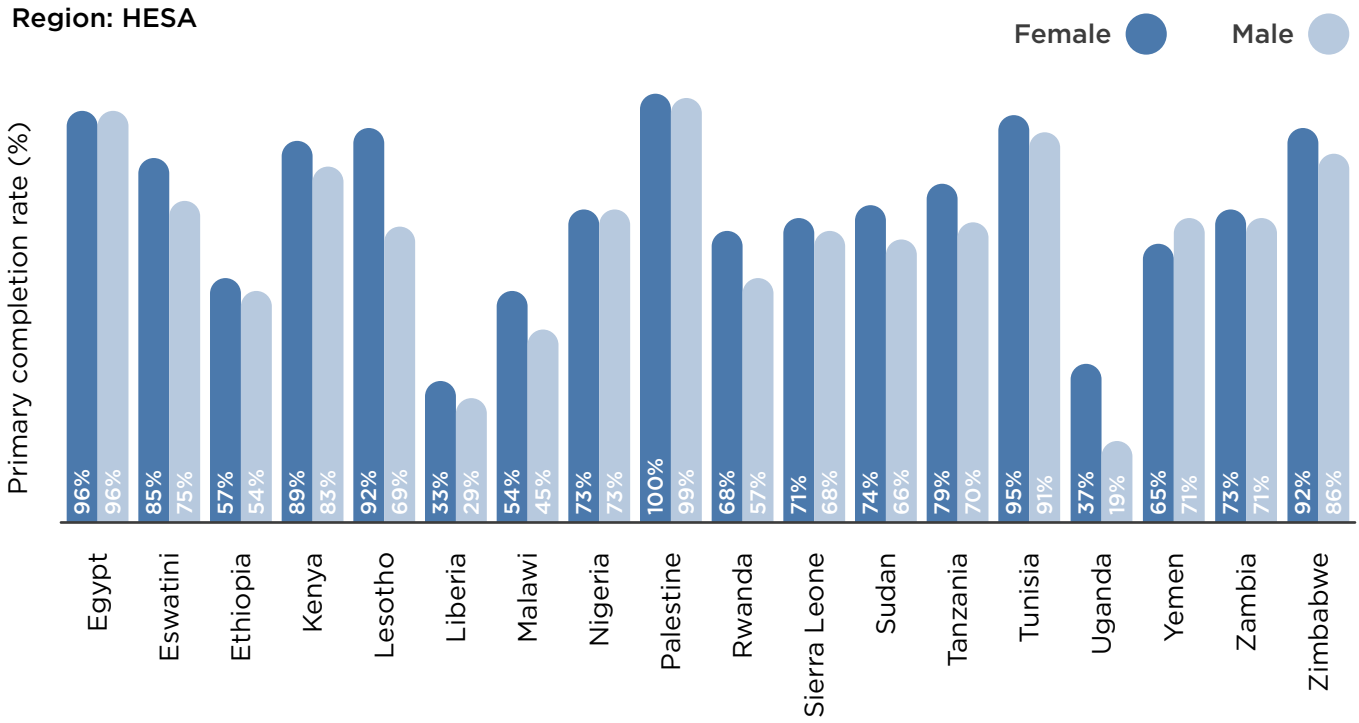
Location also plays a significant role in mathematics' outcomes. In general, in the AP region, children in urban areas are passing the lowest level in this subject at the same or higher rate than their rural peers, except for Pakistan, where the reverse is true and the gap is 10 percentage points. In Indonesia, the difference between urban and rural settings is notable: 21 percentage points, with urban individuals performing better.

Region: AP

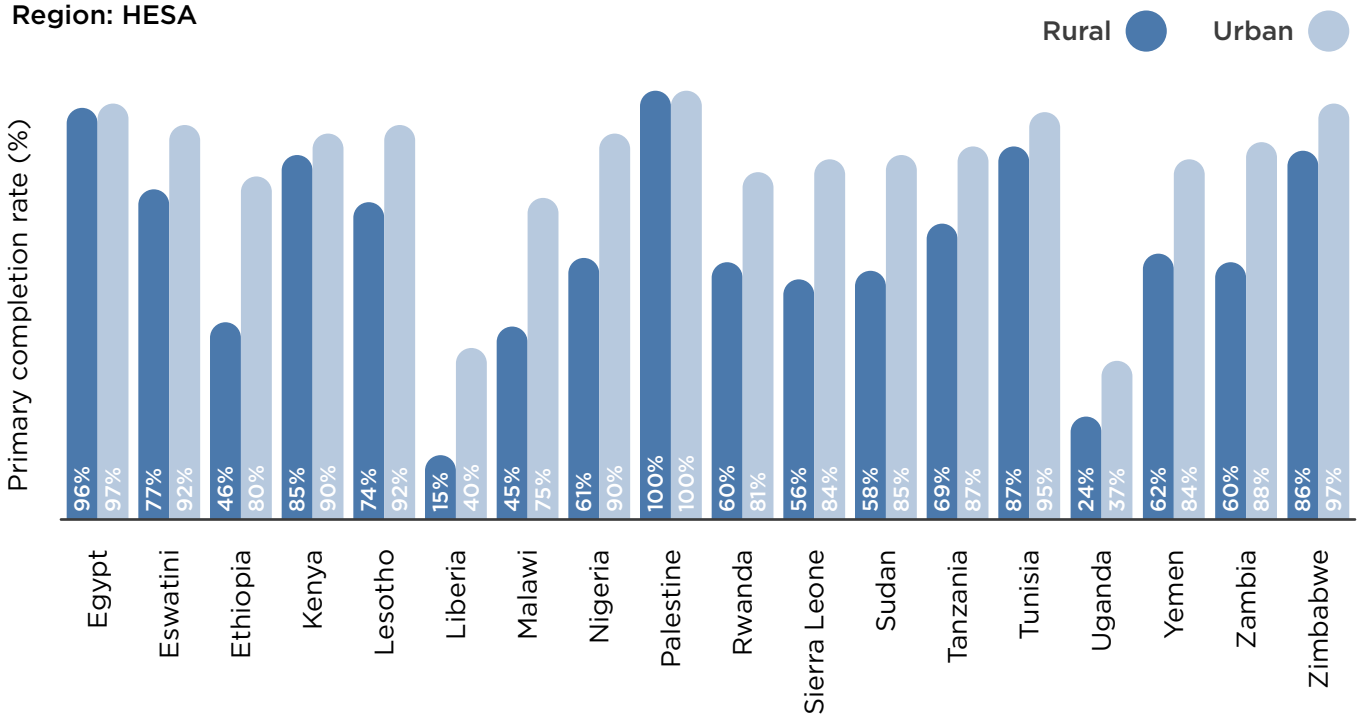


Wealth in the AP region is associated with better learning outcomes in mathematics. Even in Vietnam, which has a high overall passing rate, there is a gap by income quintile. However, there are some exceptions to this rule: in Mongolia, Bangladesh, and Kyrgyzstan the passing rate does not increase systematically with the increase in income group.

Horn, Eastern and Southern Africa (HESA), Access

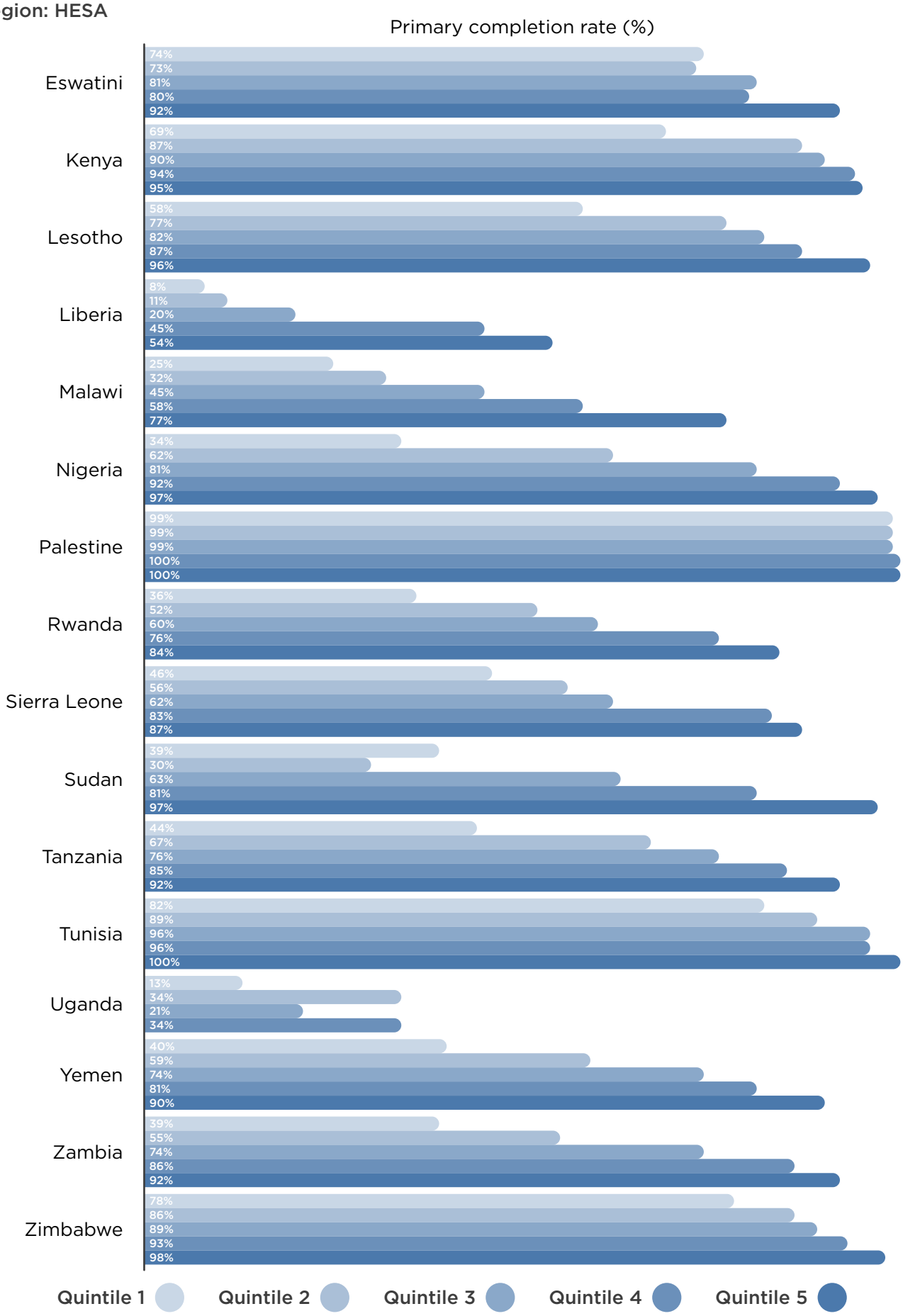


HESA has only country in which the women's completion rate is lower than men's: Yemen, where the gap is six percentage points. Uganda, on the other hand, has a significantly higher completion rate for women than men (a difference of 18 percentage points), although the overall values are on the lower end of the scale.



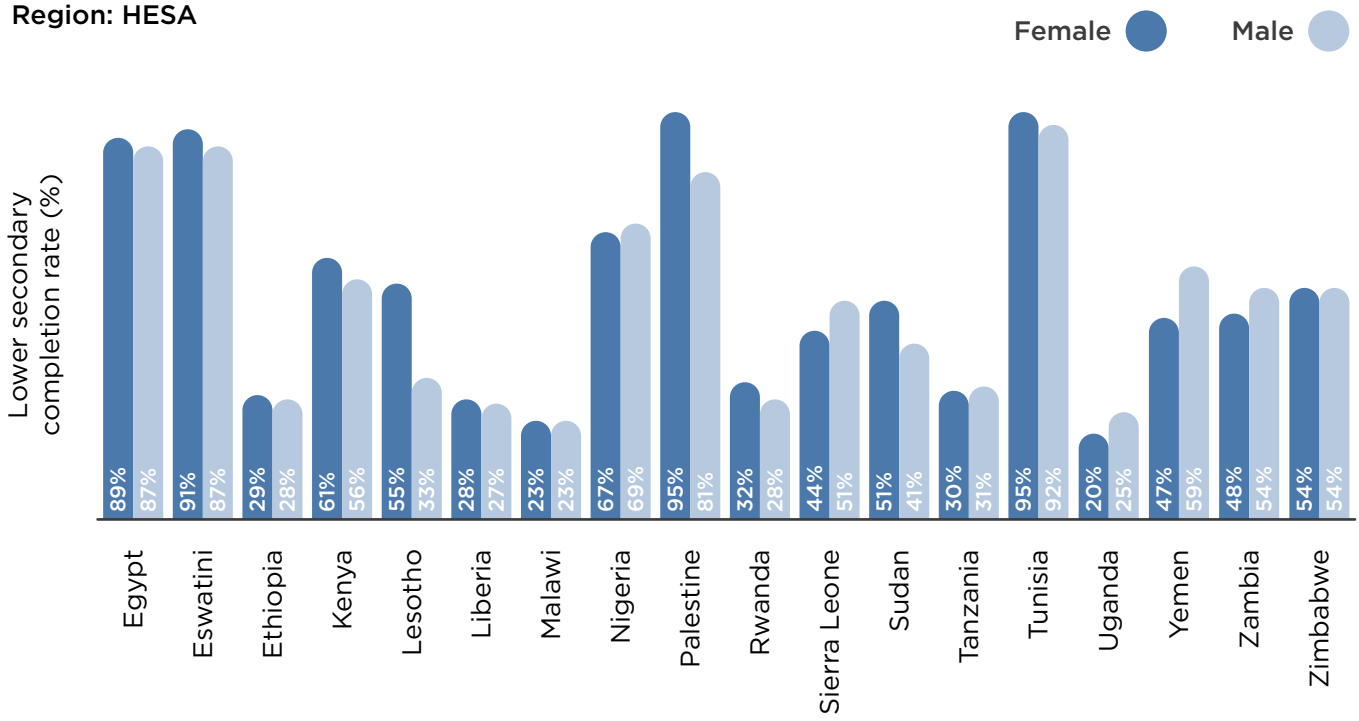
In the Horn, Eastern and Southern Africa region the differences are significant, and with a couple of exceptions, rural children are at a disadvantage. Stands out the situation in Ethiopia, where the gap between rural and urban completion rates is 34 percentage points. In Palestine there is no difference, and both rates are almost universal.

Region: HESA



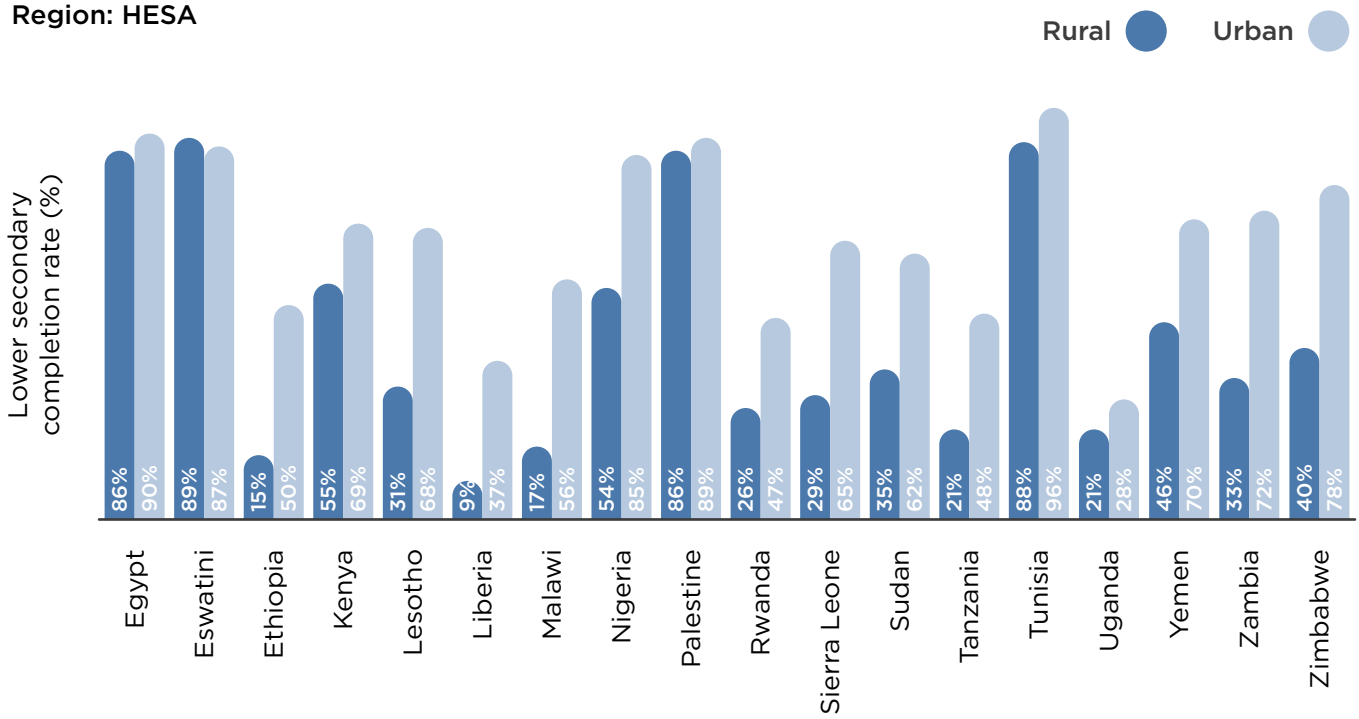
By income or wealth, the pattern is the following: higher income groups have better outcomes than lower income groups. For instance, in Zambia, the lowest quintile has a completion rate of 39% compared to the 92% primary completion rate of the highest income quintile. In Palestine almost all groups have a universal completion rate.

Region: HESA



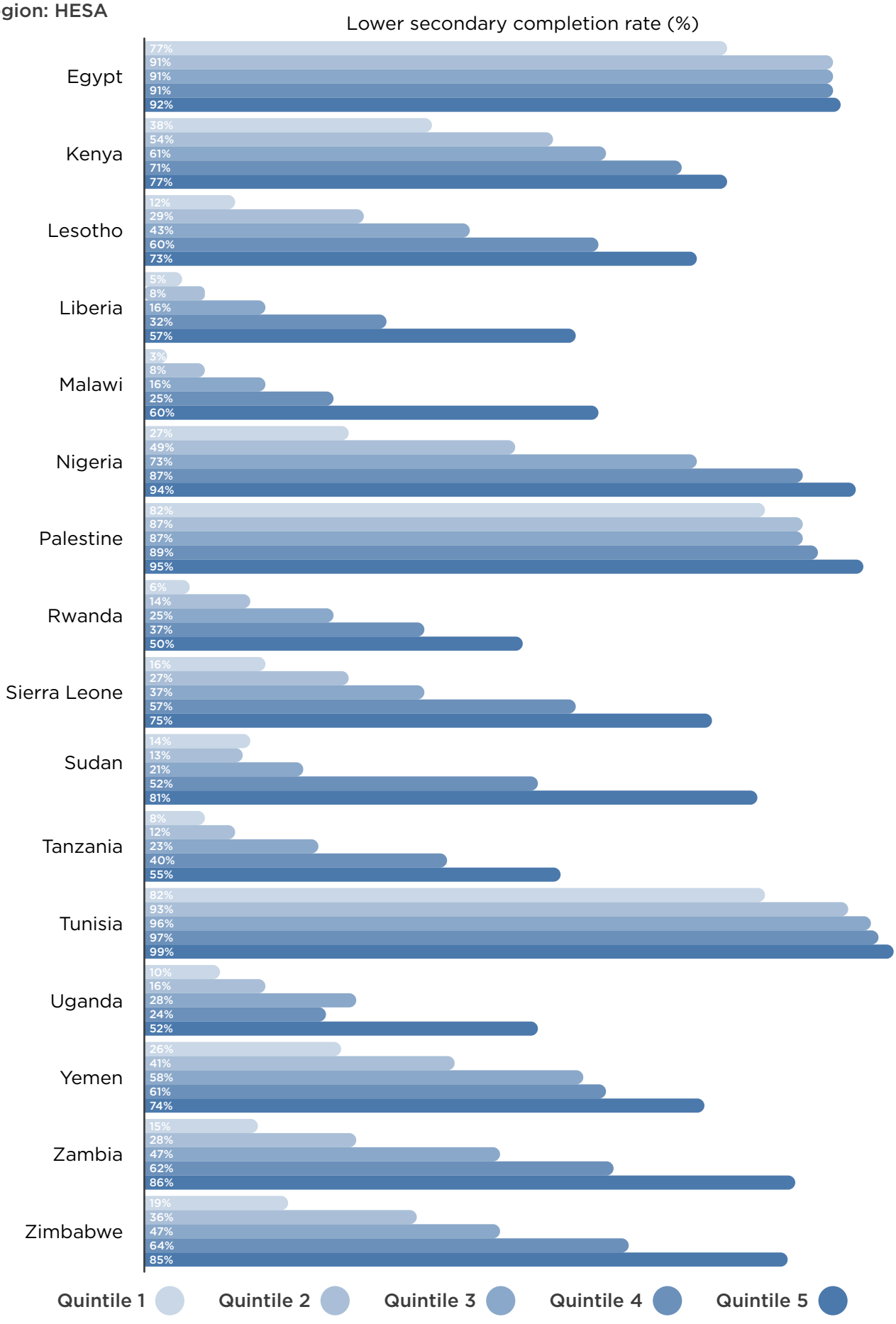
Out of the 18 countries with lower secondary completion data disaggregated by gender, only in Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia women have completion rates 5 or more percentage points lower than men. In the rest of the countries, women have either similar or higher rates than men. A notable case in Palestine, where women complete this education level at a rate 14 points higher than men. The opposite is Yemen, where men complete it at 12 points higher.

Region: HESA



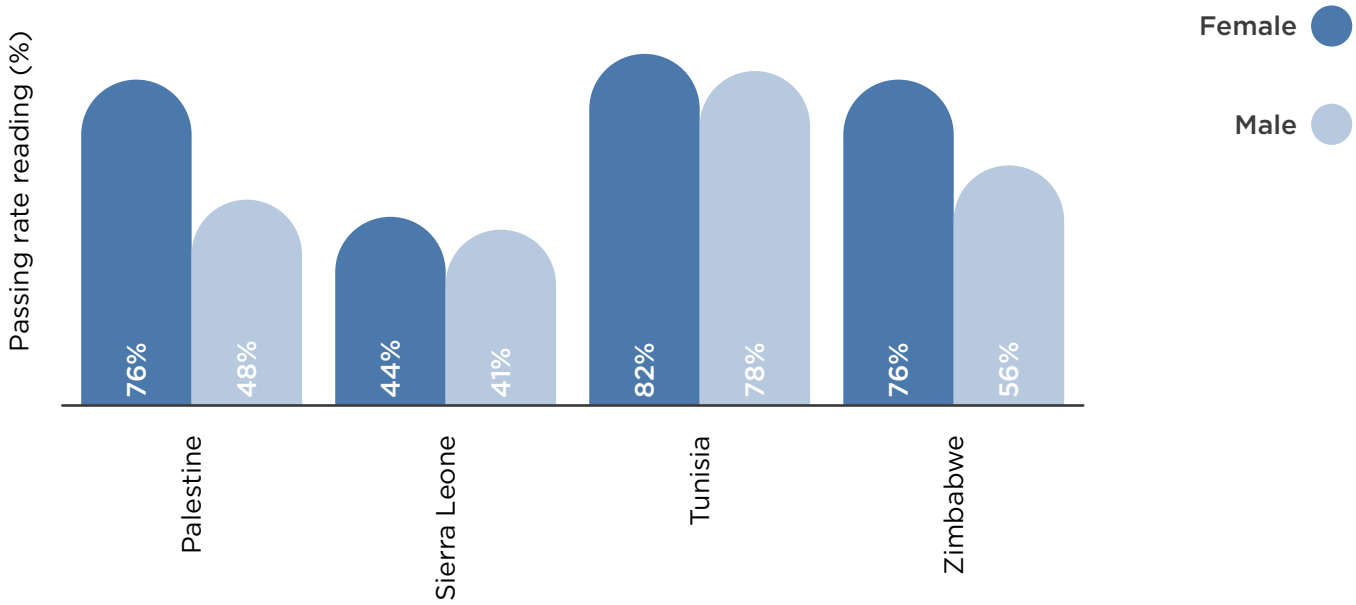
As in other regions and indicators, urban areas are outperforming rural ones in most countries, with one exception (Eswatini). In Lesotho the difference is 37 percentage points, and in Zimbabwe is 38 percentage points, both favouring urban settings. As being the exception, in Eswatini the gap is only two points, in favour of rural areas.

Region: HESA



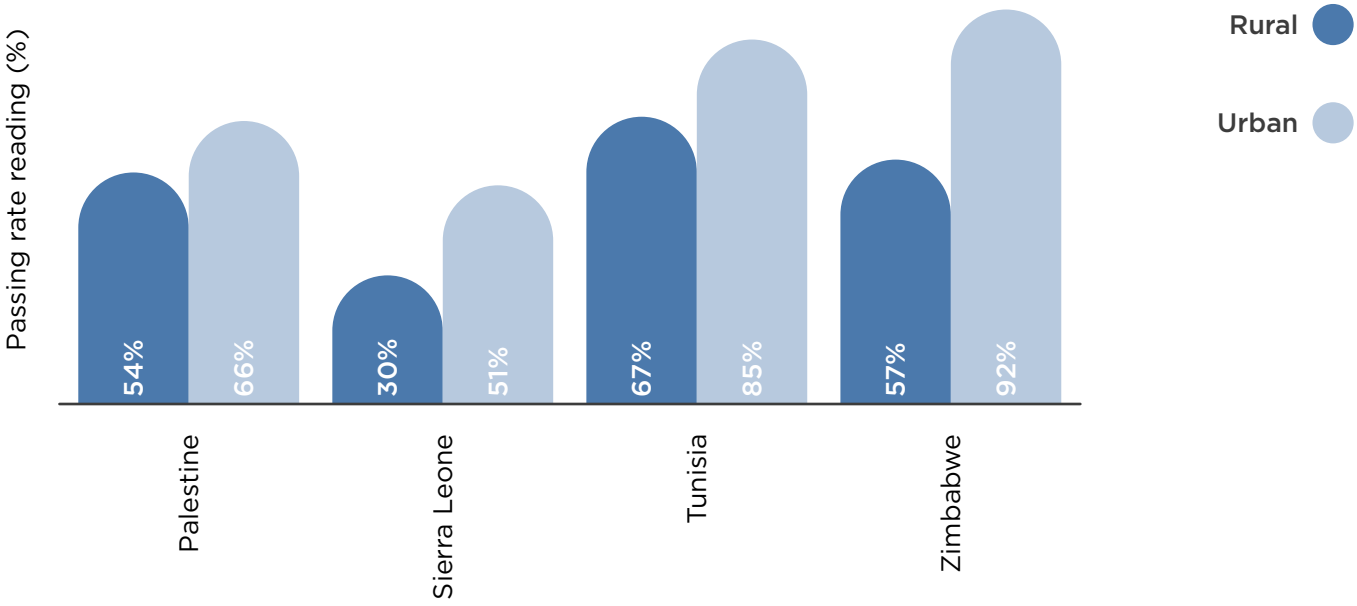
When analysing lower secondary completion rates by wealth group, we find that there is both variation between countries, but also within. In some countries the rate is high and does not depend heavily on the wealth group (Tunisia, for instance), while in others it is low and associated with income (like in Rwanda).

Region: HESA



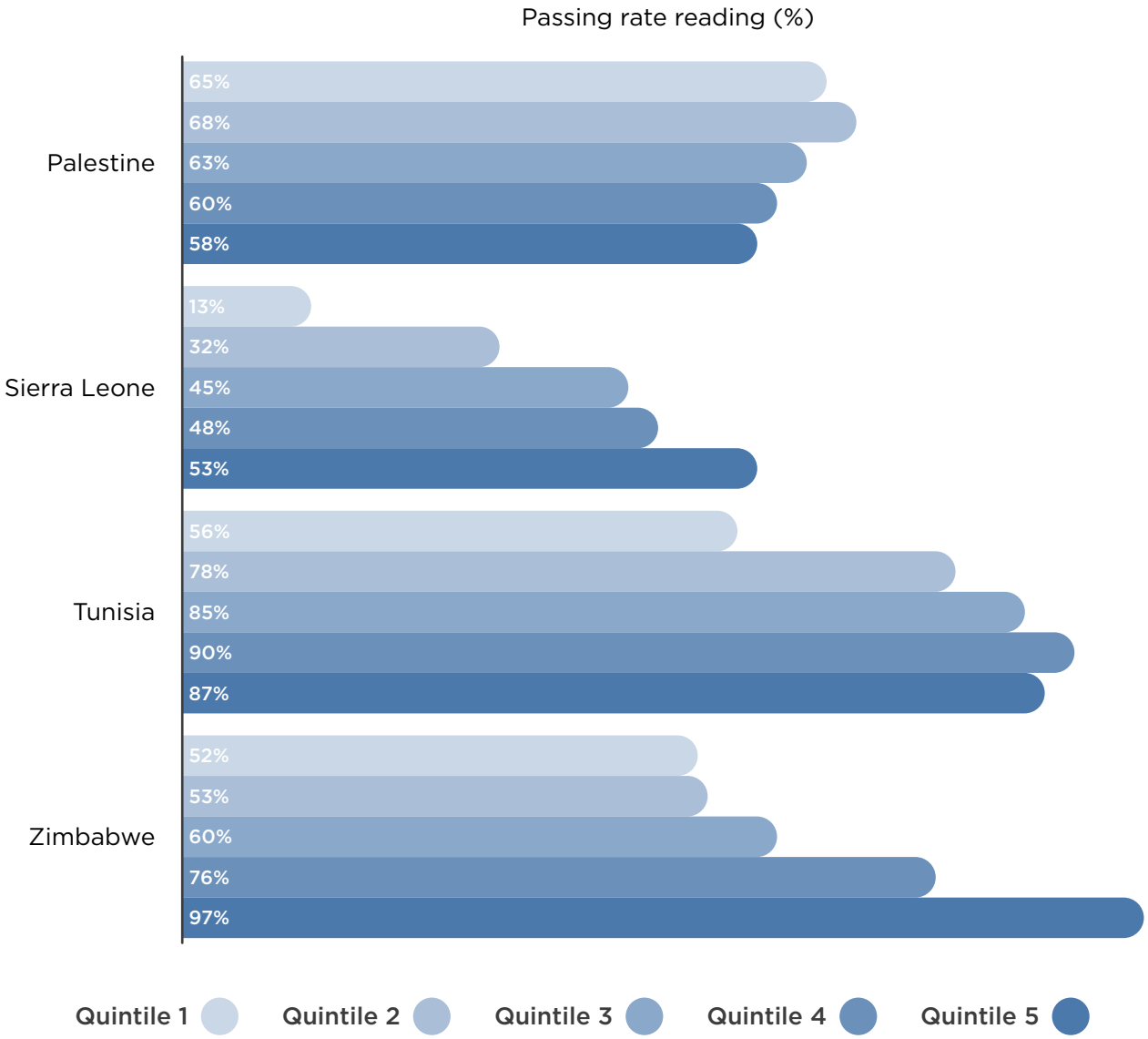
In HESA, women are outperforming or performing at the same level than men in all countries in reading. Palestine and Zimbabwe have the biggest gaps (28 and 20 percentage points, respectively), while in Sierra Leone the gap is three percentage points, and in Tunisia the difference (favouring women) is four percentage points.

Region: HESA



All the countries have significant gaps when it comes to disaggregating the passing rates in reading by area: the smallest difference within a country is 12 percentage points (in Palestine). The largest is Zimbabwe: 35 points.

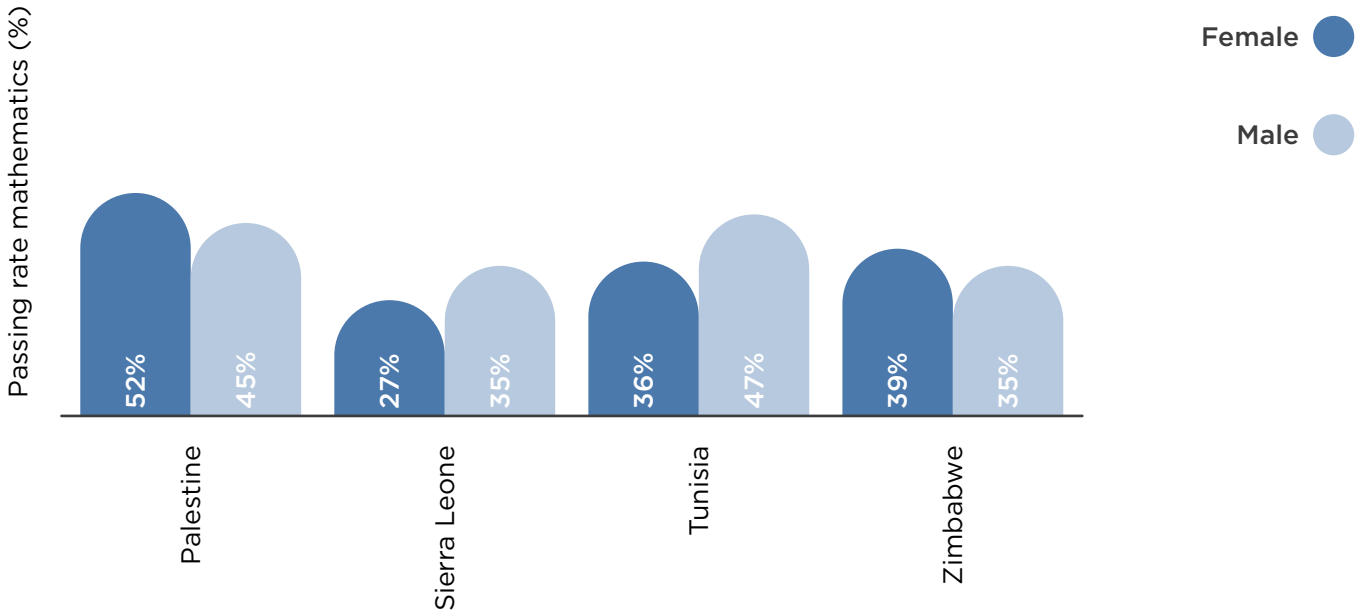
Region: HESA





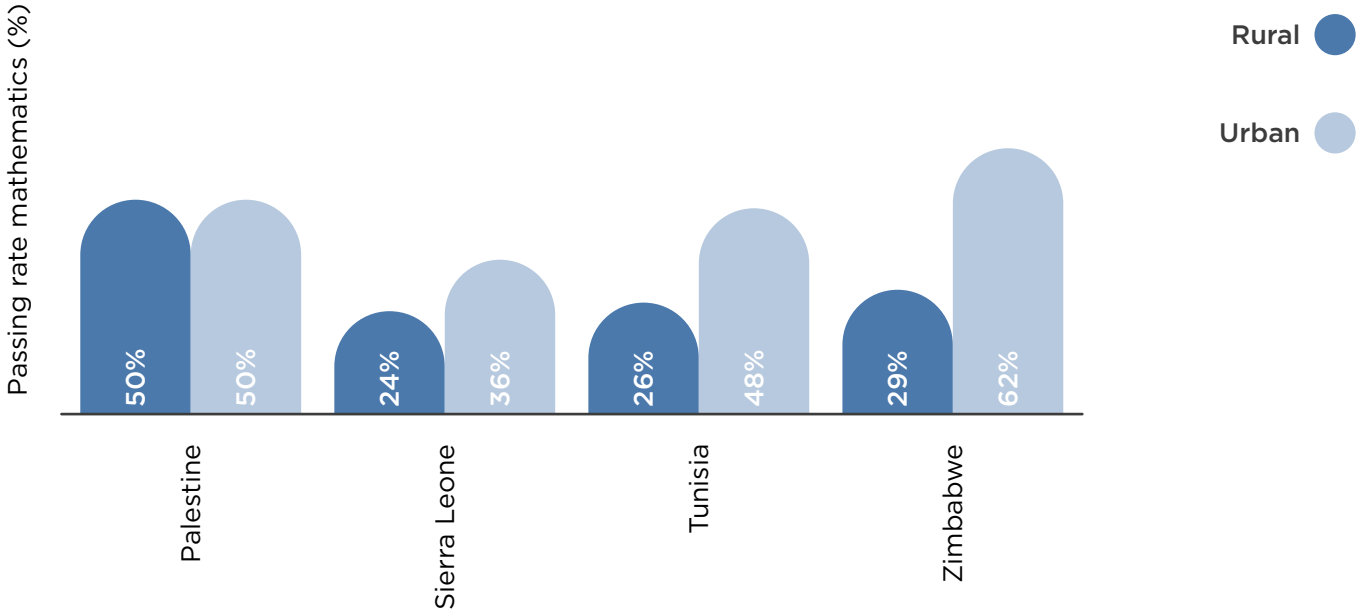
Palestine shows an interesting pattern when analysing the results by income group: not only is the poorest quintile (65%) is outperforming the richest one (58%), but the top performer one is the second poorest (68%). The other countries in the region show the usual pattern: the richer the group, the higher the performance.

Region: HESA



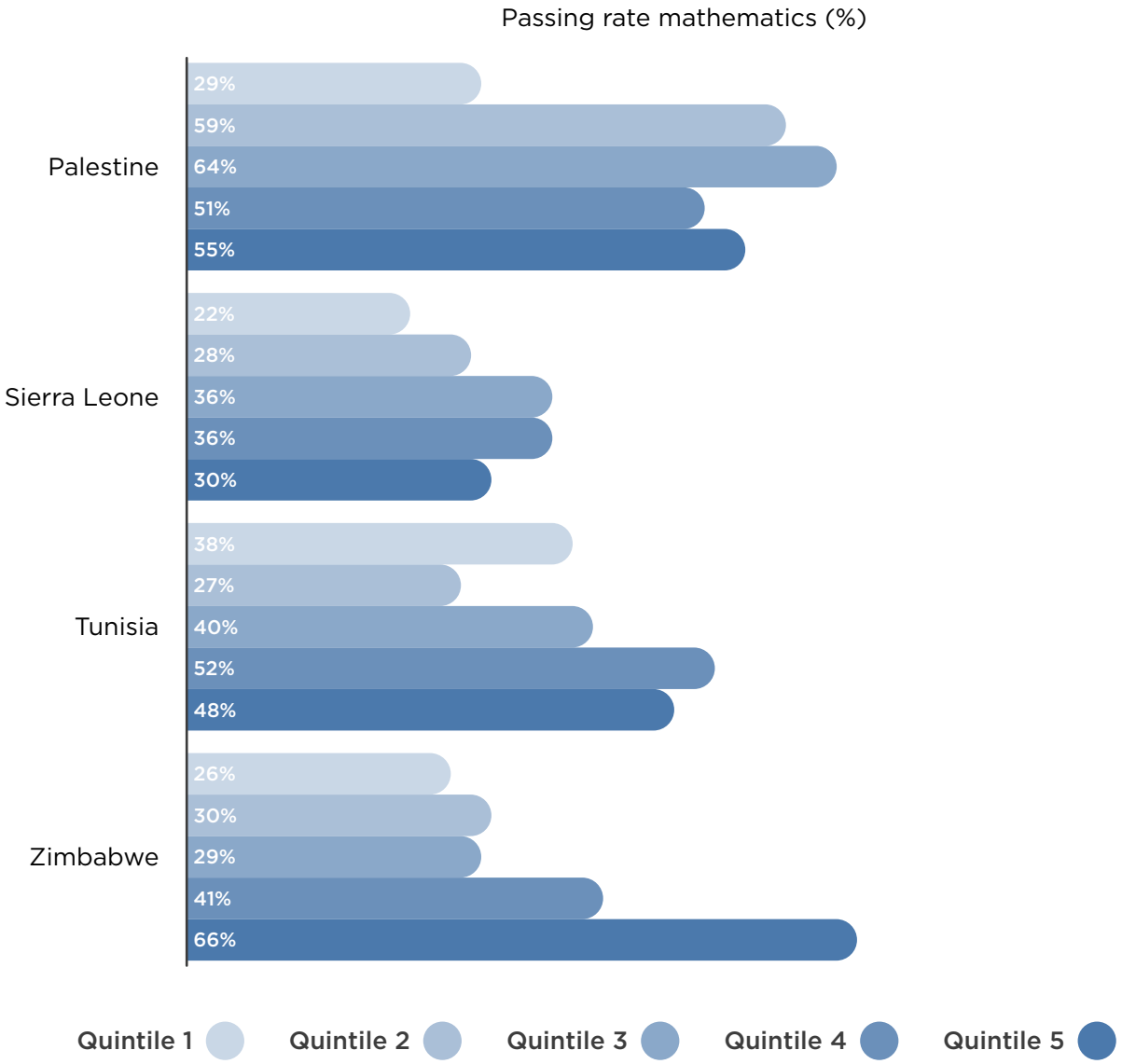
Out of the four countries with data in the HESA region, in two of them women have higher passing rates in mathematics (Palestine and Zimbabwe), while the opposite happens in the other two (Sierra Leone and Tunisia).

Region: HESA



Urban settings outperform rural settings in almost every country, except for Palestine where the passing rates are the same across groups. The best performance group depicted is urban Zimbabwe, and even there only 62% of the individuals cleared this level, highlighting the overall low performance of the region.

Region: HESA

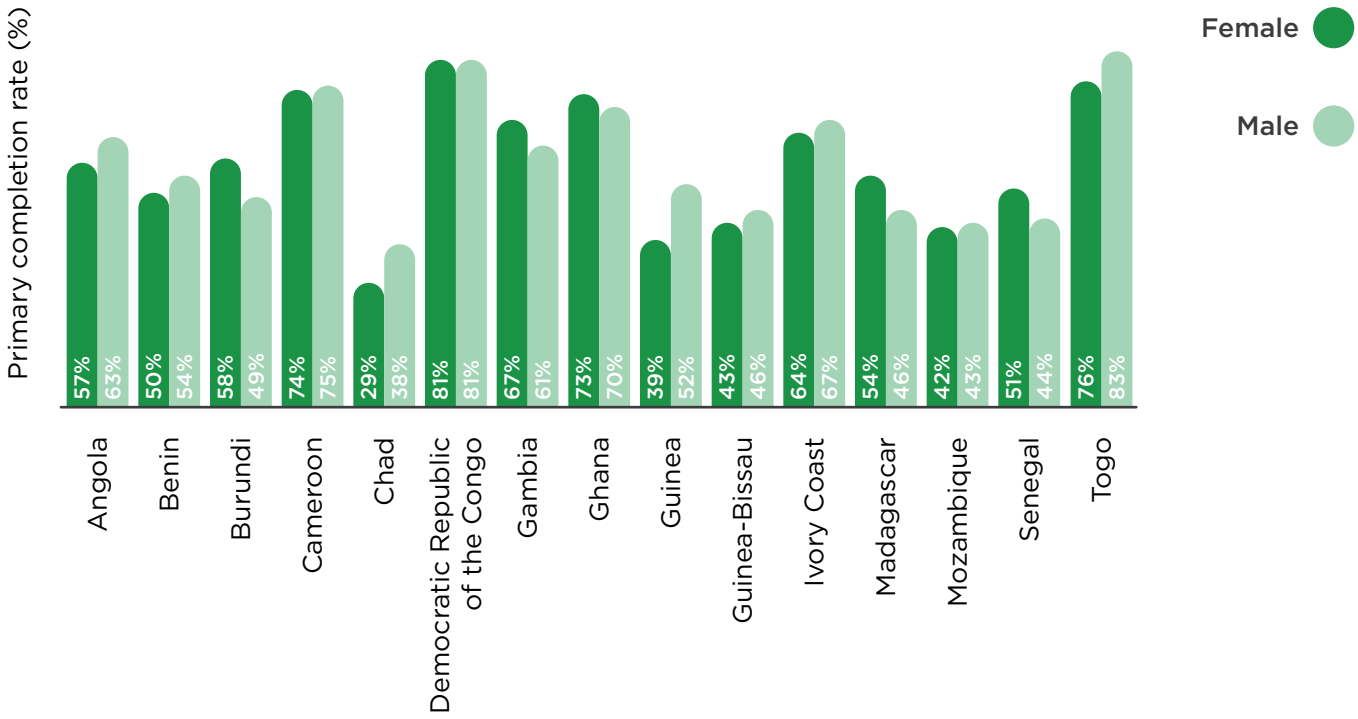


The overall trend persists: the richer the group, the higher the score. But there are some exceptions: in Sierra Leone the richest group is not the top performer, and that is also not the case in Tunisia nor in Palestine.



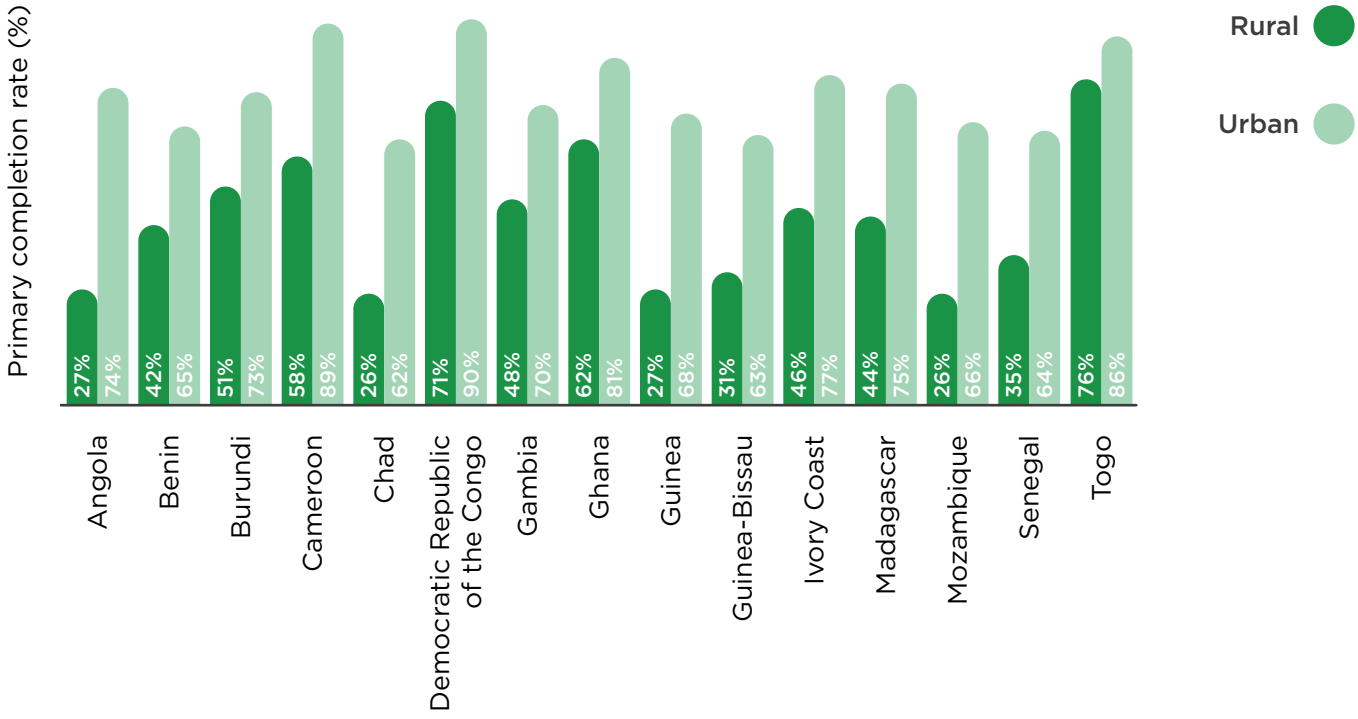
West and Central Africa (WCA), Access

Region: WCA



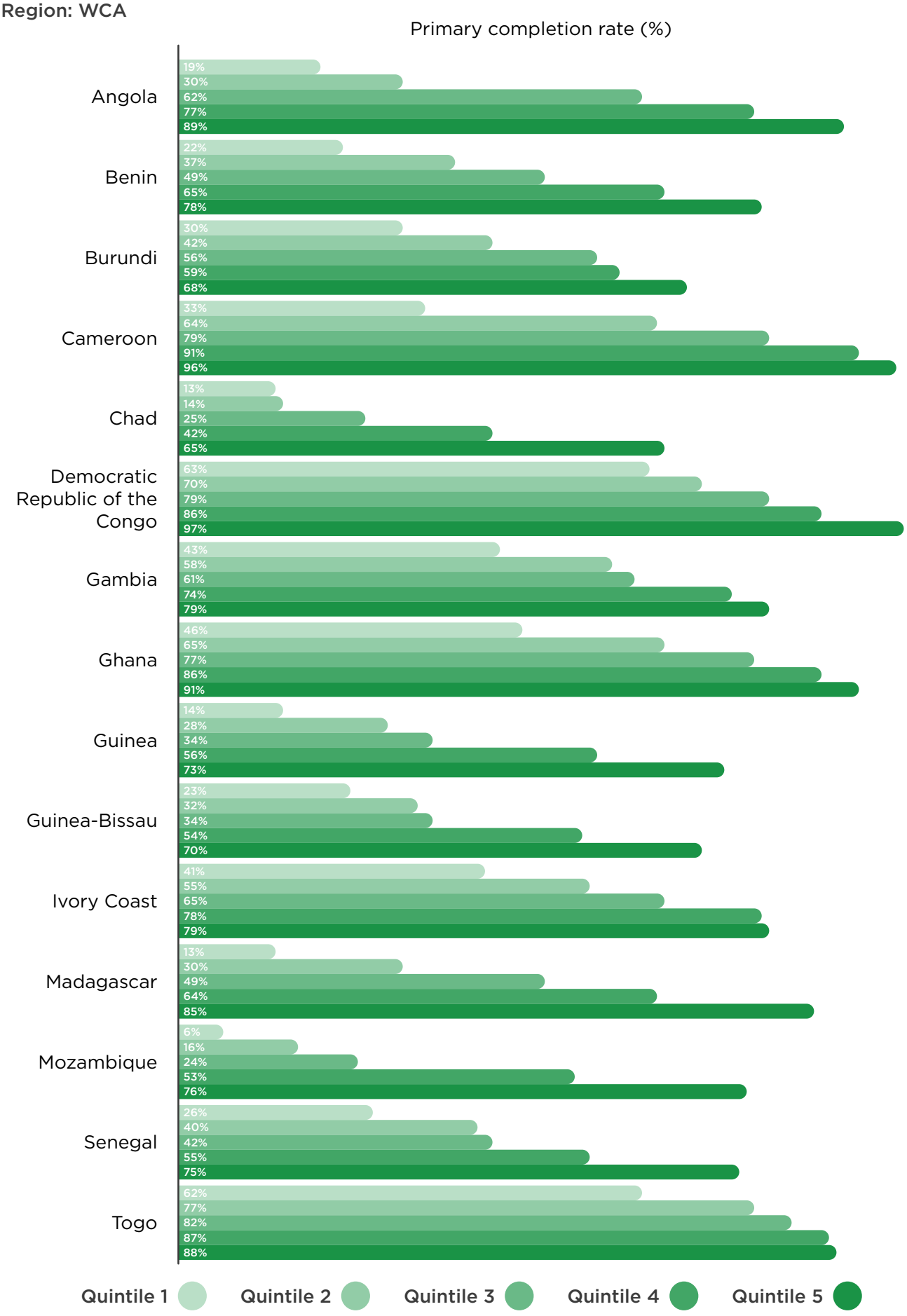
Within the West and Central Africa region there is more internal variation: In 9 countries men have higher completion rates than women, in one is the same (Democratic Republic of Congo), and in the other women 5 have higher, with Guinea having the biggest gap (13 percentage points).

Region: WCA



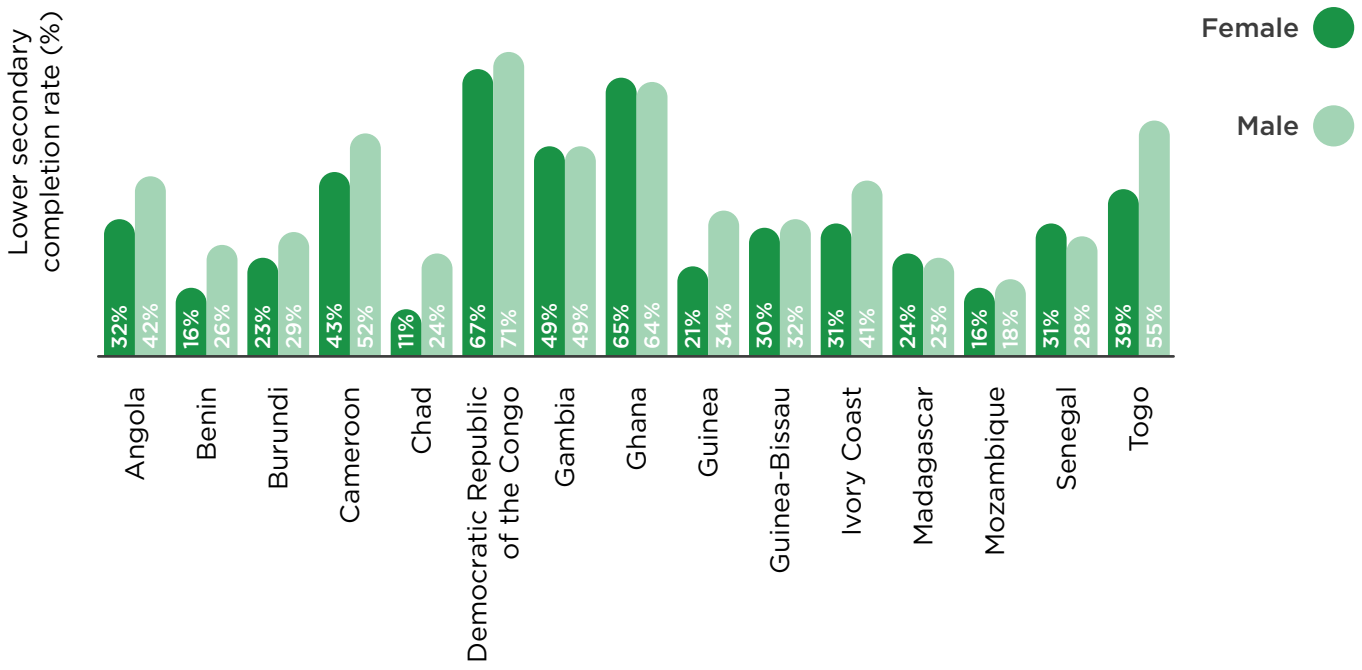
In all countries, no exception, there is the same trend: rural individuals are completing primary at a lower rate than their peers in urban areas. The countries with the smallest gaps are Togo (10 points), and Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo (19 points). The highest difference corresponds to Angola (47 percentage points), where only 27% of the rural population complete primary schooling.

Region: WCA



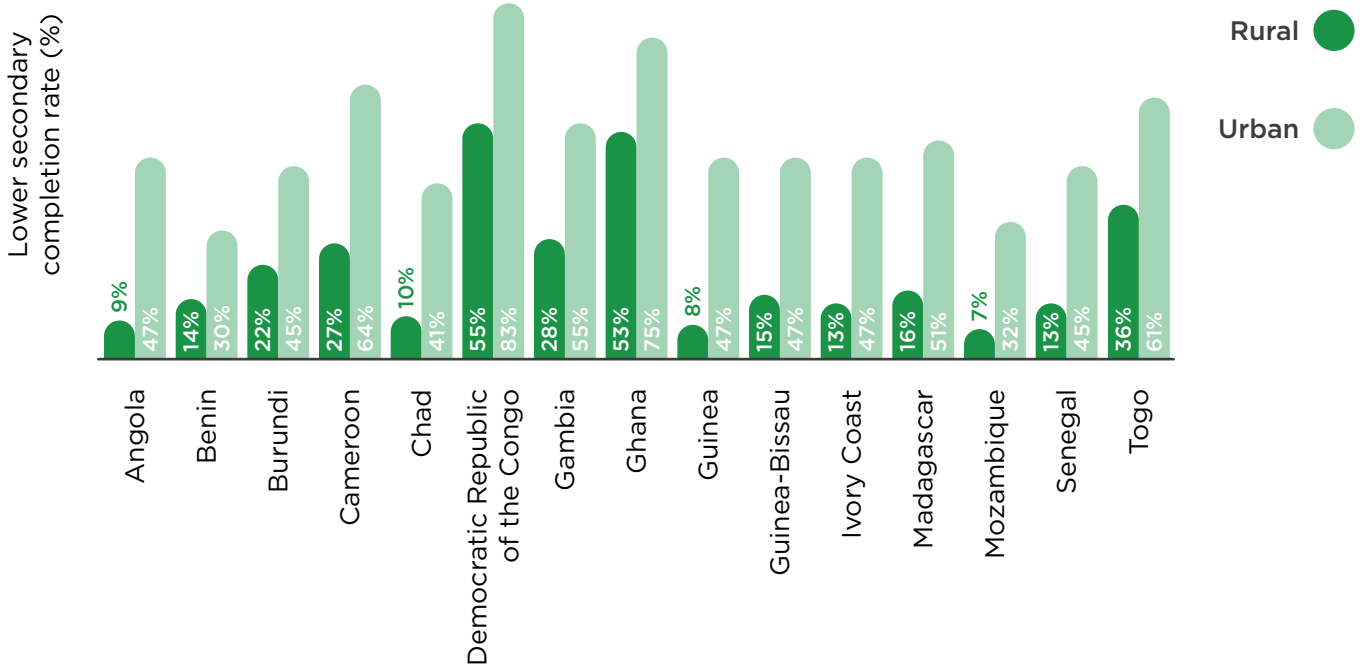
In WCA the distance between quintiles is evident. For example, in Mozambique the poorest group has a completion rate of 6%, while the wealthiest quintile is at rate of 76%. Only Togo has a completion rate above 80% for its middle-income group.

Region: WCA



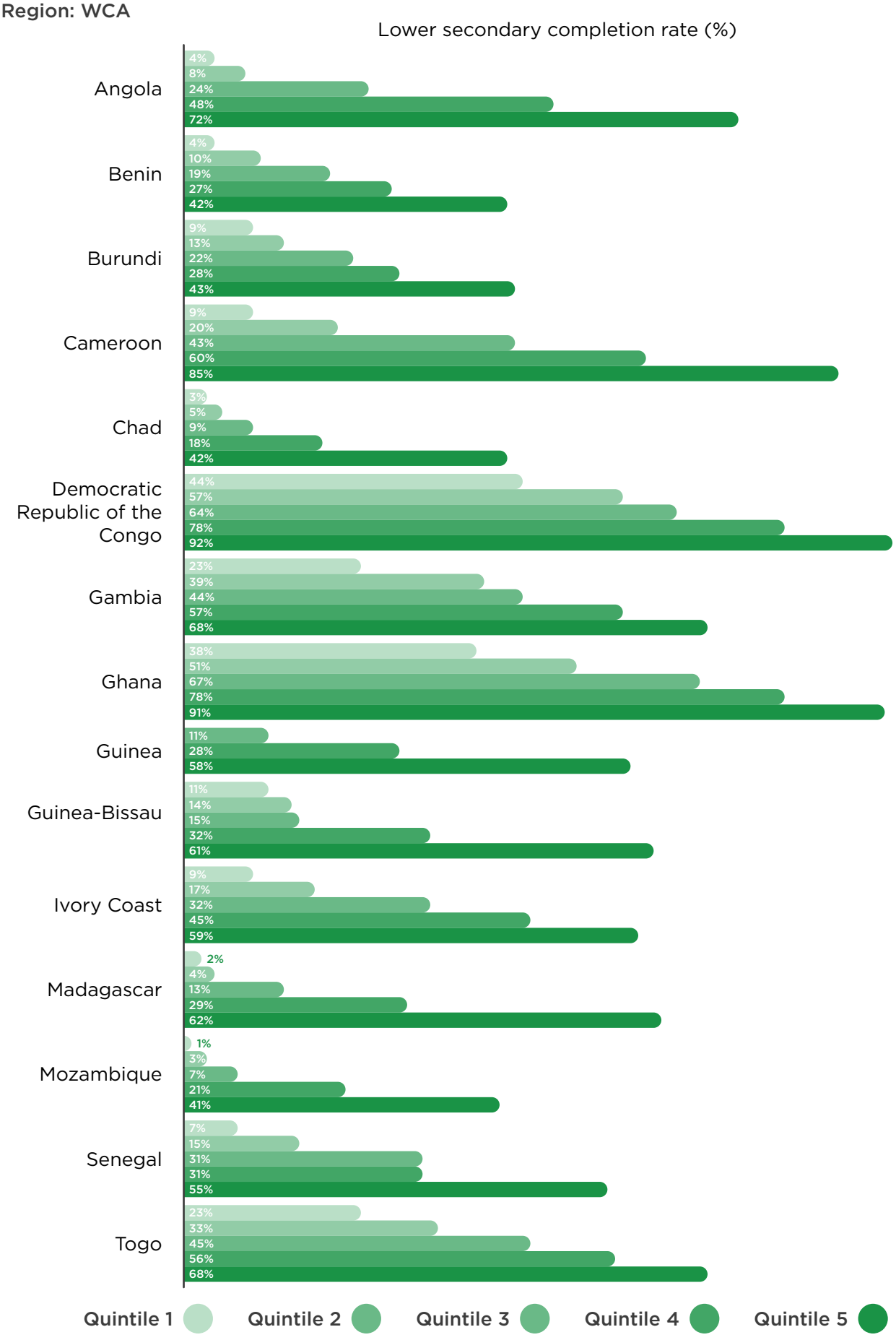
Unlike other regions, WCA shows a different story regarding lower secondary completion rate: in 11 countries (out of 15), men complete this schooling level more often than women. This gap is especially notorious in Togo (16 percentage points of difference), and Chad (13 points). Only in Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, and Senegal women have the same or higher completion rates than men.

Region: WCA



When it comes to disaggregating the data by area, there is a clear pattern in West and Central Africa: in all countries, no exception, urban settings outperform rural settings. And the gaps are significant: the smallest gap is found in Benin (16 percentage points), and the highest is Guinea (39 points, and only 8% completion rate for people in rural areas).

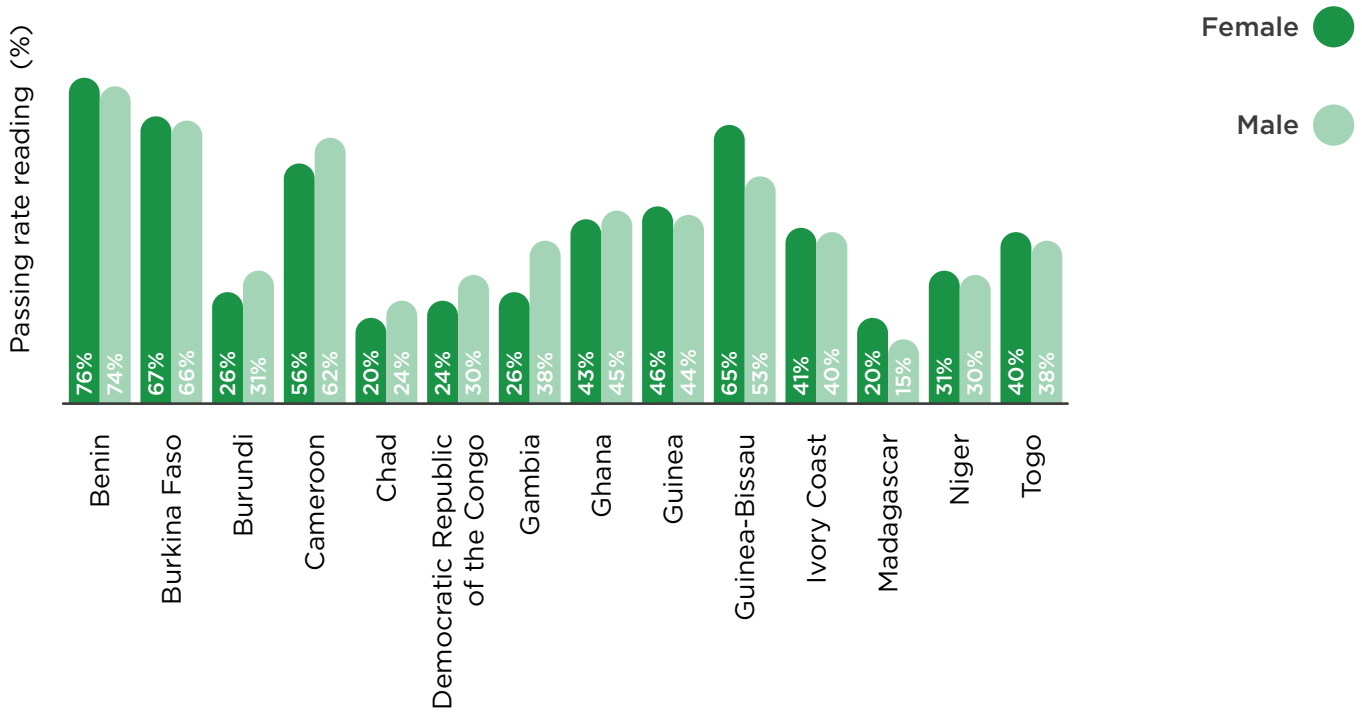
Region: WCA



Lastly, in WCA, where overall completion rates are generally low, there is high variation within several countries: For instance, in Angola, the rates go from 4% in the poorest group to 72% in the richest. Moreover, only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ghana the richest groups have a completion rate above 90%.

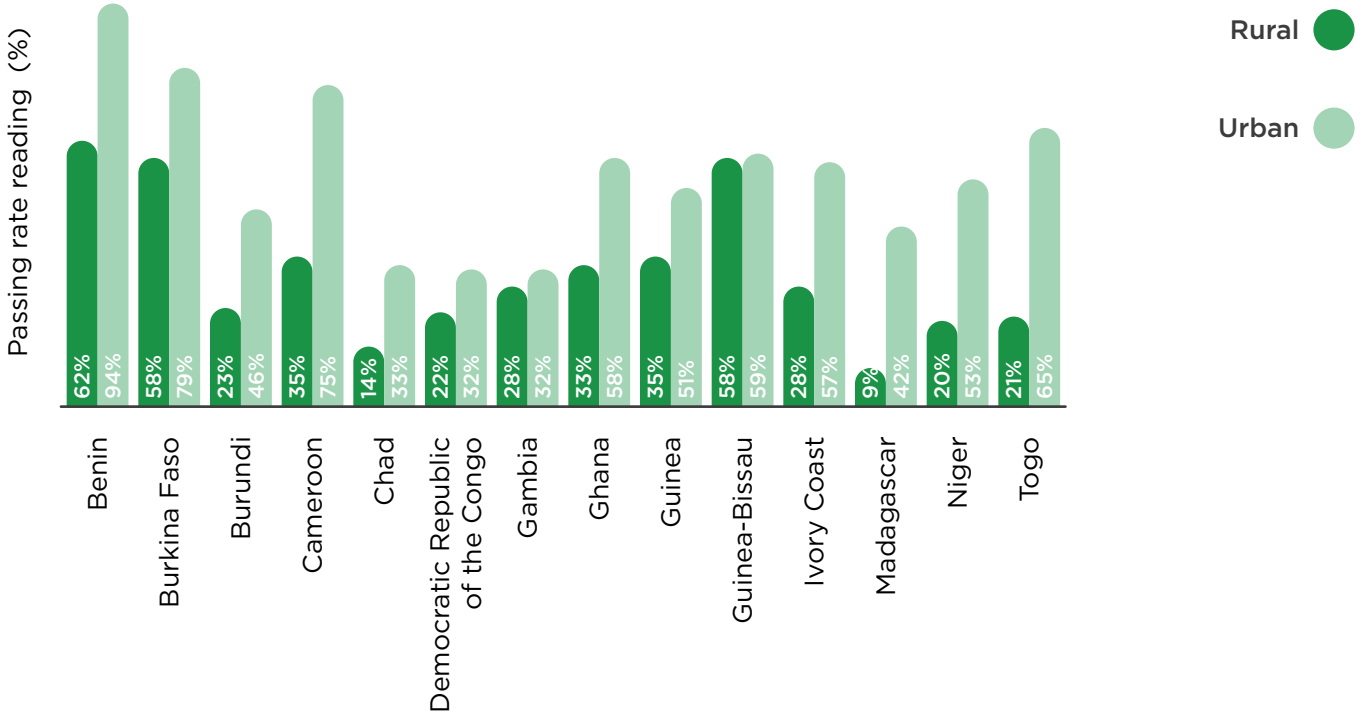
West and Central Africa (WCA), Learning

Region: WCA



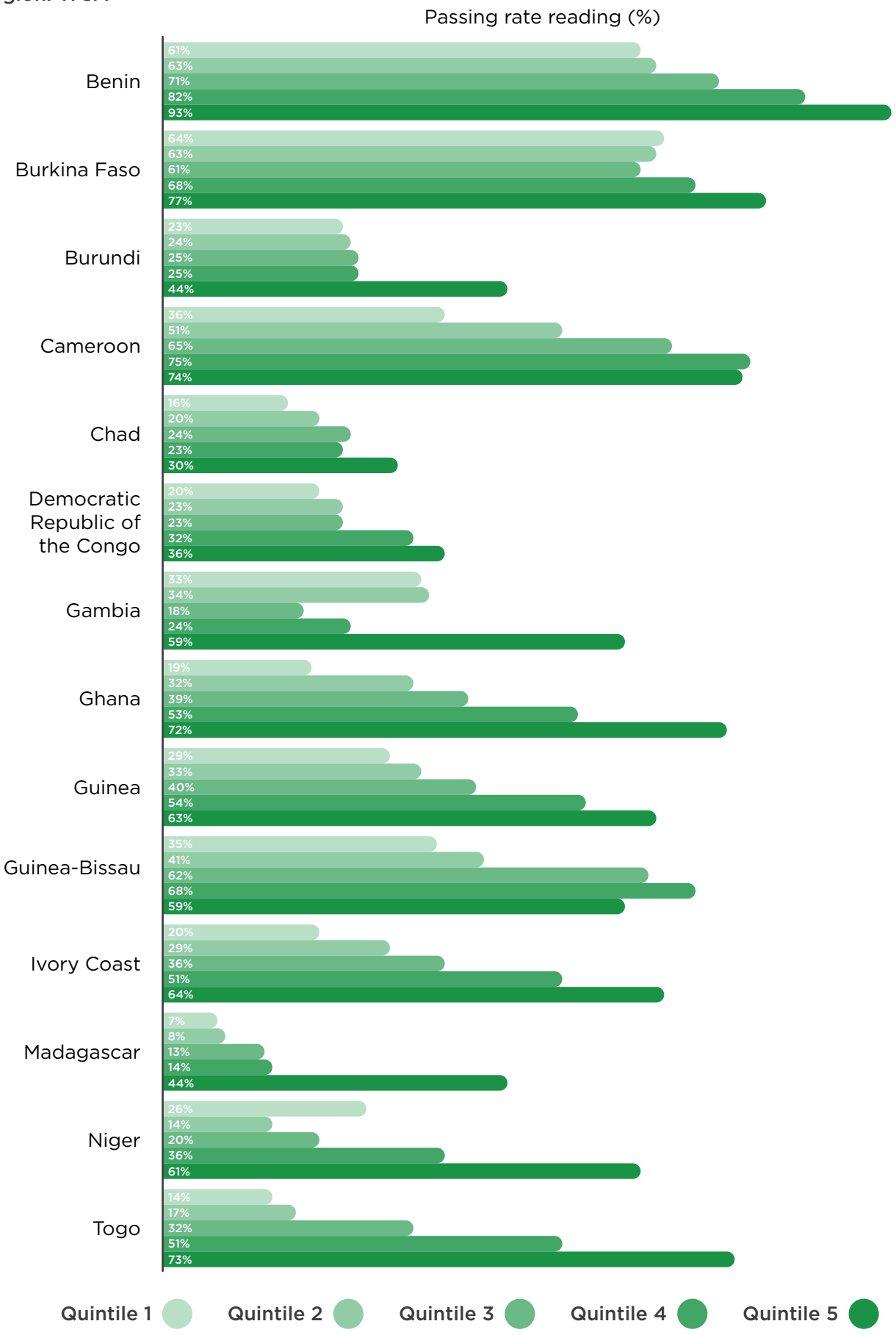
In terms of learning results, no clear pattern emerges in West and Central Africa regarding gender. For instance, in Burundi boys are performing better than girls (5 percentage points), in Guinea-Bissau girls are doing better (12 percentage points), and in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Niger the gap is only one point.

Region: WCA



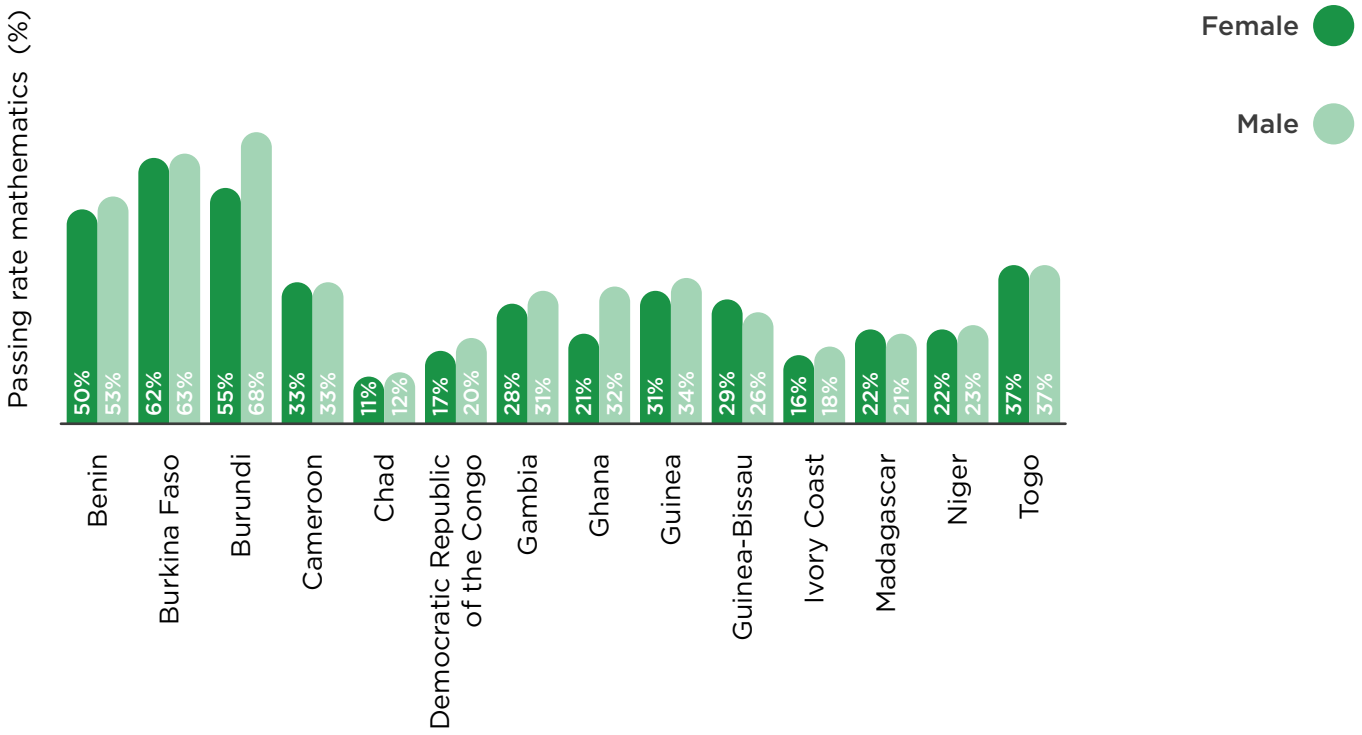
We have the same story in every country in the WCA region: urban areas are performing better than rural areas, and the differences range from 1 percentage point (Guinea-Bissau) to 44 percentage points (Togo, where only 21% of the individuals in rural setting cleared this test).

Region: WCA



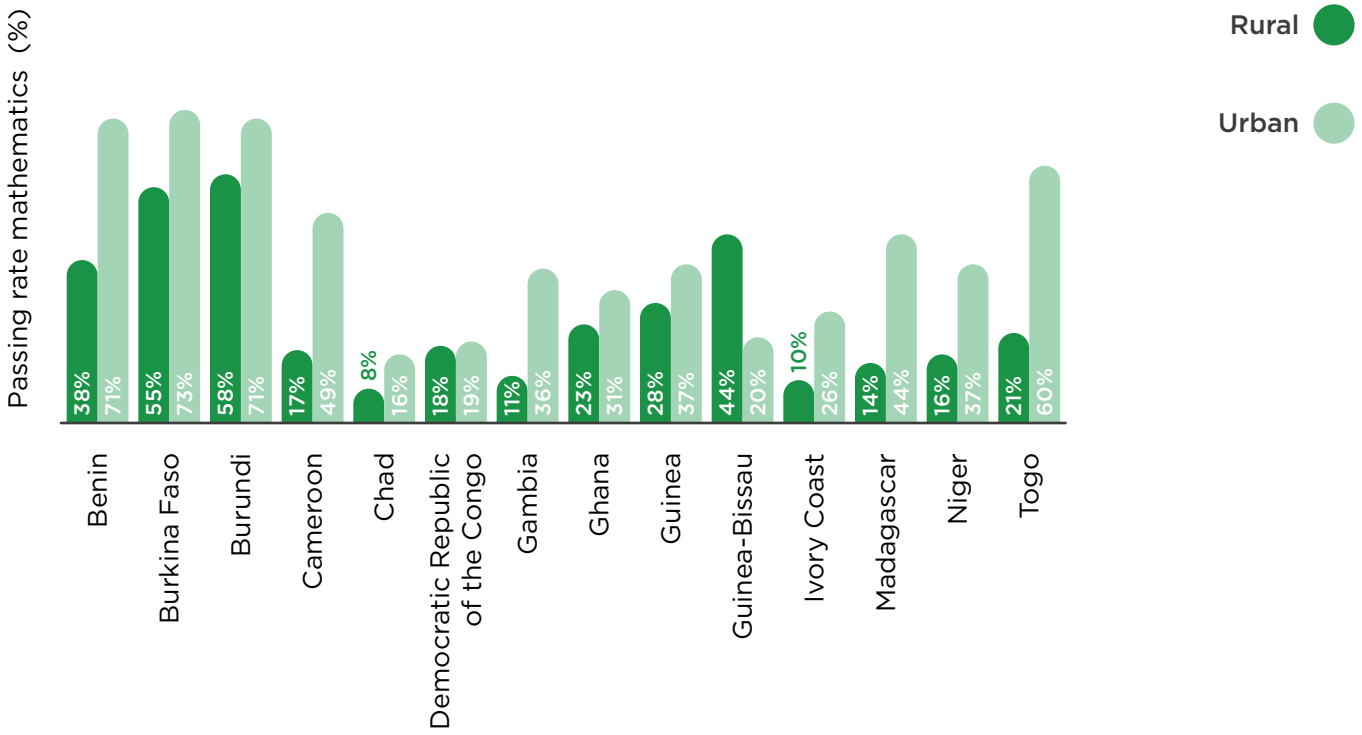
The trend that the richer the group within a country the higher the passing rate applies to most countries in the WCA. There are some unusual cases. For example, in Guinea-Bissau the top performing quintile is the second richest, and in Burkina Faso the lowest performing quintile is the middle one.

Region: WCA



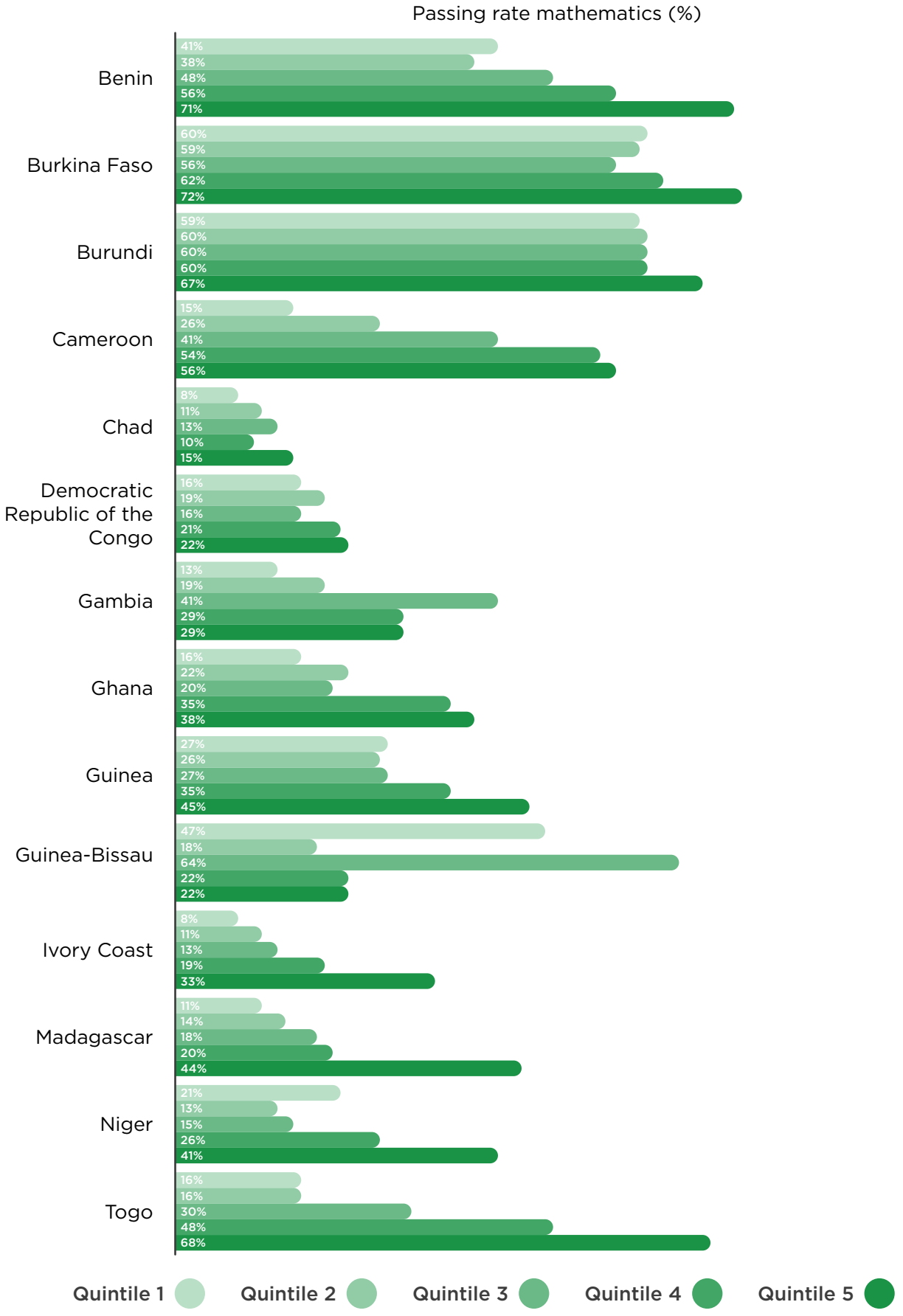
In mathematics, boys are performing alike or better than girls in all the countries except for Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar. However, the gaps are small: in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Togo the gap is zero or one percentage point.

Region: WCA



Once again, with the only exception of Guinea-Bissau, the urban population outperforms the rural population, with the largest gap in Togo (39 percentage points). The smallest difference is found in the Democratic Republic of Congo: one percentage point.

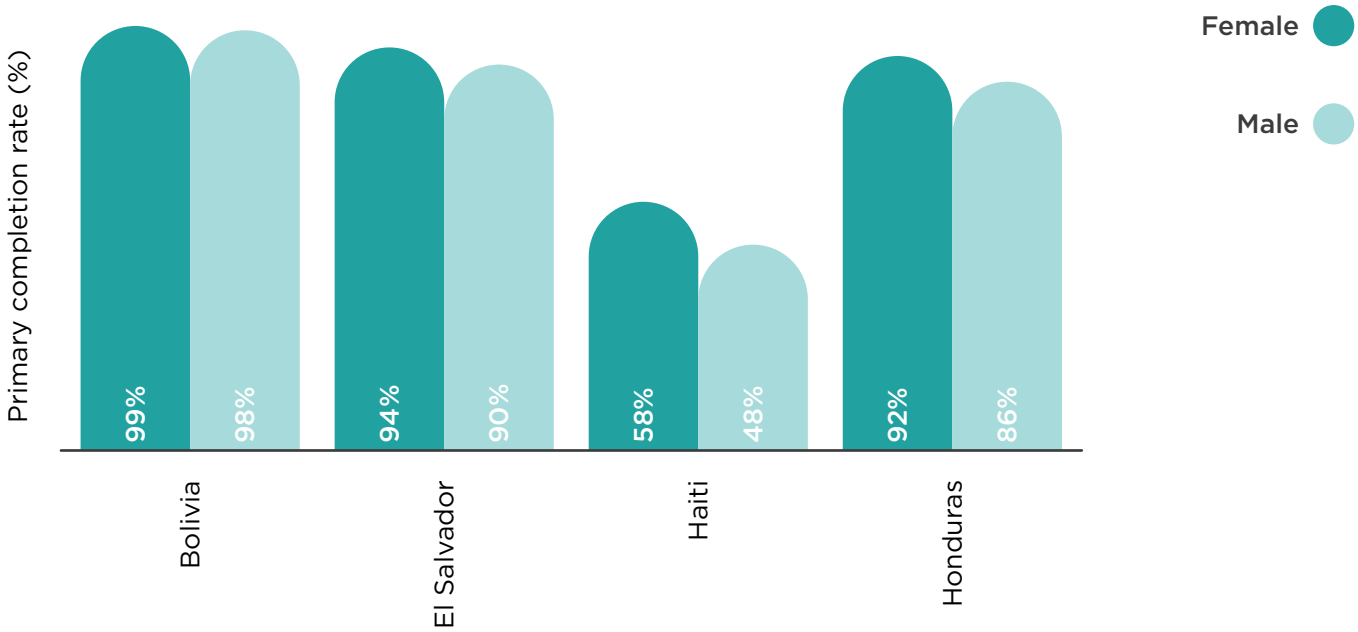
Region: WCA



There is a clear pattern regarding income groups and passing rate in mathematics: richer income groups perform better in the assessment. For instance, Cameroon has a consistent improvement in outcomes as the quintile income increases, moving from 15% for the poorest group to 56% in the richest one. There are some exceptions, for example, in Burkina Faso the middle group is doing worse than the other groups.

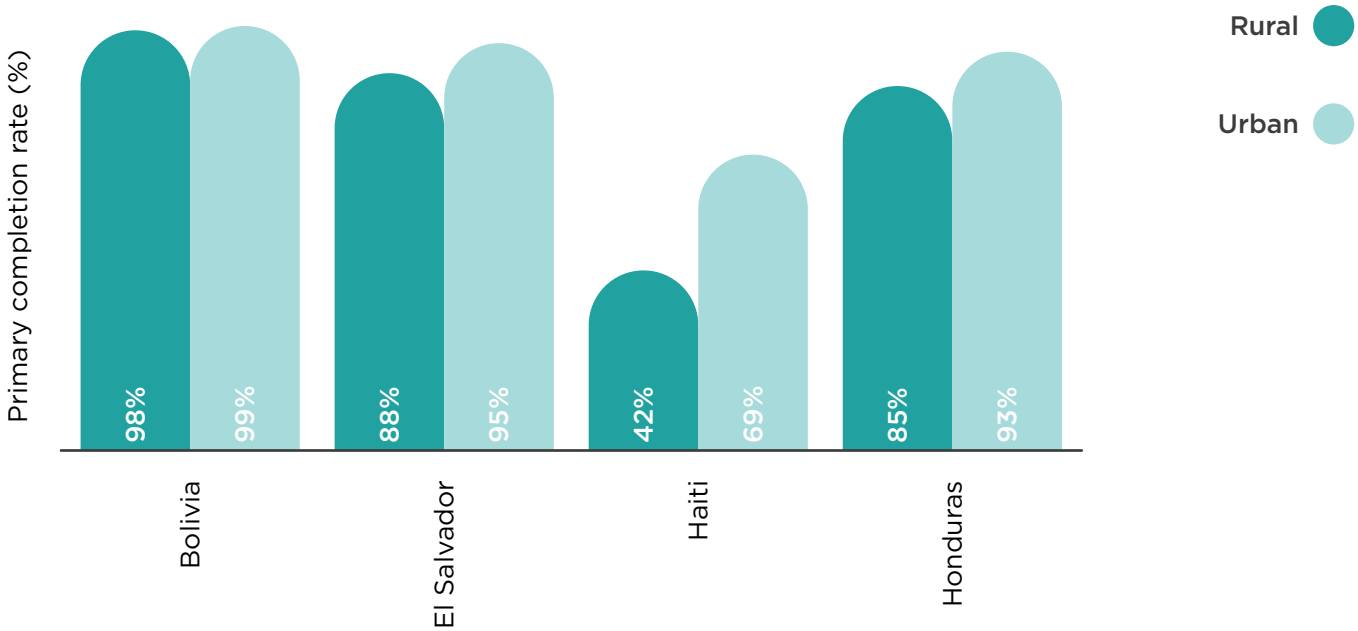
Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC), Access

Region: LAC



In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), all countries have higher completion rates for women than men. The smallest gap is found in Bolivia (one point gap), where the primary completion rate is almost universal for both groups. The largest gap corresponds to Haiti (10 percentage points), which is also the country with the lowest rates in the region.

Region: LAC



In Bolivia the primary completion rate is almost universal for rural and urban areas. In the other three countries, rural settings are at a disadvantage, and the largest gap corresponds to Haiti (27 percentage points).

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