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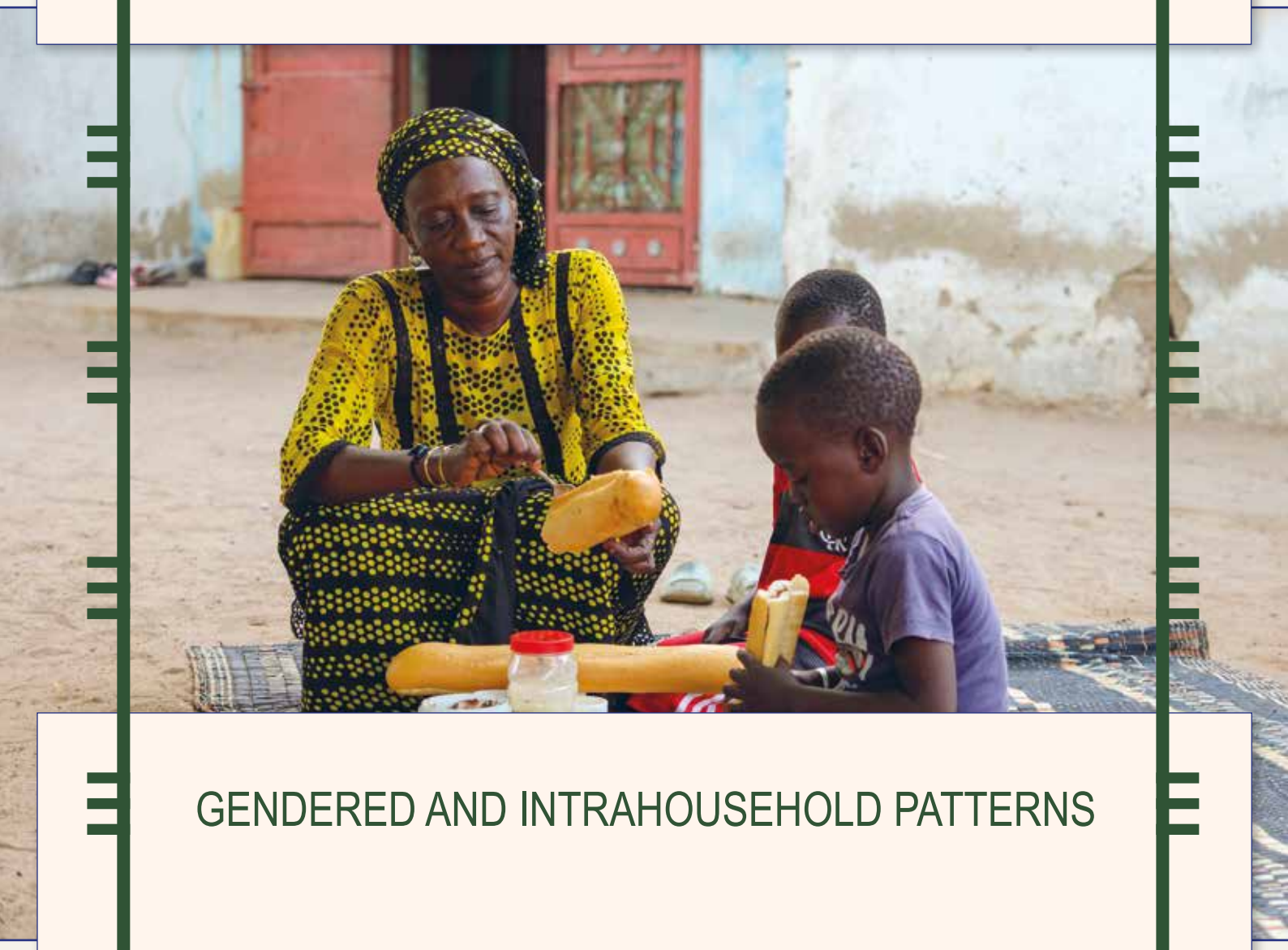
MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY AND INDIVIDUAL CHILD DISADVANTAGES IN NUTRITION AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



GENDERED AND INTRAHOUSEHOLD PATTERNS

OXFORD POVERTY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Multidimensional Poverty and Individual Child Disadvantages in Nutrition and School Attendance: Gendered and Intrahousehold Patterns

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children of more educated adults generally experience fewer deprivations and higher attainments. But previous studies on this topic tend to be limited in scope, based on modelled estimates and not always up to date. This unique report directly measures individual boys' and girls' disadvantages in nutrition and school attendance across the developing world, and then uses a household-wide multidimensional lens to study which of these children live in acute multidimensional poverty (referred to as 'poverty' throughout this report). At the household level, it describes undernourished and out-of-school children in relation to other children they live with, and in relation to the highest education levels of men and women aged 18 and above in their households. The report then shows the other deprivations that these children experience while simultaneously being undernourished or out of school. This is the first-ever study of this scope to measure these intrahousehold and multidimensional relationships directly, using the most recent data of the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). Its overall findings are stark but actionable, and vary according to world regions and income groups.

The analysis intersects individual child outcomes with the measurement of poverty according to the global MPI, which looks at how people are deprived in health, education and living standards indicators in over 100 developing countries. The results are striking. Around one-third of the 518 million children under 5 years of age living in developing countries are undernourished. For the first time, global results reveal that over 95 million stunted and/or underweight children under 5 also face the additional burden of living in multidimensionally poor households. Two-thirds of poor undernourished children live in households in which no woman has completed six or more years of schooling.

Focusing on the 1 billion school-aged children in the developing world covered by the global MPI data, the report finds 136 million to be out of school, and over 80% of these children (around 110 million) are poor as well. Around 82% of these poor out-of-school children live in a household where no woman has completed six years of schooling, underscoring the deep and ongoing scar of left-behind girls who leave school early – if they study at all.

The gender picture is nuanced. While more boys are undernourished than girls, and globally more girls are out of school than boys, the gender disparities by education vary considerably across countries. Across regions, low education for women is associated with poverty.

Considering the relationship to other children, the analysis shows that over one-third of poor children under 5 live in households with both undernourished and well-nourished children. Similarly, over one-third of poor school-age children live in households with both out-of-school and school-going children. Policies cannot assume that all children within a household experience the same conditions and opportunities.

On a positive note, the report also probes the situation of 'pioneer children' – children who have completed six years of schooling, but live in households in which no adult has attained the same level. These 71 million children might be a force for intergenerational change.

Overall, this analysis emphasises the possibility and importance of using individual data alongside household data to inform evidence-based programmes that meaningfully address cycles of poverty seeded by undernourished and out-of-school children. Launched in the wider context of increasing food insecurity stemming from conflict – including in the Middle East – and climate change, this comprehensive report provides timely data for the urgency of multisectoral interventions and offers an important call to action on child poverty.

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KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly half of all children under 5 years of age are individually malnourished, multidimensionally poor, or both (252.3 million out of 518.5 million children).
- Almost one in five children under 5 are individually undernourished *and* multidimensionally poor. This means that 95.6 million children are stunted and/or underweight and are deprived in at least one-third of the 10 health, education and living standards deprivations included in the global MPI.
- Children's experiences within the household differ. One in five children under 5 live in households where some children are undernourished, while others are not.
- Adult education matters – especially women's. Over two-thirds of both well-nourished and undernourished poor children live in a household where no woman has completed six years of schooling.
- There are 135.8 million children out of school across 108 countries, of which 110.2 million are both out of school and living in poor households, showing a tight nexus between school attendance and poverty.
- In 19 countries, representing 55.6% of all out-of-school children, girls face higher rates of school exclusion than boys. Yet in 35 countries, accounting for 21.4% of all out-of-school children, boys are more likely than girls to be out of school. In 54 countries there is no significant gender disparity, but these countries are home to fewer than one in four school-aged children.
- Around 82.1% of all poor and out-of-school children do not have an educated female (a woman who has completed at least six years of schooling) in their household. Furthermore, 62.3% of poor and out-of-school children lack an educated male, while 46.8% lack any adult with even one year of completed schooling. This risks perpetuating poverty across generations.
- Over one-third of poor children under 5 experience intrahousehold inequality in nutrition and, similarly, over one-third of poor school-aged children experience inequality in school attendance – meaning they are disadvantaged but other children in the household are not.
- The 95.6 million children who are both poor and undernourished experience, on average, four to five deprivations in addition to undernutrition. Similarly, the 110.2 million children who are both poor and out of school experience, on average, five additional deprivations across the other nine global MPI indicators. Looking only at one child indicator fails to appreciate this density of deprivations that afflict poor children – and to respond to them.
- On a positive note, 71.3 million children aged 10–17 are pioneer children – the first generation in their household to complete six years of schooling. Half of these live in South Asia (35.0 million), where one in nine children aged 10–17 is a pioneer child.

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I. INTRODUCTION

> **Deprivation of elementary capabilities can be reflected in premature mortality, significant undernourishment (especially of children), persistent morbidity, widespread illiteracy and other failures. (Sen, 1999, p. 20)**

Poor children's lives are buffeted by multiple deprivations. This report takes a panoramic view. It considers individual children's disadvantages in nutrition and school attendance alongside the broader set of deprivations they experience with their households. These include those related to water, sanitation, housing, electricity, cooking fuel, assets, child mortality and years of schooling. The household-level measures of nutrition and school attendance also incorporate information on other eligible household members.

Child nutrition and basic education have long been global goals and priorities whose strategic value is recognised. For example, in his autobiography *Home in the World*, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen explains that, as he was moving back to India in the early 1960s, 'it was impossible to escape' noticing 'the lack of crucial public services, including school education and basic health care' – under which 'endemic undernutrition remained widespread' (Sen, 2021, p.404). Sen and his long-time co-author Jean Dréze framed the critically important role of basic education thus: '[i]n a society … where so much depends on the written medium, being illiterate is like being imprisoned, and school education opens the door' (Dréze and Sen, 2013, p.109). They noted how educational skills open economic and employment prospects, unmuffle political voice, and enhance the voice and power of women within and beyond the family. Educated persons have an impact on their families' health, understand and engage institutional channels, and are initiated into the joy of learning – which can be lifelong. Similarly, Sen articulated the pivotal value of child nutrition: well-nourished children develop fully both physically and intellectually, can concentrate at school and are less prone to illnesses, leading to better job prospects and fewer ongoing health issues. Sen argued passionately that 'there is an irreducible core of absolute deprivation in our idea of poverty, which translates reports of starvation, malnutrition and visible hardship into a diagnosis of poverty without having to ascertain first the relative picture' (1981, p.17).

Since then, energised by many voices including the capability approach, global goals and human capital priorities, reports on child undernutrition and school attendance have gained ground – to the extent that they might seem to commit the capital sin of development economics: they are seen as 'old hat' – less invigorating and intellectually exhilarating than cutting edge (and also important) challenges. However, at a human level – a child level – serious capability shortfalls persist, and persist at scale. Furthermore, new data and methodologies permit far more granular investigations. Hence this report seeks to take a novel approach, which is to locate undernutrition and school exclusion in relationships with four salient features:

- With multidimensional poverty – and therefore a critical mass of deprivations.
- With other children in the household – and their nutrition and schooling status.
- With adults in the household – and their completed years of schooling.
- With that child's other deprivations – such as water, sanitation, housing and electricity.

Naturally, the present study is data-limited: nutrition also affects children aged 5 and above, school attendance is vital through secondary school and beyond, and the 10 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (global MPI) indicators are not the only relevant deprivations that children face. But this report scrutinises these priority groups and data as fully as possible to shed new light on high-impact policy angles, to deepen understanding of interrelationships and, most of all, to galvanise renewed commitment to ending these corrosive maladies for younger children.

1.1 GUIDE TO THIS ANALYSIS: DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

1.1.1 DATA OF THE GLOBAL MPI 2025

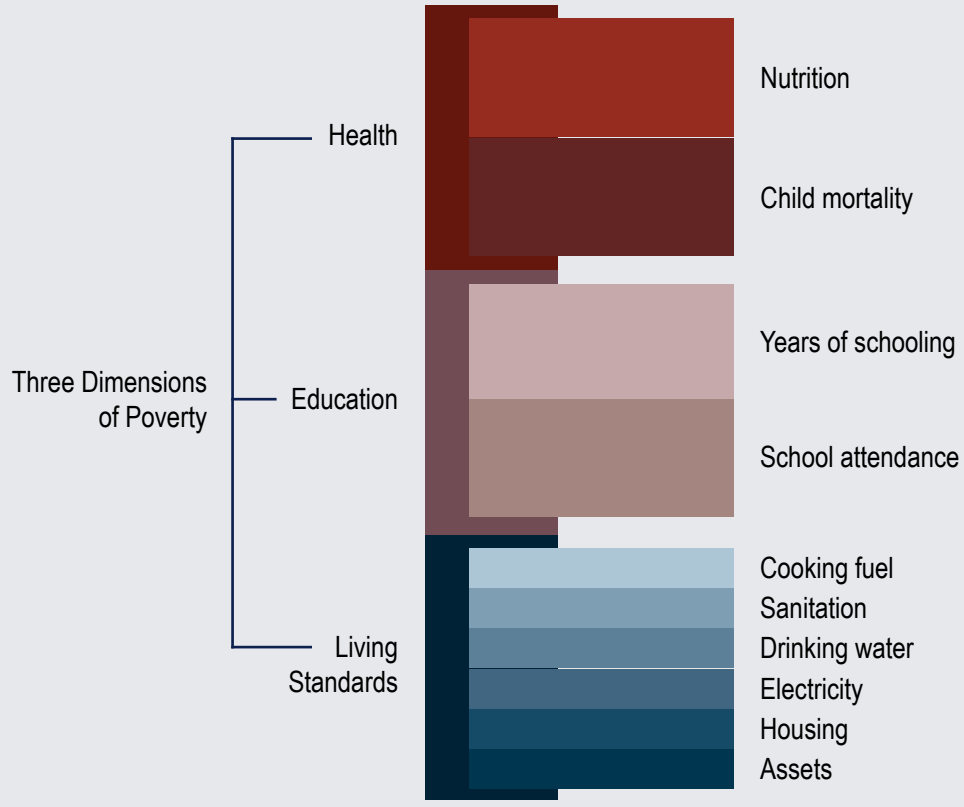
Poverty in this report is defined as multidimensional, reflecting the overlapping nature of deprivations people face in several areas of their life at the same time. This report intersects individual child data with data from the global MPI 2025 using the same datasets. The child nutrition analyses in this report use datasets covering 5.2 billion people across 97 countries. For the analysis of child school attendance, pioneer children and adult years of schooling, data cover 6.3 billion people and 108 countries.[1]

The global MPI is co-published annually with the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP and OPHI, 2025). A person is considered multidimensionally poor if they are deprived in one-third or more of the 10 weighted indicators, which are grouped into three dimensions of health, education and living standards (see Annex and Alkire et al., 2025; OPHI 2025).

1.1.2 UNIT OF ANALYSIS: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

This report uses the individual child as the unit of analysis,[2] thanks to the detailed micro-data that underlie the global MPI in the same surveys. This enables the gendered analysis of children's and adults' individual disadvantages, including in nutrition, school attendance and years of schooling, alongside the additional deprivations of their household and their multidimensional poverty status.

The report also locates children in relation to their global MPI poverty status. Recall that for the global MPI, the unit of identification is the household. That is, indicators are defined such that all persons in a household are considered deprived or non-deprived in each indicator. If household members are deprived in at least one-third of the weighted indicators, all household members are identified as multidimensionally poor. This report uses 'poverty' to refer to the global MPI status of the household.



Source: OPHI, 2018.

1.1.3 DEFINITIONS OF CHILD DISADVANTAGES IN NUTRITION AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

This report analyses individual children's undernutrition and school attendance using the same definitions at the individual level that the global MPI applies to determine under 5 children's deprivations in nutrition, and child school attendance deprivations (Alkire et al., 2025). The word 'disadvantage' specifies that this particular individual is personally affected (or disadvantaged).

- **Undernutrition:** A child aged 0 to 4 years (below 60 months) is disadvantaged in nutrition if that child is **underweight and/or stunted**. They are considered undernourished if their z-score of either height-for-age (stunting) and/or weight-for-age (underweight) is below minus two standard deviations from the median of the reference population.
- **Out-of-school child:** A school-aged child is out of school if that child is not attending school up to the age at which they should complete class 8 and has not completed class 8. The data source for the age that children start compulsory primary school is the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2026). For most of the countries, it covers children aged 6 to 14.

1.1.4 DEFINITION OF ADULT DISADVANTAGE IN YEARS OF SCHOOLING

- **Years of schooling:** If any adult aged 18 and above has not completed six years of schooling, they are considered disadvantaged in years of schooling. In the global MPI, this variable is considered for all household members aged school-entry plus six years of age. However, to analyse individual adult education, this report restricts the eligible persons to adults only.

1.1.5 DEFINITION OF A PIONEER CHILD

- A **pioneer child** is defined as a child aged 10 to 17 who lives in a household in which no adult aged 18 or above has completed six years of schooling, whereas that individual child has completed six years of schooling or more (Alkire and Ul Haq, 2025).[3]

1.2 CHILD DISADVANTAGES, MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY AND THE SDGs

The deprivations studied in this report directly link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). SDG 1 aims to 'End poverty in all its forms' – multidimensional as well as monetary. SDG target 1.2, together with SDG indicator 1.2.2 on multidimensional poverty, is the only SDG target that mentions disaggregation by children. The global MPI provides this information and offers age disaggregation for children under 10 and aged 10–17. SDG 2 is 'Zero hunger', and the study's focal indicator of child undernutrition is related to target 2.2. SDG 4 is 'Quality education', with the focal indicator of child school attendance related to target 4.1. Furthermore, the SDGs stress the importance of identifying and addressing interlinked indicators together. This report profiles, for the first time, not only individual child disadvantages, but also the other deprivations that multidimensionally poor children experience in indicators related to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 11. This analysis aims to prove useful for those seeking to implement multisectoral programmes that accelerate progress on children's poverty and on the interlinked deprivations that prevent children from escaping poverty.

1.3 POPULATION COVERAGE OF CHILDREN IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

Children are a key global priority. This report focuses on two groups of children: children under 5 years of age (for nutrition); and school-aged children, often aged 6–14 or the equivalent depending on the age at which they start school in their country. According to the global MPI 2025 figures, across the 6.3 billion people living in the 109 countries covered, 1.1 billion people experience acute multidimensional poverty (referred to as 'poverty' throughout this report). More than half of these poor people – 586.1 million – are children under 18, and 80% of them fall within two of the key child groups examined in this study.

As Figure 1 shows, of the 6.3 billion people covered in the global MPI 2025, 1.5 billion are children in these focal groups (Figure 1A). When these figures are combined with multidimensional poverty status, 1.1 billion people are poor, and 40.9% of all poor people are children in these age ranges – 175 million are under 5 years of age while 294 million are school-aged children (Figure 1B). In addition to these, the report studies 'pioneer children' aged 10-17. Thus, this study covers a large proportion of children across the developing world.

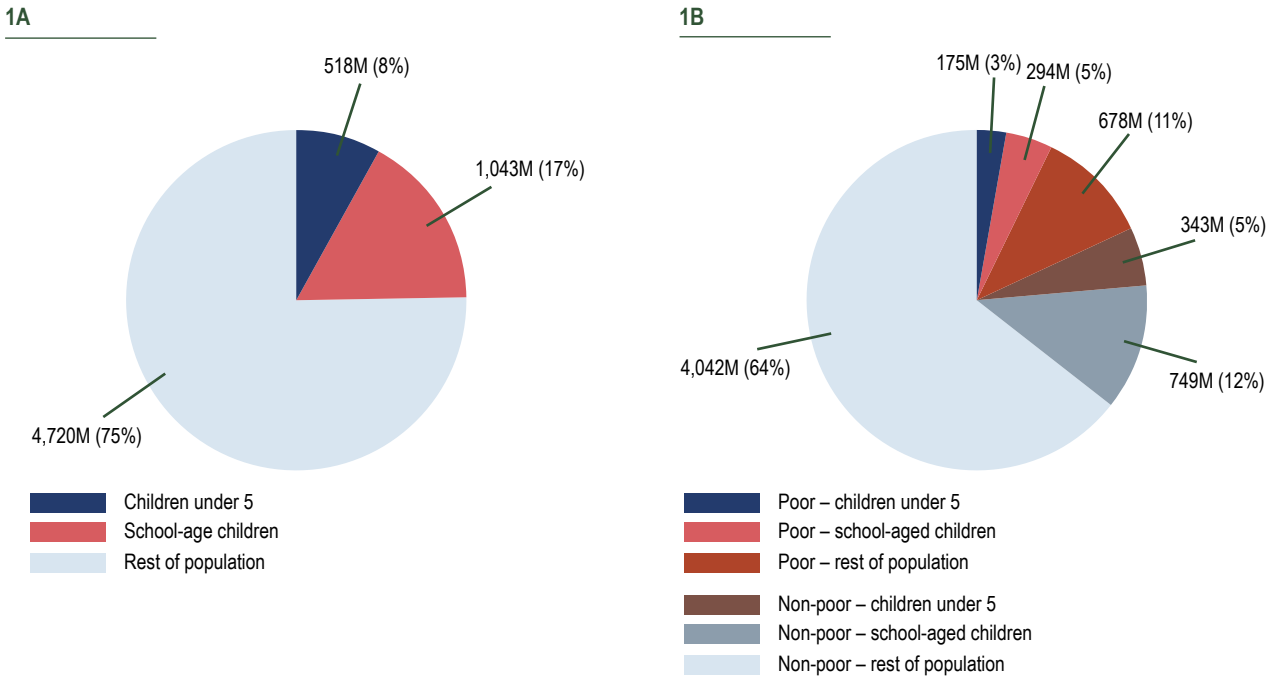
While multidimensional poverty globally affects 13.5% of adults, it affects 28.2% of school-aged children and 33.8% of children under 5. These children are thus of pivotal interest – and must not be left behind.

TABLE 1. INDIVIDUAL DISADVANTAGES ANALYSED IN THIS REPORT AND THEIR CORRESPONDENCE TO THE SDGs

Indicator	Deprivation cutoff	SDG
Nutrition	Any child under 5 is underweight and/or stunted.	2. Zero hunger
School attendance	Any child is not attending school up to the age at which they should complete class 8 and have not completed class 8.	4. Quality education
Years of schooling	Any adult aged 18 and above has not completed at least six years of schooling.	4. Quality education

Source: Authors' compilation.

FIGURE 1. THIS STUDY FOCUSES ON 518 MILLION CHILDREN UNDER 5 AND 1,043 MILLION SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN, WHICH TOGETHER REPRESENT 25% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION COVERED BY THE GLOBAL MPI (1A) AND 41% OF ALL POOR PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THE GLOBAL MPI (1B)



Note: Figure 1A. Total population covered by the global MPI, showing number of children under 5 and school-aged children covered; and 1B. Total population, distinguishing poverty status.
Source: Annex 2, Tables A1 and A2

ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

- **Disadvantaged:** Refers to a child who is individually undernourished or out of school, or an adult who has not completed six years of schooling.
- **Poverty status:** A child is identified as multidimensionally poor if they live in a household that experiences deprivations in one-third or more of the weighted global MPI indicators.
- **Gender disparity:** Refers to whether a significantly higher share of females or males are disadvantaged.
- **Intrahousehold inequality:** Refers to situations in which some eligible children within the same household are disadvantaged while others are not.

II. HOW DOES MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INTERSECT WITH UNDERNUTRITION?

> **One of the problems that makes … the prevention of [undernutrition] particularly difficult is the general sense of pessimism and defeatism that characterizes so much of the discussion on poverty and hunger in the modern world. … it is often taken for granted that nothing much can be done to remedy these desperate situations, at least in the short run.**
>
> **There is, in fact, little factual basis for such pessimism and no grounds at all for assuming the immutability of hunger and deprivation. (Sen, 1990)**

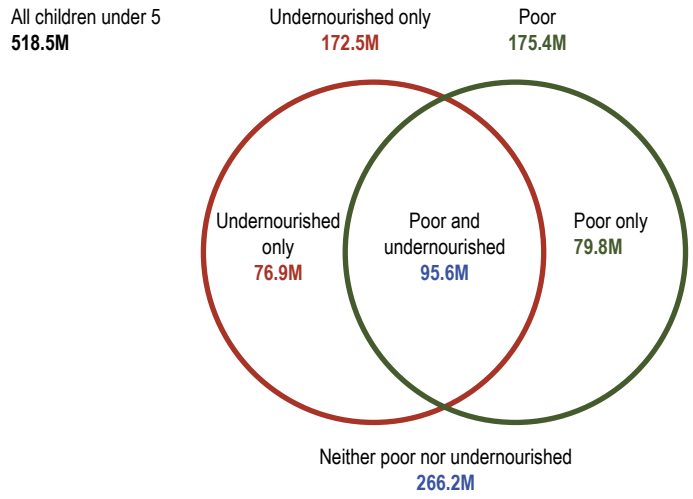
Underlying the global MPI are nutritional data on children under 5. If the child is stunted and/or underweight, they are considered disadvantaged in nutrition. If the child lives in a household that is poor according to the global MPI, we refer to the child as poor. The global MPI contains nutritional data for children under 5 for 97 countries, home to 5.2 billion people. This report uses the term 'well-nourished' as a shorthand to refer to children who are not underweight or stunted, but such children may have other nutritional challenges – in micronutrients, obesity or protein – hence more accurately the term strictly refers to children who are 'not undernourished' rather than claiming they are well-nourished.

On average, one-third of all children under 5, or 172.5 million children, are undernourished across the 97 countries (Figure 2). The majority of these undernourished children (55.4%) are multidimensionally poor, which means that they are affected by a minimum of one additional health or educational deprivation or three living standards-related deprivations.

According to the global MPI, one-third of children under 5, or 175.4 million children, are poor. Of these, 95.6 million are both undernourished and poor. These children face compounded disadvantages associated with both undernutrition and multidimensional poverty.

Yet nearly 80 million additional children under 5 who are not undernourished also experience acute multidimensional poverty. Hence, even for young children, household conditions outside of nutrition also stifle or support their potential to thrive.

FIGURE 2: NEARLY HALF OF ALL CHILDREN UNDER 5 ARE UNDERNOURISHED, MULTIDIMENSIONALLY POOR, OR BOTH



Note: Poverty and nutrition status of 518.5M children under 5 in 97 countries
Source: Annex 2, Table A1.

Combining both findings reveals that roughly half (48.7%) of all children under 5 across these 97 countries are multidimensionally poor, undernourished, or both. This rises to two-thirds in sub-Saharan Africa, where 66.2% of children are poor or undernourished. It is next highest in South Asia, where it is 53.8%. The remaining regions have fewer than 40% of children who are poor and/or undernourished, yet this figure is still 37% in the Arab States and 24% in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Just over half of all poor children under 5 live in sub-Saharan Africa and 35% in South Asia, highlighting clear policy priorities for these regions.

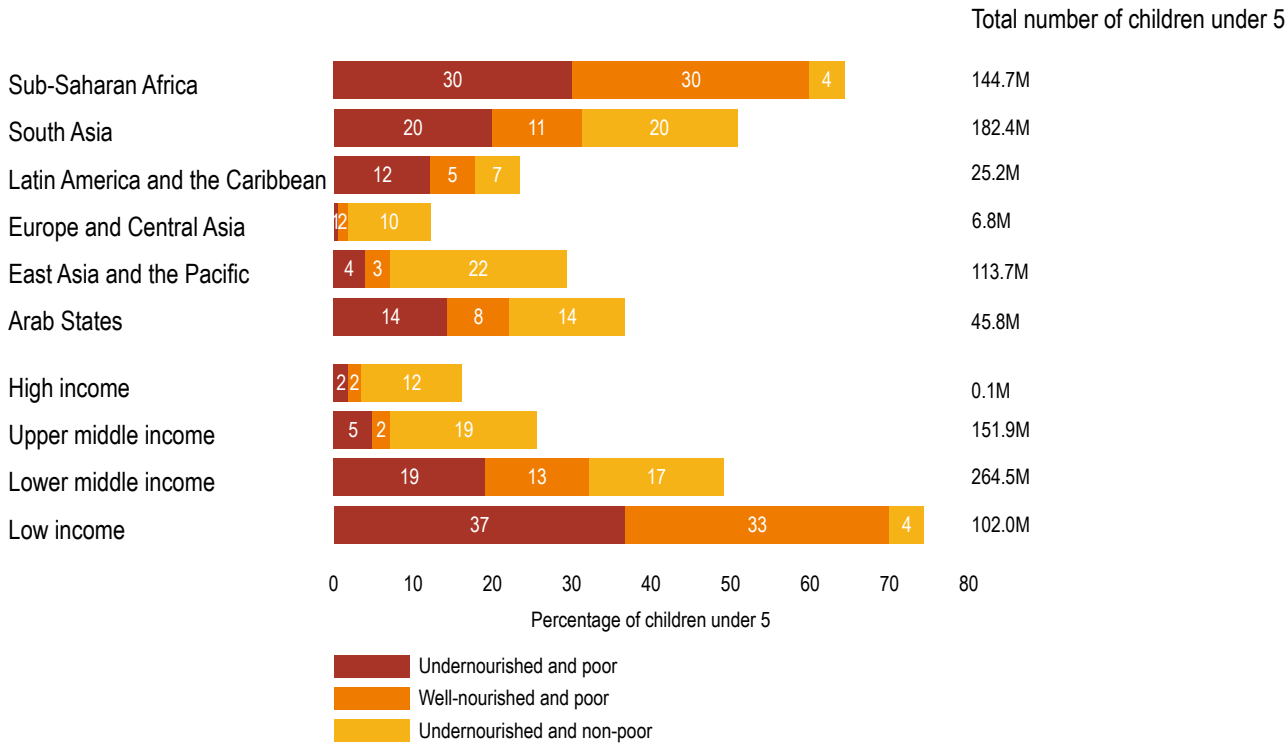
Figure 3 shows how both the levels of child undernutrition and their overlap with poverty vary considerably by world region and provides the shares of children experiencing poverty, undernourishment or both per region.

Overall, the numbers of poor and undernourished children are similar in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: 38.0% of the 252.3 million poor and/or undernourished children live in sub-Saharan Africa, and 38.9% live in South Asia.

In sub-Saharan Africa, where 61.9% of children under 5 live in poverty, 87.4% of all undernourished children are poor. This is the highest of any region, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, where roughly two-thirds of undernourished children are poor (63%). In the Arab States and South Asia, around half of all undernourished children live in poor households. In East Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia, most undernourished children are not poor.[4]

Undernourishment seems to be a 'hidden' form of deprivation in Europe and Central Asia, regions that have succeeded in bringing their overall poverty levels down but that still have a way to go to address one of people's most basic needs.

FIGURE 3: SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES HAVE THE LARGEST PROPORTIONS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE BOTH UNDERNOURISHED AND MULTIDIMENSIONALLY POOR



Notes: Children under 5, poverty, nutrition status and population by region and income category. Figures on bars refer to percentage of children; right-hand column gives total number of children under 5.

Source: Annex 2, Table A1.

However, a far less heterogeneous pattern emerges when looking at how many of the 175.4 million poor children are undernourished. In all world regions, nearly half to two-thirds of all poor children are individually undernourished. In sub-Saharan Africa, roughly half of all poor children experience undernutrition (61.9% of children are poor and 30.4% are both poor and undernourished). The pattern is similar in East Asia and the Pacific and Europe and Central Asia (50.7% and 46.6% of poor children are undernourished, respectively). In both the Arab States and South Asia, over 60% of all poor children under 5 are undernourished (61.1% and 60.8%, respectively); in Latin America and the Caribbean it is over two-thirds (68.5%).

In low-income countries, significantly high proportions of under-5 children are poor and/or undernourished: 75.4% of children are poor and/or undernourished, and 90% of undernourished children are poor. Roughly half of children in lower-middle income countries are poor and/or undernourished. Determined investments in both country groupings are vital.

While undernutrition is closely linked to multidimensional poverty in low-income countries, in high-income countries a substantial share of undernourished children are not multidimensionally poor. However, in every income category, the intensity of multidimensional poverty is higher among those children who are poor and undernourished than among poor well-nourished children.

III. HOW DOES MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INTERSECT WITH CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?

Nothing really is as important in the world as getting children to school, especially female children. (Sen, 2003)

The global MPI considers a child to be deprived in school attendance if they are not attending school up to the age at which they should complete class 8. Often this covers children aged 6–14, but as the starting age of school varies, each country's standard is used. Available data cover 108 countries, home to 6.3 billion people and 1.04 billion school-aged children.

Across these 108 countries, 13% of school-aged children (135.8 million) are out of school.[5] This means that more than one in eight children are being left behind in even basic education, placing the world far off track from achieving SDG 4 on universal primary and secondary education by 2030, and compromising these children's life chances. Moreover, four out of five out-of-school children (81.2%) are poor.

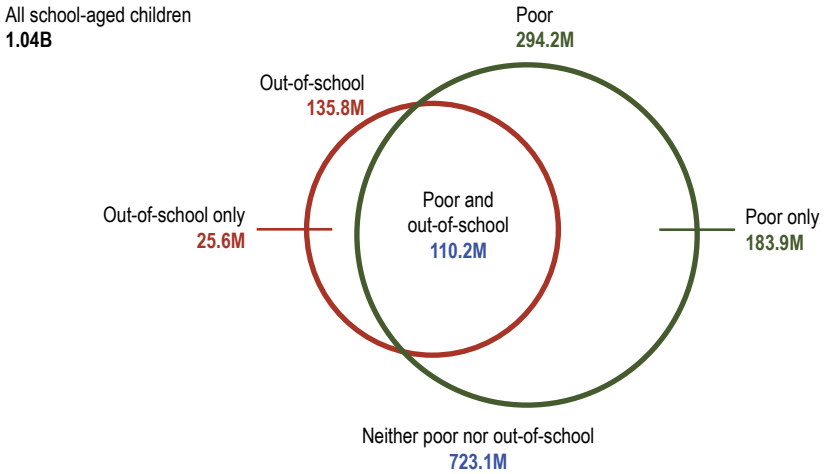
Overall, there are 294.2 million poor school-aged children, and 135.8 million out-of-school children. The overlap is high, with 110.2 million poor children being out of school and also facing other deprivations in their households (Figure 4). Yet 183.9 million additional school-aged children live in poverty, but are attending school. Schools are therefore a key location to reach children living in poverty and provide support that enable poor school-going children to thrive. Targeting out-of-school children alone is insufficient as a gauge for poverty.

Across all school-aged children, roughly one-third (319.7 million) are poor, out of school, or both.

Over half of all poor and/or out-of-school children live in sub-Saharan Africa (52.4%), followed by South Asia (30.7%), making these regions a global priority. East Asia and the Pacific are home to 8.1% of poor and/or out-of-school children; 5.7% live in the Arab States, 2.9% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 0.2% in Europe and Central Asia.

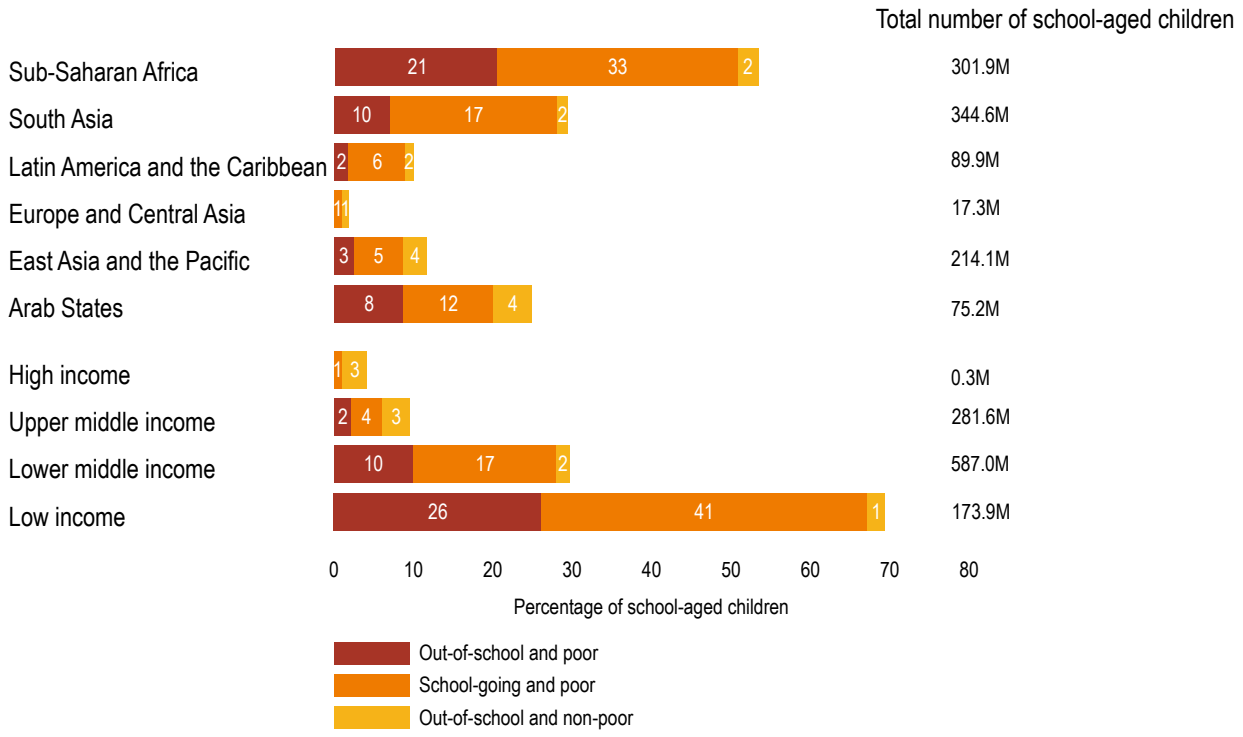
Figure 5 shows the share of school-aged children in each region who are poor and/or out of school. The thin lighter segment shows that very few children are non-poor but out of school. In sub-Saharan Af-

FIGURE 4: THERE IS A VERY HIGH OVERLAP BETWEEN OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND POOR CHILDREN IN DEVELOPING REGIONS



Note: Poverty and school attendance status of 1.04 billion school-aged children in 108 countries
Source: Annex 2, Table A2.

FIGURE 5: OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE PREDOMINANTLY ALSO POOR ACROSS MOST REGIONS AND INCOME GROUPS



Note: School-aged children in poverty and school attendance status by region and income category. Figures on bars refer to percentage of children; right-hand column gives total number of school-aged children in each region.
Source: Annex 2, Table A2.

rica, over half of children are poor and/or out of school: this is nearly 30% in South Asia and nearly 25% in the Arab States. The other regions have smaller shares and numbers of affected children.

Figure 5 also shows that low-income countries have a very small share of non-poor out-of-school children. The share of poor out-of-school children is highest in low-income countries, falling as income levels rise.

OVER THREE-QUARTERS OF AFGHAN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN FACE POVERTY, SCHOOL EXCLUSION, OR BOTH

Among Afghanistan's 10.8 million school-aged children, 7.5 million live in multidimensionally poor households and 6.2 million are out of school. Taken together, 8.4 million children (77.8%) are poor, out of school, or both, showing that single indicators can underestimate the scale of multiple disadvantages.

IV. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CHILD NUTRITION AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: VARIED STORIES

By examining individual-level outcomes, this report can compare the experiences of boys and girls directly, revealing both global patterns and important regional and national variations. While levels of undernutrition across both genders are far too high, boys are more likely to experience undernutrition. Gender patterns in school attendance are heterogeneous, with disadvantages affecting both girls and boys, but disparities vary across countries.

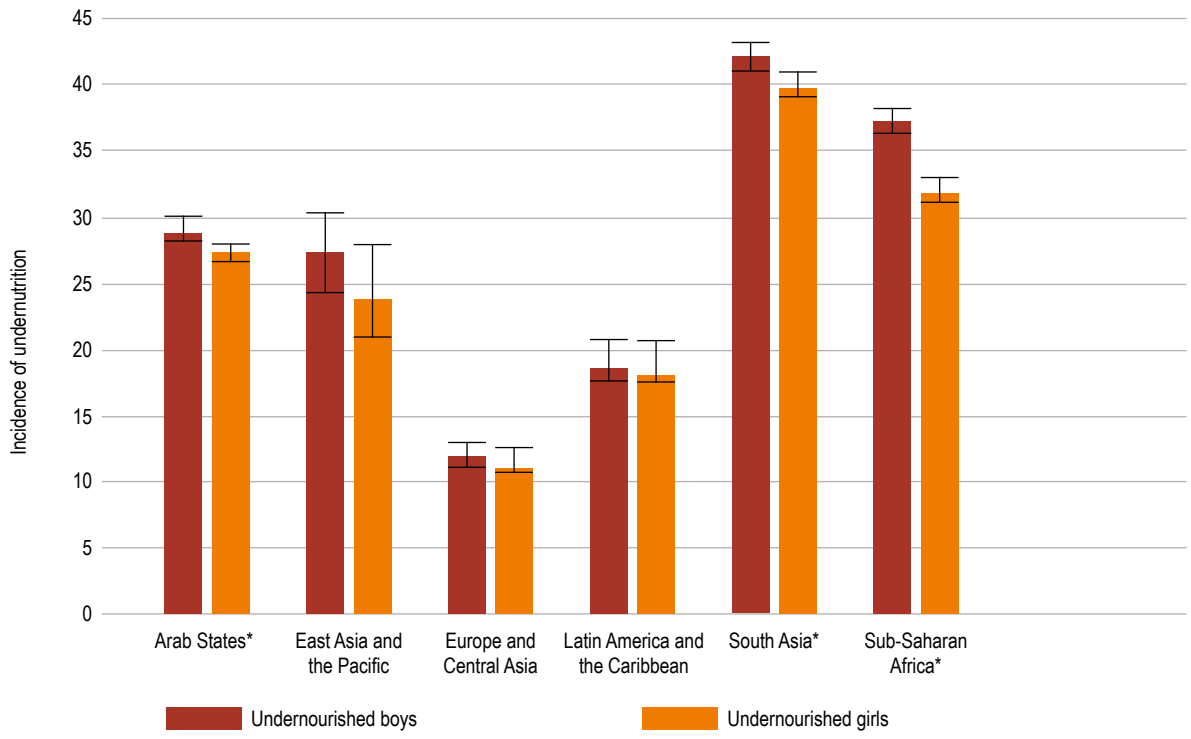
4.1 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CHILD UNDERNUTRITION: A FOCUS ON BOYS

Globally, a significantly higher share of boys are undernourished than girls (34.6% versus 31.8%). This higher prevalence, combined with the fact that boys account for 52% of children under 5, results in a large difference between the global number of undernourished boys (93.8 million) and girls (78.7 million).

Viewing nutrition by region shows that boys' undernutrition is significantly higher than girls' in sub-Saharan Africa – which has the largest gender gap – as well as the Arab States and South Asia (Figure 6). Girls' undernutrition is never higher than that of boys.

These findings are not limited to a small group of countries. In 53 of the 97 countries analysed, the proportion of boys who are undernourished is statistically higher than that of girls. Together, these countries account for 64.3% of all undernourished children covered by the study. In no countries do

FIGURE 6: IN ALL WORLD REGIONS, A HIGHER SHARE OF BOYS UNDER 5 ARE UNDERNOURISHED THAN GIRLS, WITH THE LARGEST GAP IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



Notes: Incidence of undernutrition by gender and region with 95% confidence intervals.
* Indicates regions with significant gender disparity based on non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals

Source: Annex 2, Table A1.

girls experience significantly higher levels of undernutrition than boys (at 95% confidence level).

Turning to poor and undernourished children, the gender gap is smaller and vanishes in some regions. However, boys' undernutrition is still significantly higher than girls' in sub-Saharan Africa, in low-income countries, and in 38 of the 97 countries analysed, which together account for 59.5% of all undernourished children covered by the study.

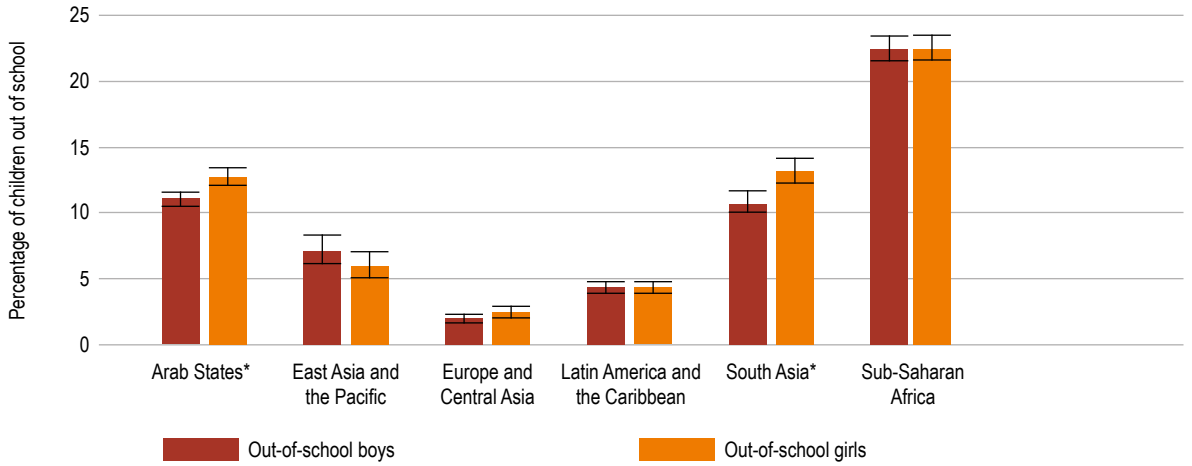
The consistency of this pattern across countries suggests that boys' disadvantage in early childhood nutrition warrants greater attention. While this study does not investigate the underlying causes, its findings align with evidence that boys may face greater biological vulnerability during early childhood (Thompson, 2021; Moore, 2024), highlighting the importance of ensuring that nutrition and health interventions are informed by sex-disaggregated data. The proportions of both boys and girls who are undernourished are very high, at almost one-third of girls and over one-third of boys. Redressing nutritional disadvantages in children is therefore critical.

4.2 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: DISPARITY VARIES

Globally, a small but significantly higher percentage of girls are out of school than boys (13.4% versus 12.7%). While 51.2% of school-aged children are boys and 48.8% are girls, among out-of-school children, 49.8% are boys and 50.2% are girls (67.6 million and 68.1 million, respectively). In other words, the number of out-of-school boys and girls is nearly equal globally.

Yet, unlike nutrition, the direction and size of gender disparities in school attendance vary considerably across countries and regions. At the regional level, girls are more likely than boys to be out of school in the Arab States and South Asia (Figure 7). These regional averages, however, conceal considerable diversity across countries. In 19 countries, representing 55.6% of all out-of-school children, girls face higher rates of school exclusion than boys. The largest gender gaps are found in Afghanistan, where the share of girls not attending school is 20 percentage points higher than the share of boys (67.1% versus 47.1%), followed by Pakistan (7.9 percentage points), the Central African Republic (7.8 percentage points) and Guinea (7.6 percentage points).

FIGURE 7: THE DIRECTION AND SIZE OF GENDER DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE VARY ACROSS REGIONS



Note: Percentage of children out of school by gender and region with 95% confidence intervals.
* Indicates regions with significant gender disparity based on non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.
Source: Annex 2, Table A2.

At the same time, boys experience higher rates of school exclusion in many contexts. In 35 countries, accounting for 21.4% of all out-of-school children, a higher share of boys are out of school than girls. The largest gaps favouring girls are observed in Gambia (8.1 percentage points), Senegal (6.7 percentage points) and Bangladesh (5.3 percentage points). The remaining 54 countries, housing 23.0% of school-aged children, do not have gender disparity in school attendance.

These findings show that gender disparities in education are pervasive but cannot be understood through a single narrative. In some contexts, long-standing barriers continue to limit girls' access to education. In others, boys are more likely to fall behind in school participation. Understanding which children are being left behind – and where – is critical for designing effective policies to achieve universal school attendance.

The gender patterns observed among out-of-school children are broadly unchanged when the analysis is restricted to children who are both out of school and multidimensionally poor. This indicates that multidimensional poverty does not fundamentally alter existing gender disparities in school attendance.

Overall, the findings highlight that gender remains an important factor shaping children's experiences of deprivation. However, the nature of the disadvantage differs across nutrition and school attendance, and between poor and non-poor undernourished children. These results underscore the value of using individual-level data as well as poverty status, for identifying inequalities that may remain hidden when analysis focuses exclusively on households and population averages.

V. INTRAHOUSEHOLD INEQUALITY IN CHILD DISADVANTAGES

5.1 OVER ONE-THIRD OF POOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCE INTRAHOUSEHOLD INEQUALITY

Households are often treated as if all children within them experience the same conditions and opportunities. Yet children's experiences can differ substantially even within the same household. By examining individual-level disadvantages, this report reveals important intrahousehold inequalities in both nutrition and schooling. These disparities are made visible here for the first time at the global level. The findings show that over one-third of poor children under 5 experience intrahousehold inequality in nutrition and over one-third of poor school-aged children experience inequality in school attendance.

5.1.1 UNDERNUTRITION IS NOT UNIFORM WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

Undernutrition is not always uniform across all children living in the same household. Among the population studied, one in five children under 5 lives in a household where some children are undernourished while others are not. This finding highlights that nutritional disadvantages can affect individual children differently, even when they are exposed to the same household resources and living conditions. The remaining children are either the only child under 5 in the household, or else live in households where all eligible children are well-nourished or all are undernourished.

Intrahousehold differences in nutritional status are particularly sharp among poor children – 36% of poor children under 5 experience intrahousehold inequality: where one or more children in

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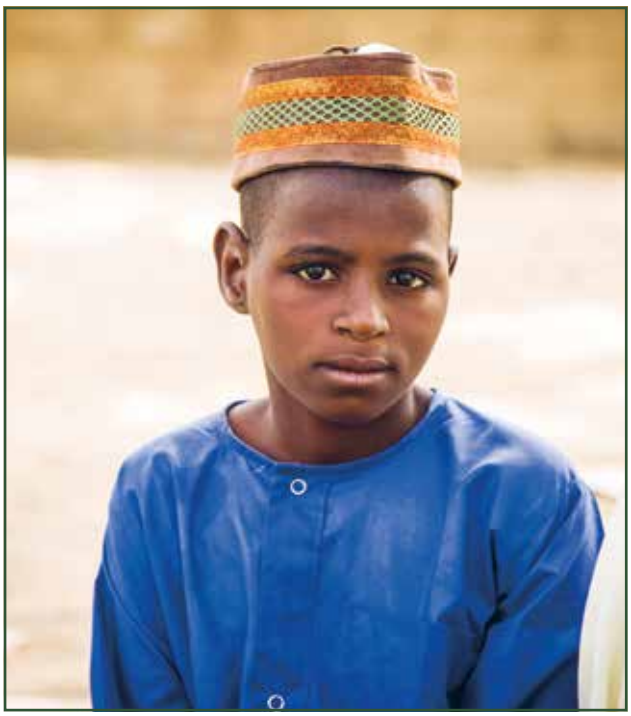
the household are undernourished and another is well-nourished, compared with 12.1% of children in non-poor households.

5.1.2 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE VARIES WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

Similar patterns emerge for schooling. One in eight school-aged children lives in a household where some children attend school while others do not. The remaining children are either the only school-aged child, or else live in households where all eligible children are attending school or all are out of school.

Intrahousehold differences are starker among multidimensionally poor households. Among poor school-aged children, 35.9% live in households where some children attend school while others are out of school. The corresponding share among children living in non-poor households is 3.7%.



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INTRAHOUSEHOLD INEQUALITY AND GENDER DISPARITIES AMONG CHILDREN IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan has higher than average levels of intrahousehold inequality. Among poor children, 46.7% of those under 5 experience intrahousehold inequality in nutrition, while 48.3% of poor school-aged children experience intrahousehold inequality in school attendance.

In a South Asia study, Alkire and Ul Haq (2025) explored gender disparity among poor girls and boys experiencing intrahousehold inequality in school attendance. They found that, in Pakistan, 58% of these girls (3.5 million) were out of school, compared with 32% of boys (2.1 million).

No comparable gender differences were evident in school attendance among non-poor Pakistani children, nor among poor or non-poor children in nutrition. While such work has not yet been undertaken on a global scale, similar analyses of gender disparity globally (data permitting) will be important in the future.

Source: Alkire and Ul Haq (2025), adapted to align with the methodology and population estimates used in this report.

VI. ADULTS' EDUCATION AND CHILD DISADVANTAGES BY GENDER

Education is an engine for poverty eradication and a force for peace. … We need education to reduce inequalities and improve health. We need education to achieve gender equality. (Guterres, 2019)

This report measures the highest levels of education among the men and women with whom disadvantaged children live. Many studies recognise how important adults' education is to children in their household. In particular, girls' and women's education has been extensively shown to be a pivotal high-impact investment that improves their own wellbeing and future livelihoods as well as that of their households (LeVine et al., 2012; Le and Nguyen, 2020; Keats, 2018). Educated adults support children's and household's wellbeing because they are more able to improve nutrition and health practices and outcomes, and may better support children's learning. This report offers the largest measured study to date that tracks the educational profile of the adults with whom disadvantaged children live, and parses these relationships by gender and poverty status.

6.1 ADULT EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN: A CLOSE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN POVERTY AND LIMITED SCHOOLING

Undernourished children are often found in households where adults have limited educational attainment. Globally, 29.1% of undernourished children under 5 live in households where no adult has completed six years of schooling, while 44.0% live in households where no woman has completed this level of education.[6] The overlap between nutritional disadvantage and low adult education is even stronger among children who are both undernourished and multidimensionally poor: half live in households without an adult who has completed six years of schooling, and more than two-thirds live in households without a woman who has reached this threshold.[7]

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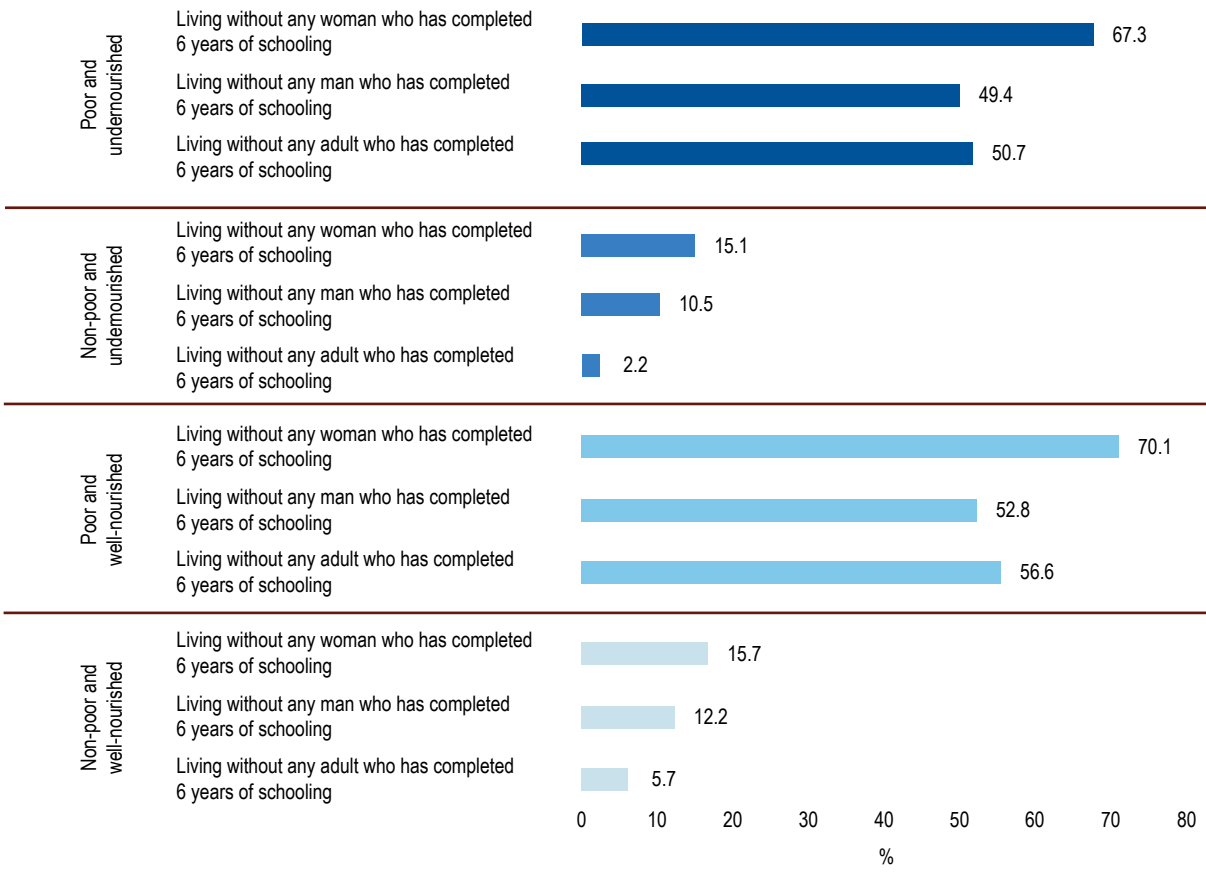
The educational environments of undernourished and well-nourished children differ substantially. This section reports the share of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children who live in households in which no woman, no man, or no adult at all in the household (aged 18 and above) has completed six years of schooling. Adults with six or more years of schooling are referred to here as 'educated' as a shorthand.

The top panel in Figure 8 shows poor undernourished children, who make up 95.6 million children under 5. The picture is sobering: nearly half of these children lack any educated adult, or male, in the household, while two-thirds (67.3%) do not have an educated female. Directly measuring these relationships highlights the intrahousehold interlinkage between female education and child nutrition.

The bottom two panels show well-nourished children, who are two-thirds of all children under 5. Recall that around 72 million well-nourished children are multidimensionally poor. Among poor well-nourished children, over half lack any educated adult or male (52.8% and 56.6%, respectively). Furthermore, 70.1% of poor well-nourished children also lack any educated female. Among non-poor well-nourished children, 5.7% lack any educated adult and fewer than 16% lack any educated male or female. Children who are undernourished yet non-poor, who total 76.9 million, likewise have low deprivations in adult schooling.

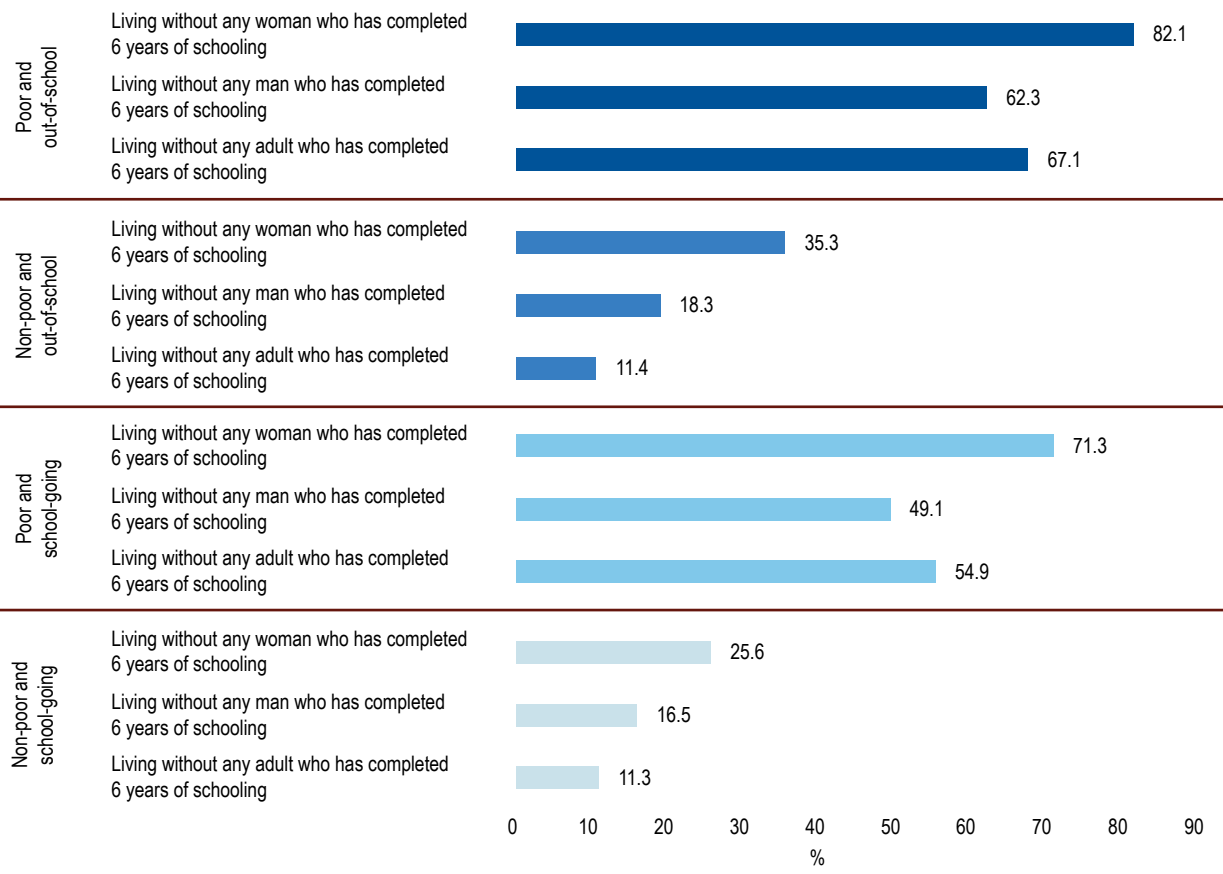
The fact that over half of both undernourished and well-nourished poor children lack any educated adult in their household and over two-thirds lack any educated female highlights the close overlap between low educational attainment and multidimensional poverty. In particular, the absence of

FIGURE 8: MULTIDIMENSIONALLY POOR CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO LIVE WITH UNEDUCATED ADULTS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN



Note: Adult completed years of schooling by gender and by child poverty and nutrition status.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

FIGURE 9: ALL CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO LIVE WITH AN UNEDUCATED WOMAN THAN AN UNEDUCATED MAN – ESPECIALLY POOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN



Note: Adult education attainment by child poverty and school attendance status.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

an educated woman is a prominent feature of the household environment of poor children under 5.

The gendered pattern of intrahousehold education also diverges between poor and non-poor children. For this reason, it is vital to combine standard intrahousehold analyses with multidimensional poverty measures that bring into view the other simultaneous deprivations that children experience.

6.2 ADULT EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IN THE HOUSEHOLDS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN: WOMEN'S EDUCATION REMAINS A CLEAR PRIORITY

Globally, 56.7% of out-of-school children live in households where no adult has completed six years of schooling, while 73.3% live in households where no woman has completed this level of education. The top panel of Figure 9 shows that the overlap between school exclusion and low adult education is even stronger among children who are both out of school and multidimensionally poor: two-thirds live in households without any adult who has completed six years of schooling. A startling 82.1% live in households without a woman who has reached this threshold.[8]

The bottom two panels of Figure 9 show school-going children – who represent seven out of eight school-aged children, or over 900 million children. Recall that 184 million of the school-going children are poor. Among poor school-going children, nearly half lack any educated male (49.1%) and 54.9% lack any educated adult, but a troubling 71.3% do not have any educated woman in their household. This contrasts strongly with the 723 million non-poor school-going children, where fewer than 17% lack either an educated male or any adult, and 25.6% lack an educated female. The motivation among uneducated adults to send children to school is strong

and well-documented in some contexts, as they recognise this to be a route out of poverty (Boyle et al., 2002; Serneels and Dercon, 2021).

Focusing on the 26 million children who are non-poor but out of school, over one-third still lack any educated female in their household.

The statistic that two-thirds of poor undernourished children lack any educated female – together with the finding, that over 80% of poor out-of-school children lack an educated female, underscores the central importance of female education and its ongoing association with child deprivations. A fundamental priority in SDG 2 is Zero Hunger, and in SDG 4 it is that all children have a right to schooling.

This study provides a genuinely new, directly measured data point using the most recent global MPI dataset on the intrahousehold patterns across children and adults in the same household. It highlights the pivotally higher deficits of female education among poor children, both school-going and those who are out of school.

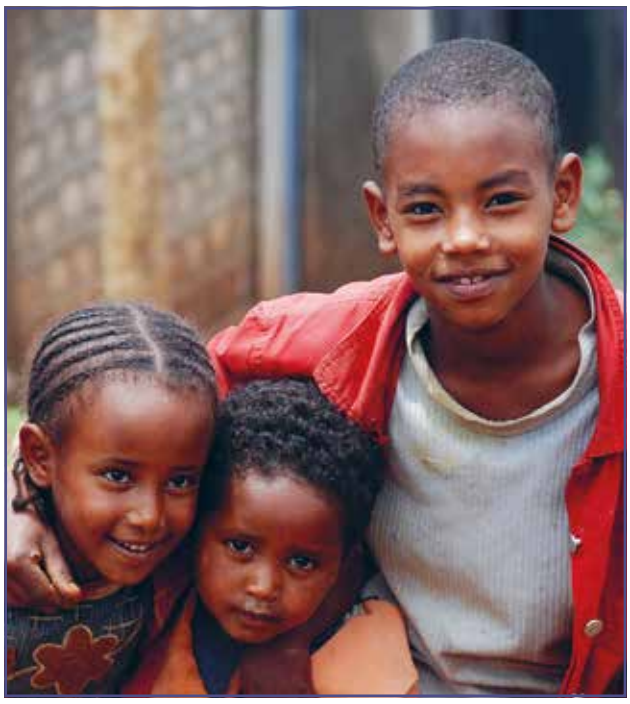


Photo: Lead Beyond, CC BY-0

CHILDREN'S OPPORTUNITIES ARE MOST CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN'S EDUCATION

In 10 countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, 87% to 95% of all out-of-school children lack any educated female in their household. The highest shares are in Chad (94.0%) and Niger (91.0%), followed by Pakistan (89.7%), Afghanistan (88.9%), then Mali, Madagascar, Benin, Sudan, Central African Republic and Guinea in all of which 87–88.5% of out-of-school children lack any educated woman at home. These 10 countries are home to 35 million out-of-school children, of whom 33.5 million are poor, and therefore account for three in ten of the 110 million poor and out-of-school children in the study's total sample.

Half of all poor and out-of-school children (56.8 million out of 110 million) live in the following 23 countries, in which 85% to 94% of out-of-school children lack an educated woman in their household: Chad, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Niger, Morocco, Mali, Benin, Nepal, Vietnam, Guinea, Madagascar, Sudan, Lao PDR, Mauritania, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Paraguay, Ethiopia, Iraq, Myanmar and Burkina Faso. These countries are located in every region except Europe and Central Asia, showing that female education requires concerted investment across many continents.

VII. PIONEER CHILDREN: THE FIRST GENERATION TO COMPLETE BASIC SCHOOLING

To these analyses we add an additional category that refers to first generation learners:

A pioneer child is a child who lives in a household in which no adult aged 18 and above has completed six years of schooling, whereas that individual child has completed six years of schooling

One of the most encouraging findings in the analysis is the emergence of pioneer children. Pioneer children are children aged 10–17 who have completed at least six years of schooling despite living in households where no adult aged 18 or above has reached that milestone (Alkire and Ul Haq, 2025). These children may represent the first generation in their households to attain a level of education considered essential for basic literacy and numeracy,[9] offering a unique lens on educational mobility and the potential to break cycles of intergenerational disadvantage.

This study covers 898.7 million children aged 10–17 living in 108 of the global MPI countries (the same countries as were studied for school attendance). Nearly one in twelve of these children – 7.9% – are pioneer children. This means that 71.3 million children are pioneers.

Globally, 807.7 million people live in households where no household member has completed six years of schooling. Yet an additional 260.3 million people live in households in which only a child – a pioneer child – has reached this milestone. In these households, the educational attainment of a younger generation has altered the household's education profile, demonstrating how progress can occur even where adults were previously left behind.

Naturally, these results vary considerably by region. But the real outlier in terms of pioneer children is South Asia. In the Arab States, East Asia,

PIONEER CHILDREN IN SOUTH ASIA

Across South Asia's 1.95 billion people, 20.9% (408.1 million) live in a household in which no adult has completed six years of schooling. But 121.6 million of these 408.1 million – nearly 30% – live in a household in which a child has completed six years of schooling. This is due to pioneer children – of whom there are 35 million in South Asia. By country, 27.7 million pioneer children live in India, 3.4 million in Bangladesh, 2.3 million in Pakistan, 837,000 in Nepal and 508,500 in Afghanistan.

In terms of gender, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh have significantly higher shares of pioneer girls than boys. The country in fastest transition is Bhutan, where 21.9% of girls aged 10–17 are pioneer children, as are 18.3% of boys. Furthermore, in Bhutan over one in ten people (10.5% of the population) are not deprived in years of schooling purely because of pioneer children. In Bangladesh, 14.4% of girls are pioneers versus 11.5% of boys. Only in Afghanistan are there significantly higher levels of pioneer boys than girls – 7.3% versus 4.2% – and half of Afghanistan's pioneer children are poor.

South Asia is thus in a rapid phase of educating the current generation of a left-behind population.

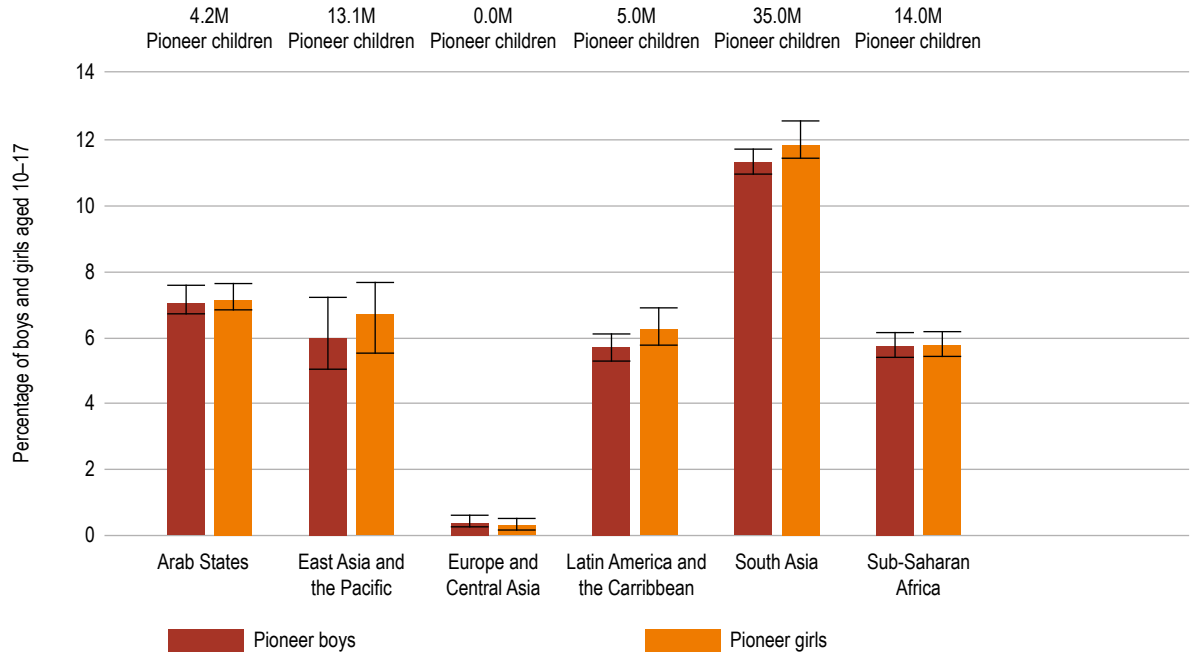
Latin America and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa, 6–7% of children are pioneers (6.9%, 6.3%, 6.1% and 6.0%, respectively). But in South Asia more than one in nine children aged 10–17 (11.6%) are pioneers. Out of the 71.3 million pioneer children globally, roughly half – 35 million – live in South Asia (Figure 10).

Children's educational attainment affects their households. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over one in twenty people share their house with a pioneer child (6.2% and 5.4%, respectively); in the Arab States, this figure is 4.7%. But even in East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, around one in fifty people share their households with a pioneer child.

Overall, gender parity is positive. Globally, 8.1% of girls are pioneer children compared to 7.7% of boys. This varies by region, but in no region is there statistically significant gender disparity between the share of boy and girl pioneer children. In lower middle income countries, however, 9.7% of girls aged 10–17 are pioneer compared with 9.2% of boys, and the difference is statistically significant.

Photo: Tixu Oty CC BY-NC-ND

FIGURE 10: SOUTH ASIA IS HOME TO SIGNIFICANTLY MORE PIONEER CHILDREN THAN ANY OTHER WORLD REGION



Note: Percentage of pioneer children by gender and region with 95% confidence intervals. Numbers above the bars indicate the total number of pioneer children in each region.

Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

7.1 THE RELATIONSHIP OF PIONEER CHILDREN TO POVERTY

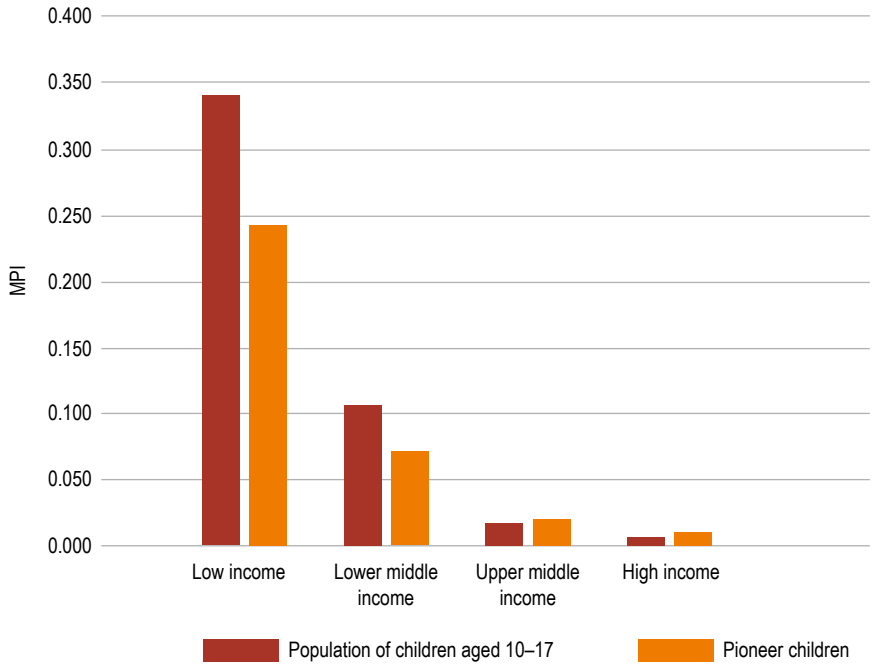
Poverty is never a positive story, but there is no significant gender disparity between poor pioneer boys and girls at the global level. In sub-Saharan Africa, however, the gender difference is statistically significant, with 47.3% of pioneer boys being poor versus 42.7% of pioneer girls.

How do pioneer children compare to all children aged 10–17? Globally, 22.9% of children aged 10–17 are poor. Among pioneer children globally, poverty is lower. One in five (19.6%) are poor, meaning that 14 million pioneer children live in poverty, of whom 6.3 million live in sub-Saharan Africa and 5.7 million live in South Asia. The MPI value of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index captures the proportion of people living in poverty as well as the average share of weighted indicators. Pioneer children's MPI value is lower than the MPI among all children aged 10–17 (0.082 for pioneers versus 0.114) – in part because pioneer children's intensity of poverty is lower. This varies by region and country, broadly as expected. But still, 45% of pioneer children in sub-Saharan Africa are poor, and nearly one in six in South Asia and the Arab States (16.2% and 16.1%, respectively).

The relationship between pioneer-child status and multidimensional poverty shows distinctive patterns across country income groups. In low-income and lower-middle-income countries, pioneer children tend to experience lower levels of multidimensional poverty than overall children aged 10–17, suggesting that becoming the first person in the household to complete six years of schooling may be associated with improving household circumstances and emerging upward mobility. In these settings, a pioneer child may signal that the household is overcoming longstanding barriers to education and human development.

A different pattern emerges in upper-middle-income and high-income countries. Here, the apparent poverty advantage of pioneer children largely disappears. As illustrated in Figure 11, multidimensional poverty levels among pioneer children

FIGURE 11: PIONEER CHILDREN ARE LESS POOR THAN TOTAL CHILDREN AGED 10–17 IN LOW- AND LOWER-MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES BUT NOT ELSEWHERE



Note: Comparing the MPI among children aged 10–17 and pioneer children, by country income category.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

are similar to – or slightly higher than – those of the broader population of children aged 10–17 in these income groups. This pattern suggests that pioneer-child status may capture a different reality in more economically advanced settings. Where basic schooling has become nearly universal, households in which adults have not completed six years of education may represent particularly marginalised groups facing persistent forms of social and economic exclusion. In these contexts, being the first child to reach six years of schooling does not necessarily indicate a pathway out of poverty.

7.2 PROGRESS DOES NOT REACH ALL CHILDREN EQUALLY: THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

The presence of a pioneer child in a household should not be interpreted as evidence that all children in that household are benefiting equally from educational opportunities. Even among households where one child has become the first to complete six years of schooling, educational exclusion can persist for others.

Indeed, 8.6% of pioneer children live with another school-aged child who is out of school. This finding highlights the importance of looking beyond household averages to understand children's individual experiences. Educational progress within a family may be uneven, with some children benefiting from increased opportunities while siblings continue to face barriers to school participation.

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VIII. MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY: THE ADDITIONAL DEPRIVATIONS AFFECTING UNDERNOURISHED AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

> **Poverty is, in many ways, the worst form of human deprivation. It can involve not only the lack of necessities of material well-being, but also the denial of opportunities of living a tolerable life. The lives could be prematurely shortened, made hard, painful or hazardous, deprived of understanding or communication, and robbed of dignity, confidence and self-respect. It is ultimately in the poverty of the lives that people can lead that poverty manifests itself. (Anand and Sen, 1997, pp. 4–5)**

Undernourished or out-of-school children are substantially more likely to live in multidimensionally poverty than their non-disadvantaged peers. This section compares the levels and composition of multidimensional poverty across these groups using the global MPI.

8.1 WHAT OTHER DEPRIVATIONS DO POOR, UNDERNOURISHED AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN HAVE?

The SDGs urge for a focus on the interconnections between SDG indicators. As mentioned, the global MPI identifies the deprivations that household members experience at the same time. Cross-referencing this with individual child information, this section explores the additional deprivations that poor undernourished children under 5 and poor out-of-school children experience. It is hoped that policy actors can use these data, as well as the underlying country-level data, to develop integrated policies and programmes or to identify marginal high-impact changes to existing programmes that will cost-effectively address the deprivations that afflict children in different phases of childhood.

Oneadvantage of the global MPI is that it shows the additional deprivations that each poor and undernourished child, or each poor and out-of-school child, experiences at the same time. The 95.6 million poor and undernourished children experience a total of 434.4 million deprivations in addition to undernutrition – so each child is deprived in four or five additional indicators of the global MPI. The 110 million poor and out-of-school children experience 551.7 million additional deprivations across the other nine indicators – so an average of five additional deprivations. Looking only at one child indicator obscures this density of deprivations that afflict poor children – and must be addressed.

Furthermore, the intrahousehold analyses and likewise the global MPI's censored headcount ratios show that many well-nourished and school-going children are living in households where someone else is undernourished or out of school (see also Section 5). This raises a cautionary flag about taking any single child's attainment as a proxy for others in that household.

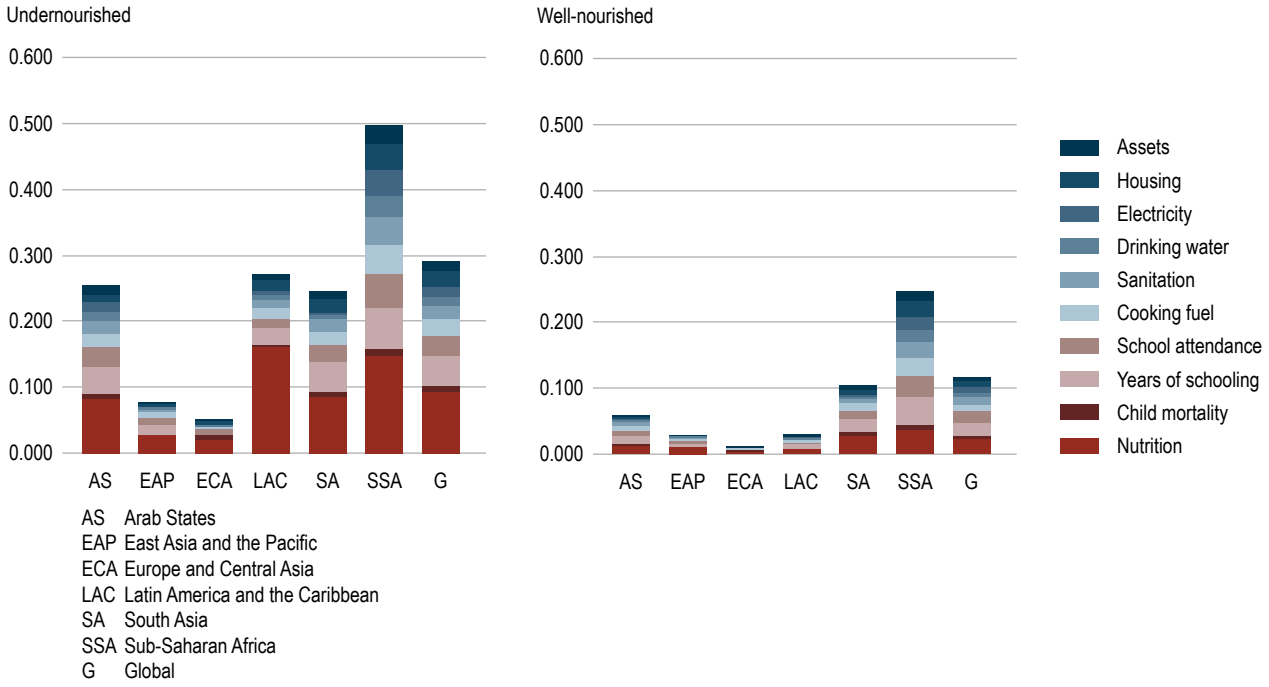
Overall, pairing individual child disadvantages and the MPI better enables us to see and energetically confront how, as Amartya Sen put it, 'human lives are battered and diminished in all kinds of different ways' (2000).

8.2 COMPARING POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION PROFILES OF UNDERNOURISHED AND WELL-NOURISHED CHILDREN

Figures 12 and 13 compare the level and composition of multidimensional poverty across two groups of children under age 5: those who are undernourished (172.5 million) and those who are not (301.8 million), using the 10 MPI indicators.

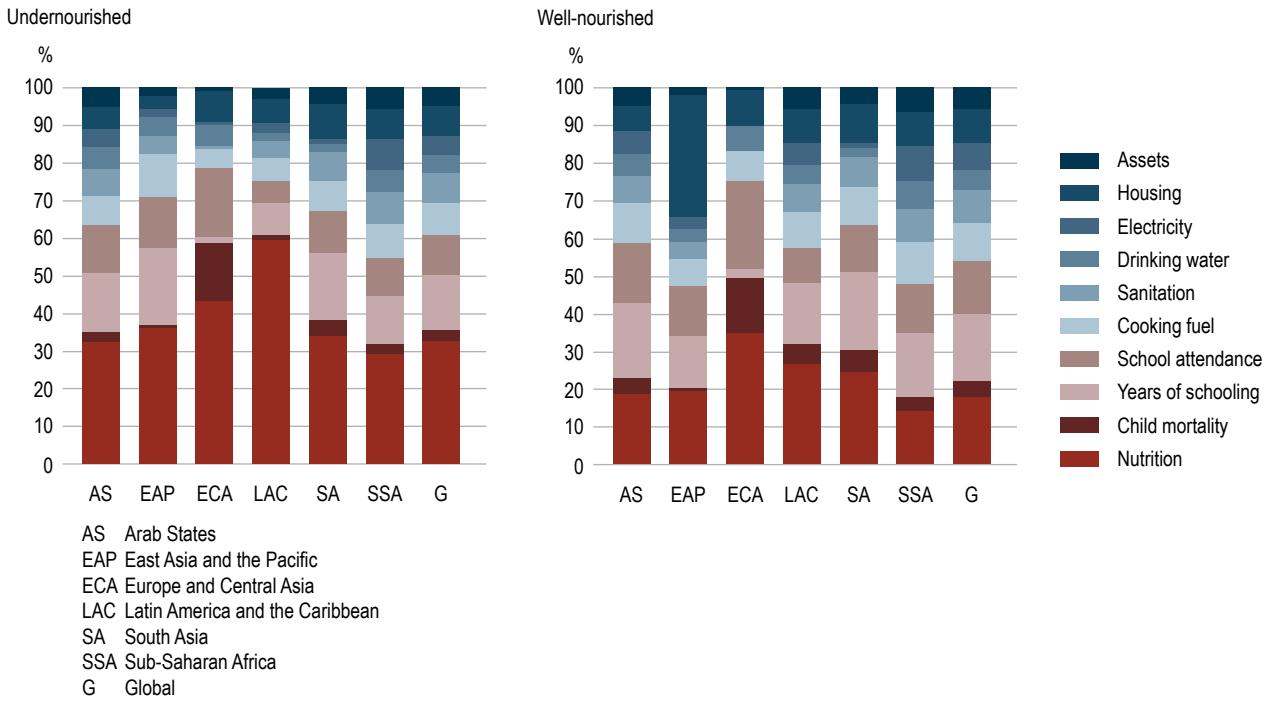
Figure 12 shows the level of poverty among the 172.5 million children under 5 who are undernourished (on the left) and the 301.8 million children under 5 who are not (on the right). The level of the MPI – which is the height of each stacked bar – shows that the absolute contribution of each MPI indicator is substantially higher among undernourished children, underscoring the priority of

FIGURE 12: THE ABSOLUTE CONTRIBUTION OF EACH MPI INDICATOR IS SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER AMONG UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN



Note: The figure shows absolute indicator contributions to poverty by child nutrition status and region.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

FIGURE 13: UNDERNUTRITION IN THE HOUSEHOLD CONTRIBUTES THE MOST TO POVERTY – NOT ONLY AMONG UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN IN ALL REGIONS, BUT ALSO AMONG WELL-NOURISHED CHILDREN EXCEPT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND THE ARAB STATES



Note: Indicator percentage contributions to poverty, by child nutrition status and region.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

addressing poor undernourished children as they are considerably poorer.

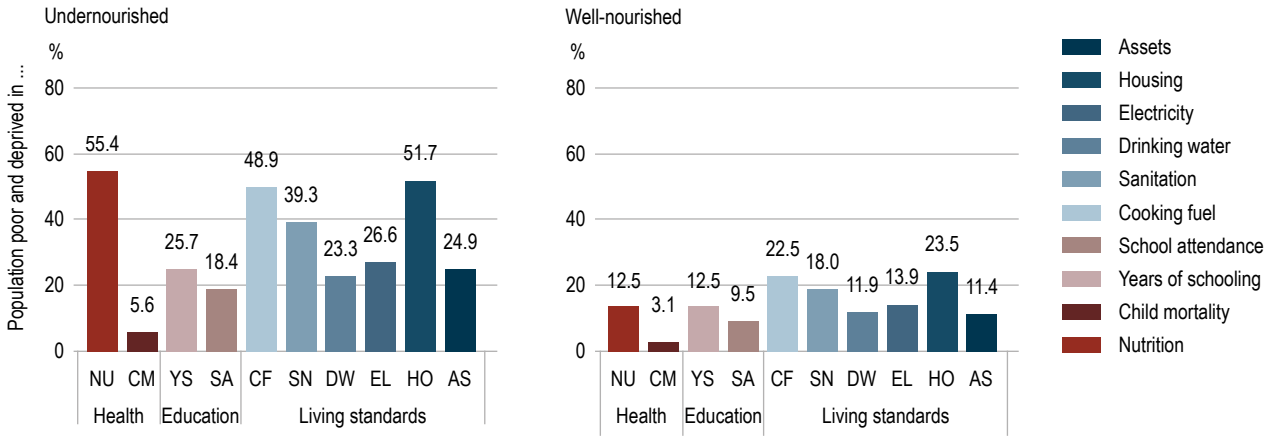
Overall, 55.4% of undernourished children are poor, compared to 23.9% of well-nourished children; the disparity according to the MPI is even higher. But this varies greatly by region. In sub-Saharan Africa, the MPI for undernourished children is twice as high as the MPI for well-nourished children; and in South Asia, and especially in the other world regions, the differential is even starker, showing that undernourished children experience substantially higher multidimensional poverty and a denser mix of other deprivations. Furthermore, in every region and globally, poor undernourished children have a higher intensity of poverty – they carry a greater set of deprivations – than poor well-nourished children. So, while all acute poverty must be vigorously addressed, undernourished children must not be left behind.

Multidimensional analysis of poverty using the global MPI typically studies the poverty of all household members. In this report individual-level analysis uncovers child-specific information relating to nutrition in the household. Turning to the indicator composition, well-nourished but poor children overall share their households with undernourished household members (the red segment at the bottom of Figure 13). These may be other children under 5 or adults for whom the dataset has nutrition information. For example, in South Asia, 15.1% of poor well-nourished children live in a household with undernutrition, and in sub-Saharan Africa, it's 20.8% (see Alkire and Ul Haq 2026). Unsurprisingly, in all regions of the world, nutrition contributes the most of any indicator among poor and undernourished children (as every child is deprived). But among well-nourished children, undernutrition also contributes the most of any indicator except in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States, where deprivation in years of schooling contributes marginally more.

Overall, both sets of children have visible deprivations in all 10 global MPI indicators in every region. The living standards dimension – especially the indicators of solid cooking fuel, inadequate sanitation and poor-quality housing – contributes most to the MPI, regardless of children's nutritional status, with particularly high contributions in sub-Saharan Africa and low-income countries. In most regions, each dimension contributes 25% or more, showing that poor children under 5 are buffeted by multiple deprivations, and that integrated responses are essential.

To inform multisectoral policies, it is useful to emphasise that censored headcount ratios in the data tables published alongside this report provide the share of children who are poor and deprived in each indicator. For example, Figure 14 shows the proportion of undernourished children and well-nourished children with each deprivation globally.

FIGURE 14: GLOBALLY A LARGER PROPORTION OF UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN ARE POOR AND DEPRIVED IN EVERY INDICATOR THAN WELL-NOURISHED CHILDREN



Note: Censored headcount ratios by child nutrition status.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

8.3 COMPARING POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION PROFILES AMONG OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN

The study repeated this analysis, comparing school-aged children who are out of school (135.8 million) with those going to school (906.8 million). It found that the MPI levels of out-of-school children are fundamentally higher and that the disparity is greater than even for undernourished children. These findings are consistent across all world regions.

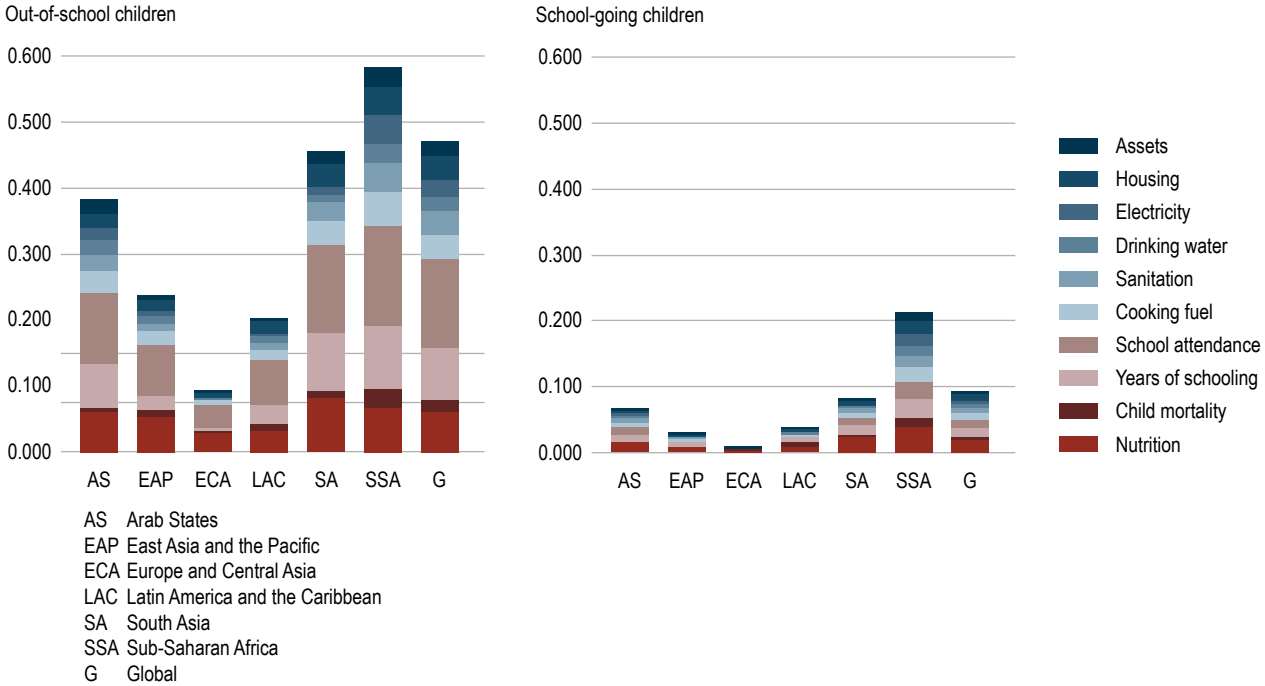
Figure 15 compares the level and composition of poverty among out-of-school children (on the left) and school-going children (on the right). The height of each bar is the MPI value for that group. The absolute contribution of each MPI indicator is higher for out-of-school children in all indicators, again emphasising the global priority of supporting out-of-school children to exit poverty.

Another noteworthy aspect of the indicator composition of poverty – as shown in Figure 16 – is that the school attendance indicator makes a relatively large contribution to multidimensional poverty among school-going children in every region. This can only happen because another school-aged child in their household is out of school (see also Section 5). For example, Figure 17 shows that 6.6% of school-going children are poor and deprived in school attendance, because they share their household with an out-of-school child. Among out-of-school children, the educational dimension contributes most to the MPI in all regions. In contrast, the living standards dimension contributes the most to school-going children's poverty in all regions except Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Nutrition's percentage contribution is considerably higher globally and in all world regions among households with school-going children.

Across both groups of children, however, years of schooling contributes strongly. There are slightly higher contributions in years of schooling among school-going children in East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, and higher contributions among out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa.

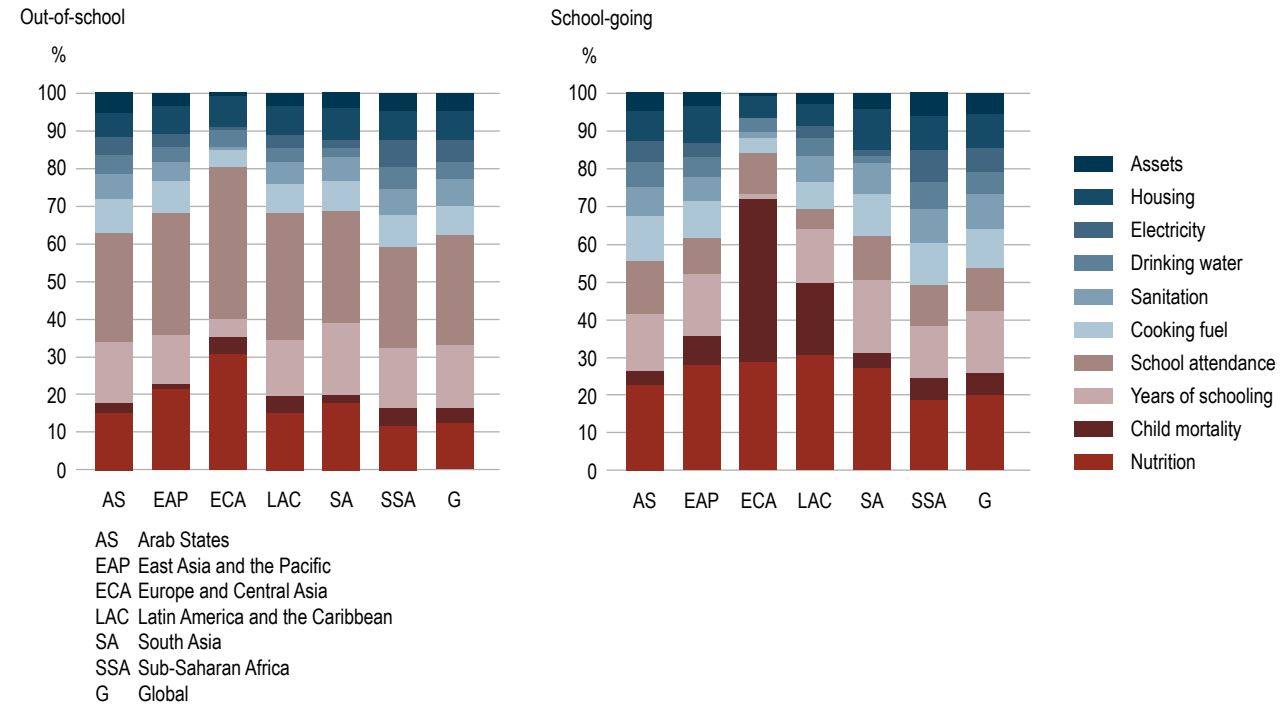
These data can be used to quantify the share and number of out-of-school or school-going children

FIGURE 15: MPI LEVELS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER AMONG OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN THAN AMONG SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN



Note: Indicator absolute contributions to poverty, by child school attendance status and region.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

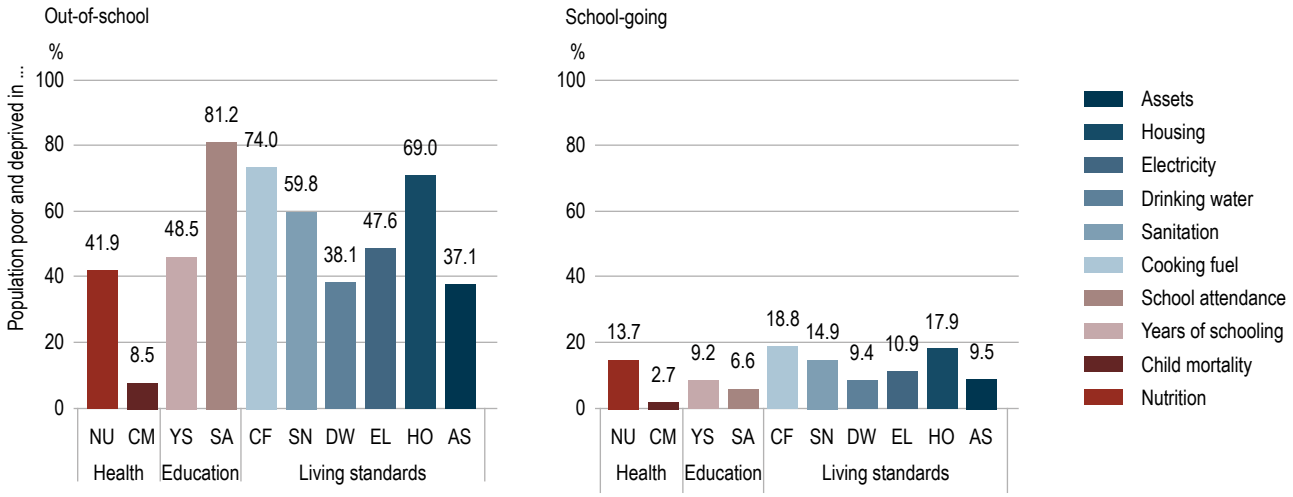
FIGURE 16: DEPRIVATION IN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REMAINS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTOR TO POVERTY EVEN AMONG SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN



AS Arab States
EAP East Asia and the Pacific
ECA Europe and Central Asia
LAC Latin America and the Caribbean
SA South Asia
SSA Sub-Saharan Africa
G Global

Note: Percentage contributions of each indicator to poverty, by child school attendance status and region.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

FIGURE 17: GLOBALLY A MUCH LARGER PROPORTION OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE POOR AND DEPRIVED IN EVERY INDICATOR THAN SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN



Note: Censored headcount ratios by child school attendance status.
Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

who are poor and deprived in each indicator, to inform diagnosis, targeting and the design of integrated responses. Figure 17 provides an example at the global level; regional and country data are also available.

It is often repeated that child poverty is multidimensional. This section has taken two disadvantages – nutrition and school attendance – and focused on the other deprivations that afflict children who are disadvantaged in each indicator and also poor according to the global MPI, comparing these to the deprivations of peers in their age group who are also poor. Understanding the fuller multidimensional picture of children's lives provides vital information to help design high-impact integrated policies that bring about more effective action.

Photo: Lead Beyond, CC BY-0

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CONCLUSION

Amartya Sen observes, in *Home in the World*, that his childhood experience of witnessing the Bengal famine in 1943 'began to generate a determination in me to do what I could to prevent famines'. He continues, 'when I told this to one of my school teachers, he smiled and applauded my ambition, but he also "brought me down to earth" (as he put it) by saying that famines are almost impossible to eliminate' (Sen, 2021, p.121). Yet Sen's sustained determination has fuelled in-depth research and field endeavours, media and public intellectual engagement and policy dialogue spanning decades – and continues to inspire future generations to do the same.

This report has used existing data in new ways to underscore the scale of child undernutrition and school exclusion and then relate it, in actionable ways, to multidimensional poverty, gender disparity, intrahousehold inequalities between children, men and women's schooling in the household, and the other deprivations that afflict children at the same time.

Many will call for greater policy analyses and recommendations. However, institutional contexts and existing policy frameworks vary greatly across the countries considered, as does the particular shape of each country's challenges. Global recommendations are likely to fall flat in many contexts. Our hope is instead that this study, and the country-level datasets it is built upon, will be used by those with contextual knowledge to generate precise and actionable trajectories that could be effective and have a high impact in the widely varying contexts covered here.

At the same time, it is hoped that the novel angles of this report may inspire small breakthroughs and energise and re-energise those policy actors who are at the forefront of the plethora of charges to end child undernutrition and advance quality education. As Sen put it, '[t]he challenge today is the strengthening of this already functioning participatory process, on which the pursuit of global justice will to a great extent depend. It is not a negligible cause' (2010, p.410).

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ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY OF THE GLOBAL MPI

The global MPI is based on data on people and households from each country included in the study. The first step is to construct a deprivation profile for each household and person within it, covering 10 indicators of health, education and living standards. A household and all the people living in it are deprived if the household contains at least one child under five who is underweight or stunted, or at least one person aged 5–70 years with low BMI; if any school-aged child is not attending school up to the age at which she or he would complete class 8; if no household member has completed six years of schooling; if the household lacks access to electricity; if the household lacks an improved source of drinking water within a 30-minute walk round trip; if the household lacks an improved sanitation facility that is not shared; if the household cooks with solid cooking fuel; if the household lacks durable roof, floor or wall materials; or if the household does not own more than one of these assets – a radio, animal cart, telephone, television, computer, refrigerator, bicycle, motorcycle or car.

All indicators are equally weighted within each dimension. The two health and two education indicators are weighted one-sixth each, and the six living standards indicators are weighted one-eighteenth each. A person's deprivation score is the sum of the weighted deprivations she or he experiences, and the deprivation score of all household members is the same. The global MPI identifies people as multidimensionally poor if their deprivation score is one-third or higher.

The MPI is the product of the incidence (H, or the percentage of people who are identified as multidimensionally poor) and intensity of poverty (A, or the average deprivation score among multidimensionally poor people). Put simply, MPI = H × A. MPI values range from 0 to 1, and higher values imply higher poverty. MPI values decline when fewer people are poor and/or when poor people have fewer deprivations.

The precise definition of each indicator is available online (Alkire Mishra Selden and Suppa 2025, OPHI 2025), together with any country-specific adjustments and the computer code used to calculate the global MPI value for each country (Alkire et al., 2025). By identifying who is poor, the composition of their poverty (their deprivation profile) and how poor they are (their deprivation score), the global MPI complements the international US$3.00 and US$4.20 a day poverty rates, bringing interlinked non-monetary deprivations into view.

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ANNEX 2: TABLE A1

PREVALENCE AND MAGNITUDE OF CHILD UNDERNUTRITION, POVERTY, AND THEIR OVERLAP

Table A1 presents aggregate data for 97 countries with available nutrition data, excluding Seychelles, on children under age 5 who are undernourished, MPI poor, or both; compares undernourished and well-nourished children; and examines disparities between boys and girls.

Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

NOTES:

Global MPI data and data on income categories, regions etc. were taken from global MPI 2025 tables.

[1] **World regions:**

Arab States: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen

East Asia and the Pacific: Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Naoero, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Vietnam

Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

[2] **Income groups:**

Low income: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Yemen

Lower-middle income: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, State of Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Upper-middle income: Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Libya, Maldives, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Peru, Serbia, South Africa, Suriname, Thailand, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu

High income: Guyana, Naoero, Trinidad and Tobago.

[3] United Nations (2024). 'World population prospects 2024' (last accessed: 29 August 2026). Note: Population estimates are based on the 2023 population projections.

** Indicates a significant difference based on non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.

TABLE A1

World region / income group	Total number of children under 5[3]	Children under 5	Total number of children under 5 who are undernourished	Children under 5			
		Share of children under 5 who are undernourished		Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI = H*A)	Headcount ratio: population in multidimensional poverty (H)	Number of poor	Intensity of deprivation among the poor (A)
	Thousands	%	Thousands	Range 0 to 1	%	Thousands	Average % of weighted deprivations
Global estimates	518,479	33.3	172,476	0.171	33.8	175,405	50.6
World regions[1]							
Arab States	45,762	28.4	13,012	0.115	22.9	10,493	50.2
East Asia and the Pacific	113,710	26.0	29,593	0.037	8.4	9,573	44.5
Europe and Central Asia	6,758	11.9	803	0.012	3.2	214	38.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	25,158	18.6	4,688	0.074	17.1	4,312	43.0
South Asia	182,426	40.6	74,063	0.160	33.6	61,334	47.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	144,665	34.8	50,316	0.332	61.9	89,478	53.7
Income groups[2]							
Low income	102,031	41.4	42,221	0.393	71.4	72,848	55.0
Lower-middle income	264,511	35.9	94,935	0.166	34.4	90,931	48.1
Upper-middle income	151,863	23.3	35,309	0.032	7.7	11,623	41.9
High income	74	14.6	11	0.017	4.3	3	39.3

World region / income group	Total number of children under 5[3]	Children under 5	Total number of poor and undernourished children under 5	Undernourished children under 5			Well-nourished children under 5		
		Share of children under 5 who are poor and undernourished		Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI = H*A)	Headcount ratio: population in multidimensional poverty (H)	Intensity of deprivation among the poor (A)	Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI = H*A)	Headcount ratio: population in multidimensional poverty (H)	Intensity of deprivation among the poor (A)
	Thousands	%	Thousands	Range 0 to 1	%	Average % of weighted deprivations	Range 0 to 1	%	Average % of weighted deprivations
Global estimates	518,479	18.4	95,576	0.291	55.4	52.4	0.116	23.9	48.5
World regions[1]									
Arab States	45,762	14.0	6,407	0.255	49.2	51.9	0.056	11.9	47.3
East Asia and the Pacific	113,710	4.3	4,858	0.075	16.4	45.9	0.020	4.7	42.3
Europe and Central Asia	6,758	1.5	100	0.048	12.4	38.9	0.007	1.9	38.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	25,158	11.7	2,956	0.271	63.0	43.1	0.027	6.4	42.8
South Asia	182,426	20.4	37,294	0.246	50.4	48.8	0.100	21.8	45.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	144,665	30.4	43,961	0.498	87.4	57.0	0.245	48.5	50.5
Income groups[2]									
Low income	102,031	37.3	38,061	0.526	90.1	58.3	0.298	58.0	51.4
Lower-middle income	264,511	19.2	50,673	0.263	53.4	49.4	0.109	23.4	46.6
Upper-middle income	151,863	4.5	6,840	0.082	19.4	42.5	0.014	3.5	39.9
High income	74	2.4	2	0.064	16.1	39.5	0.008	2.1	38.3

TABLE A1

World region / income group	Total number of children under 5[3]	Boys under 5			Total number of boys under 5 who are undernourished	Girls under 5			Total number of girls under 5 who are undernourished	Gender disparity Gap (boys - girls)
		Share of boys who are undernourished (with confidence interval)				Share of girls who are undernourished (with confidence interval)				
	Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	Percentage points
Global estimates	518,479	34.6	*33.7*	*35.4*	93,793	31.8	*31.1*	*32.6*	78,684	2.7**
World regions[1]										
Arab States	45,762	29.5	*28.7*	*30.3*	6,987	27.3	*26.6*	*28.0*	6,026	2.2**
East Asia and the Pacific	113,710	27.4	*24.3*	*30.5*	17,707	24.2	*21.0*	*27.4*	11,886	3.2
Europe and Central Asia	6,758	12.1	*11.3*	*12.9*	420	11.6	*10.9*	*12.4*	383	0.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	25,158	18.8	*16.7*	*20.9*	2,431	18.5	*16.3*	*20.6*	2,257	0.4
South Asia	182,426	41.5	*40.7*	*42.3*	38,924	39.7	*38.8*	*40.5*	35,140	1.8**
Sub-Saharan Africa	144,665	37.5	*36.9*	*38.2*	27,323	32.0	*31.3*	*32.7*	22,993	5.6**
Income groups[2]										
Low income	102,031	44.0	*43.2*	*44.8*	22,583	38.7	*37.9*	*39.6*	19,638	5.3**
Lower-middle income	264,511	37.2	*36.6*	*37.8*	50,527	34.5	*33.9*	*35.1*	44,409	2.7**
Upper-middle income	151,863	24.6	*22.1*	*27.0*	20,677	21.6	*19.3*	*23.9*	14,633	3.0
High income	74	16.3	*13.4*	*19.2*	6	12.8	*8.9*	*16.6*	5	3.5

World region / income group	Total number of children under 5[3]	Boys under 5			Total number of boys under 5 who are poor and undernourished	Girls under 5			Total number of girls under 5 who are poor and undernourished	Gender disparity Gap (boys – girls)
		Share of boys who are poor and undernourished (with confidence interval)				Share of girls who are poor and undernourished (with confidence interval)				
	Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	Percentage points
Global estimates	518,479	18.6	*18.2*	*19.1*	50,509	18.2	*17.7*	*18.7*	45,067	0.4
World regions[1]										
Arab States	45,762	14.2	*13.6*	*14.8*	3,372	13.8	*13.2*	*14.3*	3,035	0.5
East Asia and the Pacific	113,710	3.8	*2.6*	*5.0*	2,454	4.9	*3.2*	*6.6*	2,404	-1.1
Europe and Central Asia	6,758	1.5	*1.2*	*1.7*	51	1.5	*1.2*	*1.7*	49	0.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	25,158	11.4	*9.4*	*13.5*	1,477	12.1	*10.0*	*14.2*	1,479	-0.7
South Asia	182,426	20.5	*19.8*	*21.2*	19,268	20.3	*19.6*	*21.1*	18,027	0.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	144,665	32.8	*32.1*	*33.5*	23,888	27.9	*27.3*	*28.6*	20,073	4.9**
Income groups[2]										
Low income	102,031	39.8	*38.9*	*40.6*	20,399	34.8	*34.0*	*35.7*	17,662	4.9**
Lower-middle income	264,511	19.7	*19.1*	*20.2*	26,695	18.6	*18.1*	*19.2*	23,979	1.0
Upper-middle income	151,863	4.1	*3.1*	*5.1*	3,414	5.1	*3.8*	*6.3*	3,425	-1.0
High income	74	2.4	*1.6*	*3.2*	1	2.3	*1.1*	*3.5*	1	0.2

ANNEX 2: TABLE A2

PREVALENCE AND MAGNITUDE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN, POVERTY, AND THEIR OVERLAP

Table A2 presents data on school-aged children who are out of school, MPI poor or both; compares out of school and school-going children; and examines disparities between boys and girls.

Source: Alkire and Ul Haq, 2026.

NOTES:

Global MPI data and data on income categories, regions etc. were taken from global MPI 2025 tables.

[1] **World regions:**

Arab States: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen

East Asia and the Pacific: Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Naoero, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Vietnam

Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

[2] **Income groups:**

Low income: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Yemen

Lower-middle income: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, State of Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Upper-middle income: Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Libya, Maldives, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Peru, Serbia, South Africa, Suriname, Thailand, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu

High income: Guyana, Naoero, Trinidad and Tobago.

[3] United Nations (2024). 'World population prospects 2024' (last accessed: 29 August 2026). Note: Population estimates are based on the 2023 population projections. Following DHS and MICS conventions, countries with fewer than 25 unweighted observations in the relevant reference population (denominator) were excluded when calculating the aggregate estimates.

[4] Countries excluded when out-of-school children were used as the reference population (denominator): Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia.

** Indicates a significant difference based on non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.

TABLE A2

World region / income group	Total number of school-aged children[3]	School-aged children	Total number of school-aged children who are out of school	School-aged children				School-aged children	Total number of school-aged children who are poor and out of school
		Share of school-aged children who are out of school		Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI = H*A)	Headcount ratio: population in multidimensional poverty (H)	Number of poor	Intensity of deprivation among the poor (A)	Share of school-aged children who are both poor and out of school	
	Thousands	%	Thousands	Range 0 to 1	%	Thousands	Average % of weighted deprivations	%	Thousands
Global estimates	1,042,798	13.0	135,769	0.143	28.2	294,155	50.8	10.6	110,222
World regions[1]									
Arab States	75,160	12.0	9,028	0.103	20.4	15,309	50.4	8.0	6,006
East Asia and the Pacific	214,071	6.6	14,190	0.037	8.5	18,226	44.0	3.1	6,629
Europe and Central Asia	17,262	1.9	325	0.006	1.7	293	37.7	0.4	71
Latin America and the Caribbean	89,856	4.1	3,657	0.035	8.0	7,214	44.2	1.7	1,499
South Asia	344,589	11.7	40,224	0.126	26.3	90,701	47.9	9.5	32,759
Sub-Saharan Africa	301,859	22.6	68,344	0.289	53.8	162,412	53.6	21.0	63,257
Income groups[2]									
Low income	173,888	27.4	47,572	0.369	67.2	116,933	54.9	25.9	45,111
Lower-middle income	586,952	12.6	74,045	0.133	27.2	159,635	48.9	10.2	59,588
Upper-middle income	281,641	5.0	14,140	0.026	6.2	17,582	41.8	2.0	5,522
High income	317	3.9	12	0.007	1.6	5	40.0	0.5	1

World region / income group	Total number of school-aged children[3]	Out-of-school children[4]			School-going children		
		Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI = H*A)	Headcount ratio: population in multidimensional poverty (H)	Intensity of deprivation among the poor (A)	Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI = H*A)	Headcount ratio: population in multidimensional poverty (H)	Intensity of deprivation among the poor (A)
	Thousands	Range 0 to 1	%	Average % of weighted deprivations	Range 0 to 1	%	Average % of weighted deprivations
Global estimates	1,042,798	0.470	81.2	57.9	0.094	20.3	46.6
World regions[1]							
Arab States	75,160	0.369	66.5	55.5	0.066	14.0	47.1
East Asia and the Pacific	214,071	0.215	46.7	46.0	0.025	5.8	42.8
Europe and Central Asia	17,262	0.085	21.7	39.0	0.005	1.3	37.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	89,856	0.197	41.0	48.0	0.029	6.6	43.2
South Asia	344,589	0.449	81.4	55.2	0.083	19.0	43.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	301,859	0.565	92.6	61.0	0.208	42.5	48.9
Income groups[2]							
Low income	173,888	0.591	94.8	62.3	0.286	56.9	50.2
Lower-middle income	586,952	0.450	80.5	56.0	0.087	19.5	44.6
Upper-middle income	281,641	0.166	39.0	42.6	0.019	4.5	41.4
High income	317	0.053	11.7	45.3	0.005	1.2	37.9

TABLE A2

World region / income group	Total number of school-aged children[3]	School-aged boys			Total number of school-aged boys who are out of school	School-aged girls			Total number of school-aged girls who are out of school	Gender disparity Gap (boys – girls)
		Share of boys who are out of school (with confidence interval)				Share of girls who are out of school (with confidence interval)				
	Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	Percentage points
Global estimates	1,042,798	12.7	*12.4*	*13.0*	67,626	13.4	*13.0*	*13.7*	68,142	-0.7**
World regions[1]										
Arab States	75,160	10.9	*10.5*	*11.3*	4,191	13.2	*12.6*	*13.7*	4,837	-2.3**
East Asia and the Pacific	214,071	7.2	*6.3*	*8.0*	7,913	6.1	*5.3*	*6.9*	6,278	1.1
Europe and Central Asia	17,262	1.9	*1.7*	*2.1*	170	1.9	*1.7*	*2.1*	155	0.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	89,856	4.1	*3.7*	*4.4*	1,884	4.1	*3.7*	*4.5*	1,774	0.0
South Asia	344,589	10.7	*10.2*	*11.2*	18,963	12.7	*12.0*	*13.5*	21,260	-2.0**
Sub-Saharan Africa	301,859	22.7	*22.1*	*23.3*	34,505	22.6	*22.0*	*23.2*	33,839	0.1
Income groups[2]										
Low income	173,888	26.7	*25.9*	*27.5*	23,480	28.0	*27.2*	*28.8*	24,093	-1.3
Lower-middle income	586,952	12.2	*11.8*	*12.5*	36,548	13.1	*12.6*	*13.6*	37,495	-0.9
Upper-middle income	281,641	5.2	*4.5*	*5.9*	7,592	4.8	*4.2*	*5.4*	6,548	0.4
High income	317	3.7	*2.8*	*4.6*	6	4.1	*2.8*	*5.5*	7	-0.4

World region / income group	Total number of school-aged children[3]	School-aged boys			Total number of school-aged boys who are poor and out of school	School-aged girls			Total number of school-aged girls who are poor and out of school	Gender disparity Gap (boys – girls)
		Share of boys who are poor and out of school (with confidence interval)				Share of girls who are poor and out of school (with confidence interval)				
	Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	%	95% CI		Thousands	Percentage points
Global estimates	1,042,798	10.2	*9.9*	*10.5*	54,478	11.0	*10.6*	*11.3*	55,744	-0.8**
World regions[1]										
Arab States	75,160	7.2	*6.8*	*7.6*	2,774	8.8	*8.3*	*9.3*	3,232	-1.6**
East Asia and the Pacific	214,071	3.2	*2.6*	*3.7*	3,487	3.0	*2.4*	*3.6*	3,142	0.1
Europe and Central Asia	17,262	0.4	*0.3*	*0.5*	37	0.4	*0.3*	*0.5*	34	0.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	89,856	1.7	*1.4*	*1.9*	770	1.7	*1.5*	*1.9*	730	0.0
South Asia	344,589	8.6	*8.1*	*9.1*	15,219	10.5	*9.7*	*11.2*	17,541	-1.9**
Sub-Saharan Africa	301,859	21.2	*20.6*	*21.8*	32,191	20.7	*20.2*	*21.3*	31,066	0.4
Income groups[2]										
Low income	173,888	25.7	*24.9*	*26.5*	22,548	26.2	*25.4*	*27.0*	22,562	-0.5
Lower-middle income	586,952	9.7	*9.3*	*10.1*	29,125	10.6	*10.1*	*11.1*	30,463	-0.9**
Upper-middle income	281,641	1.9	*1.5*	*2.3*	2,804	2.0	*1.5*	*2.5*	2,718	-0.1
High income	317	0.6	*0.3*	*0.9*	1	0.3	*0.1*	*0.6*	1	0.3

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ENDNOTES

1 We follow DHS and MICS conventions of removing any observations for which the unweighted sample size is fewer than 25. The remaining observations are reported with standard errors and 95% confidence intervals in the full tables. For more details, see Alkire and Ul Haq (2026).

2 Following Alkire and Ul Haq (2025), the individual child analysis is based either on the microdata underlying the global MPI estimation or on disaggregations of the global MPI by relevant child subgroups. No additional child-level MPI is constructed for this report (for the construction of linked child MPIs, see Alkire et al., 2026).

3 In the global MPI, if all individuals in the household are in an age group where they should have formally completed six or more years of schooling, but none has, then the household is deprived. However, if any child aged 10 years and older reported six years or more of schooling, the household is not deprived.

4 The global MPI uses China Family Panel Study data (CFPS), and this is the only one of the 97 datasets on undernutrition in which children's height and weight is reported rather than measured by enumerators. In general, the nutrition values from CFPS are higher than those from the National Bureau of Statistics China, hence the undernourished non-poor figures may be slightly too high.

5 Alkire and Ul Haq (2026) note and probe the problem that some measured schooling-disadvantages might be because the available age variable does not align with school starting months, so may overestimate the number of deprived children at the age in which their school career starts.

6 To provide a complete account of the reference population, the study retained cases where no eligible person was present in the household or where the relevant information was missing.

7 Since years of schooling is one of the indicators in the global MPI, the study tested the extent to which the overlap between multidimensional poverty and low adult educational attainment might be merely mechanical. It is not: 86.7% of poor and undernourished children would remain multidimensionally poor if the years-of-schooling deprivation were removed. In addition, not considering these children's years of schooling deprivation, the 95.6 million poor undernourished children experience a total of 485.6 million deprivations in other global MPI indicators, which seems to be a serious burden. Hence in these datasets the documented overlap between years of schooling disadvantages and child disadvantage cannot be simply dismissed by an assumption that it is merely mechanical. For further empirical analyses, see Alkire and Ul Haq (2026).

8 Since years of schooling is one of the indicators in the global MPI, part of the overlap between multidimensional poverty and low adult educational attainment reflects the construction of the measure. More importantly, 89.3% of poor and out-of-school children would remain multidimensionally poor if the years-of-schooling deprivation was removed, indicating that the relationship is not driven primarily by this indicator alone. Not considering the years-of-schooling deprivation, poor out-of-school children experience 596.1 million deprivations in other global MPI indicators, representing a substantial burden.

9 Pioneer children and first-generation children are not fully equivalent categories. An educated household adult may be a relative rather than a parent, excluding some first-generation children from the pioneer children category, while the absence of an educated parent due to death, migration, separation, divorce or residence elsewhere may result in some non-first-generation children being classified as pioneer children.

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