

# *State of Young Children in the Arab Region*

Forum on Investing in Young Children Globally Investing in Young  
Children Globally: The Cost of Inaction  
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# State of Young Children in the Arab Region

- Introduction and Current Situation
- Progress towards EFA Goal ONE
- ECCE Policies
- Education Programmes
- Health Programmes
- ECCE Threat: Emergencies and Armed Conflicts
- ACTION NOW

# OVERALL SITUATION

- Demand greater than services available
- Families have complex needs
- Focus on treatment rather than prevention/early intervention
- Fragmented service delivery
  - Different sectors (health, education, welfare)
  - Different funding streams – short term plan
  - Variable understanding of early years issues

# EFA GOAL ONE - GLOBALLY

- **Goal 1**: *Despite improvements, far too many children lack early childhood care and education. In 2012, 25% of children under 5 suffered from stunting. In 2011, around half of young children had access to pre-primary education.*



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# EFA GOAL ONE - Arab Region

- The under-5 mortality rate fell from 53 deaths for every 1000 live births in 2000 to 33 in 2012.
- The pre-primary education gross enrolment ratio increased from 15% in 1999 to 23% in 2011, but remains the second lowest ratio of any region in the world.
- Access to early childhood education services remains unequal as the region has the highest share of private provision, with more than two-thirds of total enrolment in private pre-schools and nurseries.
- Algeria, which stands out as the country with the highest share of government provision in the region at 86%, achieved the largest expansion in pre-primary education - from just 2% in 1999 to 75% in 2011 - as a result of a reform that introduced a pre-primary curriculum in 2004 and aimed to increase the gross enrolment ratio to 80% by 2010.



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# Pre Primary Enrollment

- There is a wide gap in enrolment between the richest and poorest.
- Governments have yet to assume sufficient responsibility for pre-primary education: as of 2011, private providers were catering for 33% of all enrolled children, rising to 71% in the Arab States.
- The cost of private provision is one of the factors that contribute to inequity in access.

# Health and Nutrition Programmes

- Findings about **health programmes show that the region have in the last ten years improved** its health care services for children (0-8 years)!
- Malnutrition remains a **serious impediment** in many Arab countries.
- On average **17 per cent** of young children in the Arab States **are moderately to severely underweight** with Yemen and Sudan having the highest percentages of 46 and 41 percent respectively.
- The Arab region has the greatest number of children under age 5 **suffering from moderate to severe stunting** where it averages 26 per cent in all states, and it reaches 53% in Yemen and 20% in Saudi Arabia.

# Health and Nutrition Programmes

- All the countries have **national immunization programmes** for the first five years which is leading to reduction in the under-5 mortality rates.
- Only few countries in the Arab States have school health programmes, i.e. UAE, Tunisia, and Oman. Their programmes are for children 3-8 years old.
- **Under-5 mortality** rate fell from 53 deaths for every 1000 live births in 2000 to 33 in 2012.

# Education Programmes

- **Access to early childhood education services varies between children for 0-3 and 3-6.**
- **It is fairly** low for children 0-3 and usually privately operated or government financed.
- As for children's access to pre-primary education, measured in terms of gross enrolment, it varies widely among countries: from GER above 80% like Kuwait and UAE to under 5% like Yemen, Mauritania, and Djibouti.
- Adequate statistics on availability of services for **marginalized Children** including those living in rural areas, children with special needs, disadvantaged and at-risk children is lacking.

# EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

## For Children 0-3

- Fewer services are provided to children under 3 than over 3 and official early childhood programmes targeting this age group are usually of a custodial nature.
- In most of these Arab countries, almost all of child care centres are privately operated by for-profit commercial businesses.

## For Children 3-6

- Several education acts and regulations in the region have resulted in important changes for the pre-primary years.
- In Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and Yemen **entry age to pre-primary is 3 and the duration is two years**. However, **entry age and duration is from 4-5** year olds in Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Libya, Palestinian Authority Territories, Oman, Sudan and UAE.

# EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

## For Children 6-8

This age category is part of formal education, which makes it difficult to monitor the coverage of these services for this age group and the extent of coverage of health, nutrition and social needs in addition to academic education.

## Some programmes targeting children from low socio-economic backgrounds

- Countries like Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Oman and Morocco have launched specific programme.
- Examples are the Sesame Stories programme, *Khatawat and* Kidsmart in Jordan and the MOCEP in Bahrain, which is a pioneer programme in education of the mother and child, and the “ATFALE” programme for improving Koranic schools in Morocco.
- In Oman, there are special programmes like “Child’s Corner” and “Homes for child development” that provide services to these children.

# ECCE National Strategies

- **Early childhood strategies** are reported to be existing or in process in eight countries. This is in cooperation with regional and international organizations (UNICEF, AGFUND, and UNDP)
- Yet, the process of evaluation and follow-up as well as monitoring with quantitative and qualitative indicators is vague.

# Armed Conflict is a major barrier to Young Children Well Being



Children peer from a tent classroom after their school was destroyed

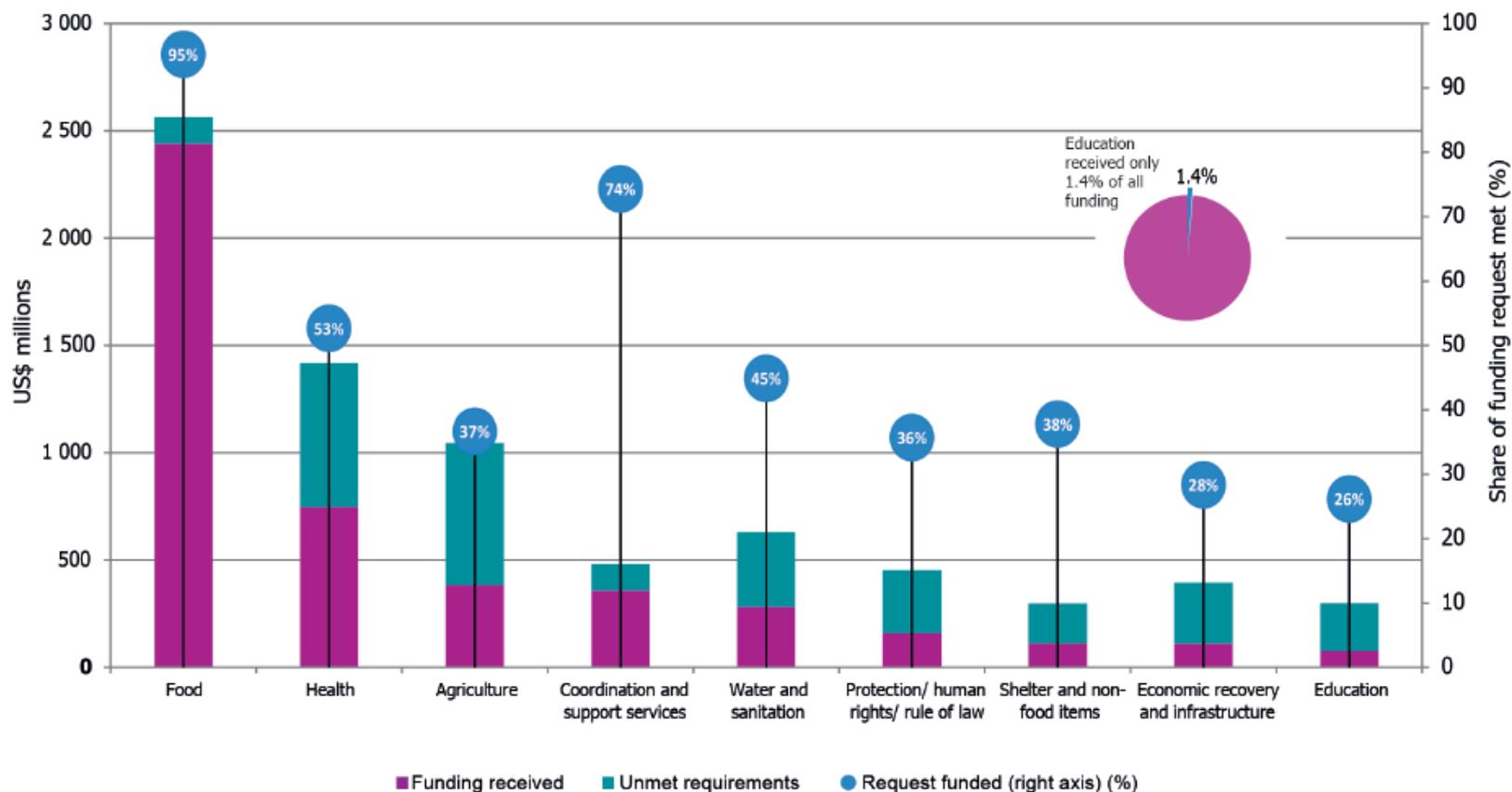
## EC MAJOR THREAT in the Arab Region: EMERGENCIES and Armed conflicts

- Internal armed conflict is affecting civilians
- Increase number of displaced population
- Increased number of injuries among parents and children
- School infrastructure is a target
- Shortage of qualified teachers
- Lack of resources and materials
- Child Soldier – recruitment from schools
- Safety in and to school
- Trust in education programmes!
- Priority is for relief not education and social services
- Funding goes to military and defense
- Young children live in abnormal situation. They need....

# Education Receives Small Share of HF

Figure 2: Education receives a small share of humanitarian aid

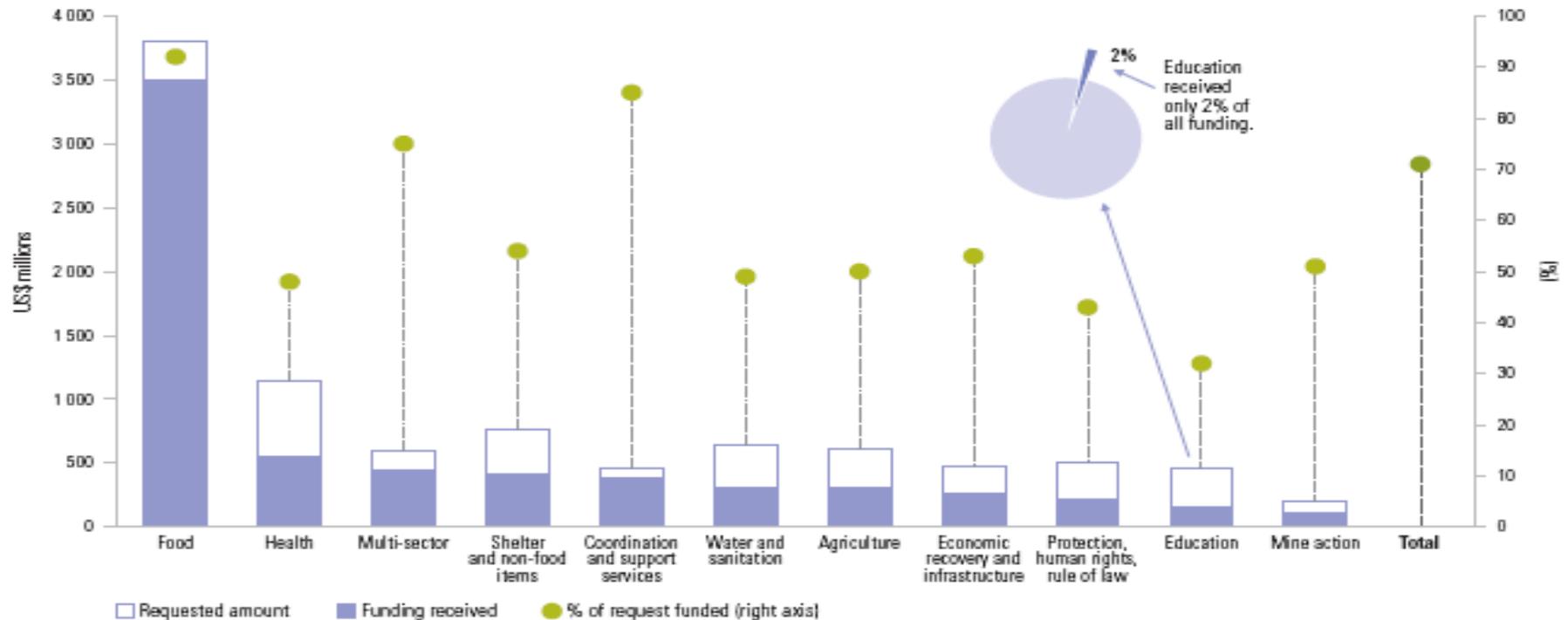
Funding received against amount requested per sector, 2012 consolidated appeals and flash appeals



Source: Financial Tracking Service database. Accessed June 2013

# Small Share of Requests and Small share of Approved Funding

**Figure 13: Education's double disadvantage in humanitarian aid: a small share of requests and the smallest share of requests that get funded**  
*Funding received against amount requested per sector, 2009 consolidated appeals and flash appeals*



Source: See Figure 4.4 In the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report.

# ACTION NOW - 3 Main Priorities

- Gain political will and put ECCE as a priority in all situations, making **early childhood programmes a force for PEACE.**
- Pay greater attention to the transition years (6-8 years). The findings show that within the primary education group there is limited information on children aged 6-8.
- Urgent need for a database, accurate statistics, and laboratory studies that reflect the **realities of early childhood** and provide detailed data that is supported by scientific evidence which can be communicated to policy makers.



**Thank YOU**