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## Education for all five years after Dakar. The long road of Yemen

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# Education for All - fünf Jahre nach Dakar

## Aus dem Inhalt:

- Chancen und Grenzen für das Erreichen der Dakar-Ziele
- Quantitative und qualitative Bestandsaufnahmen zu „Bildung für Alle“
- Education for All in Asien, Afrika und Lateinamerika
- Perspektiven für den Dakar-Prozess bis 2015

# Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik

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Herbert Bergmann

# Education For All five years after Dakar

## The long road of Yemen

*Zusammenfassung: Obwohl es positive Entwicklungen im Bildungsbereich Jemens und anderer arabischer Länder gibt, ist unklar, ob die Dakar-Ziele erreicht werden können; insbesondere die Mädchenbildung ist ein kritischer Faktor. Neben Informationen über das jemenitische Bildungswesen informiert der Beitrag über die Herausforderungen der MENA-Region am Beispiel Jemens, Schwierigkeiten in der Mädchenbildung und die Basic Education Development Strategy als ein Weg zur Erreichung der Dakar-Ziele.*

*Abstract: Although there are positive developments in the education of Yemen and other Arabic countries, it is yet unclear if the Dakar-goals can be achieved; especially the education of girls' is a critical aspect. The article informs about the education system of Yemen, the challenges of the MENA-region, using the example of Yemen, difficulties of girls' education and the Basic Education Strategy as a trace to reach the Dakar-goals.*

### Introduction

Everywhere in the Arab World, the education indicators have improved (see Fig. 1). In contrast to the period after the World Conference on Education in Jomtien (1990), there has been a series of follow-up activities after the Dakar World Forum that took up, implemented and reinforced the recommendations of the Dakar Framework of Action. The development of basic education worldwide can be followed in UNESCO's annual Global Monitoring Reports. It shows impressive advances (UNESCO 2002; 2003; 2004).

Concerning the Dakar Goals in its meaning for Yemen, the three causally linked goals of Education For All with a qualified primary level completion, the elimination of gender discrimination in education, and the reduction of adult illiteracy are of strategic significance. The causal links are such that striving for the first goal entails the other two, elimination of gender discrimination by definition and therefore relatively soon, and eliminating adult literacy in the long term.

### The History of Education in Yemen

The history of modern education in Yemen is very short, although formal education probably existed on the territory

of present-day Yemen since the advent of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, probably also earlier on in the context of the old kingdoms that thrived on the frankincense trade. At the latest, it must have appeared with the advent of Judaism and Christianity before the appearance of Islam. Modern education developed along two different paths. The later People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PRDY) became a British colony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1839). In 1866, the first school was established, in 1937, there were four schools with a middle school section. At the end of the colonial period, South Yemen counted about 44,000 pupils, 71% of them at the primary level. „The UK was forced to withdraw from Aden in 1967. The National Liberation Front (NLF), which took over the South, became radicalized, and the socialist People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) was formed in 1970" (Braun/Hummelsheim 2002, p. 7). Education became compulsory along the lines of education of the socialist block (Bartel/Scheffler/Scholz 1995). In the North, the history of education starts with the overthrow of the Imamate<sup>1</sup> in 1962. It developed from a very modest start, and now counts about 4,545,000 students and about 14,000 schools (Ministry of Education 2003/2004). It has all the elements of a modern system of education. The situation of the country is particularly precarious because of the high population growth of around 3.4% per year with its heavy and growing demand for human and other resources.

### Regional Developments and the unification of the education-system

Given the history of Yemen, there are two distinct development paths of modern formal education, one in the part colonised by Britain that later became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY = South Yemen), and one in the territory of the Imamate. In both states, educational development was uneven and varied a lot between urban and rural areas, and between regions dominated by tribes as compared to regions where the state had a stronger presence. These early differences remain visible until today. In the Former South Yemen, the policy of obligatory education was followed in the cities, particularly in Aden, while it was poorly implemented in the tribal areas to the east of Aden (Shabwa, Hadramout). On the territory of the former Imamate, the development of

	Adult Literacy Rate (15+)				Youth Literacy Rate (15-24)				GER Primary Education				Gross Intake Rate				INDEX
	1990		2000-2004		1990		2000-2004		1998		2001		1998		2001		
Country or territory	Fem.	GPI	Fem.	GPI	Fem.	GPI	Fem.	GPI	Fem.	GPI	Fem.	GPI	Fem.	GPI	Fem.	GPI	
Palestinian Autonomous Territories									106.4	1.01	104.6	1.01	104.9	1.01	100.1	1.01	102.4
Syrian Arab Republic	47.5	0.58	74.2	0.82	66.9	0.73	93.0	0.96	98.9	0.92	107.8	0.93	104.4	0.94	120.6	0.97	98.9
Lebanon	73.1	0.83			88.6	0.93			104.3	0.96	100.9	0.96	92.8	0.93	95.9	0.98	98.4
Qatar	76.0	0.98	82.3	0.97	93.0	1.05	95.8	1.02	106.1	0.97	103.8	0.96	112.4	0.98	108.1	1.01	97.5
Jordan	72.1	0.80	85.9	0.90	95.3	0.97	99.5	1.00	96.7	1.00	98.7	1.00	99.2	1.00	103.2	1.01	96.8
Iraq	19.7	0.38			24.9	0.44			89.3	0.82	88.7	0.82	104.5	0.88	103.8	0.88	96.3
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	51.1	0.62	70.7	0.77	82.7	0.84	94.0	0.94	114.8	0.98	114.1	1.00					92.9
United Arab Emirates	70.6	0.99	80.7	1.07	88.6	1.08	95.0	1.08	87.2	0.96	90.3	0.96	88.4	0.97	101.5	0.99	91.9
Bahrain	74.6	0.86	84.2	0.92	95.0	0.99	98.9	1.01	101.0	1.01	97.5	0.99	97.5	1.03	86.6	0.96	91.8
Kuwait	72.6	0.92	81.0	0.96	87.2	0.99	93.9	1.02	102.2	1.01	94.1	0.99	99.0	1.00	94.8	0.99	91.0
Tunisia	46.5	0.65	63.1	0.76	75.2	0.81	90.6	0.93	111.6	0.95	109.3	0.96	100.5	1.00	99.3	1.01	90.6
Algeria	41.3	0.64	59.6	0.76	68.1	0.79	85.6	0.91	102.0	0.92	104.3	0.93	100.2	0.98	100.1	0.98	87.4
Morocco	24.9	0.47	38.3	0.61	42.0	0.62	61.3	0.79	79.9	0.81	110.6	0.89	112.2	0.94	115.2	0.97	81.4
Oman	38.3	0.57	65.4	0.80	75.4	0.79	97.3	0.98	84.1	0.96	82.2	0.98	80.9	1.00	74.4	1.01	79.8
Egypt	33.6	0.56	43.6	0.65	51.0	0.72	66.9	0.85	92.0	0.96	94.0	0.94	87.1	0.96	94.4	0.98	74.7
Saudi Arabia	50.2	0.66	69.5	0.83	78.6	0.86	91.6	0.96	67.6	0.97	66.3	0.97	64.9	0.99	67.4	0.99	73.7
Mauritania	23.9	0.52	31.3	0.61	36.1	0.65	41.8	0.73	83.9	0.94	84.6	0.96			110.2	0.96	67.0
Sudan	31.5	0.53	49.1	0.69	54.0	0.71	74.2	0.88	50.1	0.85	54.0	0.85			47.7	0.82	56.3
Yemen	12.9	0.23	28.5	0.41	25.0	0.34	50.9	0.60	52.5	0.56	64.3	0.66	64.3	0.72	79.1	0.76	55.7
Djibouti	39.7	0.59			64.2	0.78			31.5	0.71	34.8	0.76	27.3	0.74	34	0.76	34.4

Fig. 1: Selected Literacy and Enrolment Indicators for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (UNESCO 2004)

education was slower and had less political backing. It was strong in the large cities, i.e. the capital Sana'a, the port city of Al Hodeida, and cities like Ibb and Ta'iz in the mountains. It was much weaker in the tribal strongholds east of the mountains (Marib), and to the North towards the border with Saudi Arabia.

The PDRY had organised a series of schools along party and ideological lines. To keep up with this, the Arab Republic of Yemen (North Yemen) had allowed the development of a privately run, religious system of education. It had its origin in the Coranic schools for boys in the Imamate. In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, they were suspected to serve as recruitment and training ground for the Al Qaida network, much like the madrassas in Pakistan, and this provided additional momentum for integration.

## Education Indicators in Yemen and the Region

In order to assess the current state of affairs of education in Yemen, data from the recent EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) are used (see Fig. 1). We show only *indicators concerning the female population* as this is the critical dimension in the region, and for two points in time. For each of the four indicators selected, we also present the Gender Parity Index (GPI)<sup>2</sup>. The following indicators are used: (1) The adult literacy rate (for the population of 15 years and above), which represents "the weight of the past"; (2) the youth literacy rate (for the population between 15 and 24 years), which shows – compared to the first indicator – the effect of schooling during the past decades on the young generation; (3) the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for the primary level; (4) the Gross Intake

Rate (GIR) for the primary level. Since this is usually higher than the GER, it shows what could be achieved if all those entering Grade 1 could be kept in school. This is "the promise of the future". Fig. 1 shows these indicators for all countries of the MENA<sup>3</sup> region. The following two figures (Fig. 2 and 3) show them for three countries, Syria at the high end of the distribution, Morocco at a middle position, and Yemen.

Comparing the four indicators (Fig. 2), it is obvious that Yemen is making progress. Its development path is similar to that of Syria, but Syria started at a higher level. There is a serious flaw with the enrolment rates in Yemen due to the unreliability of population data.

Gender parity (Fig. 3) shows a remarkable improvement concerning the level of education, measured by the literacy rates, as well as the participation in education, measured by GER and GIR. The difference between the GIR and the GER points to an uneven drop-out in the early school years in disfavour of the girls. At very high levels of female enrolment (Syria), the GPI stabilises at values close to 1.0. The movement of the indicators shows that, as usual, the demand for the education of boys precedes the demand for girls' education, but girls follow.

## Demand for Education

The demand for education is increasing. It varies a lot among the Governorates. As usual, the urban areas lead the drive for more and better education, where the value of education is the most obvious. The demand is gender specific, particularly in rural areas. The GPIs by district shows this very clearly.<sup>4</sup>

The lackmus test for educational development in any Islamic country is *girls' education*,<sup>5</sup> as this is a difficult issue. The

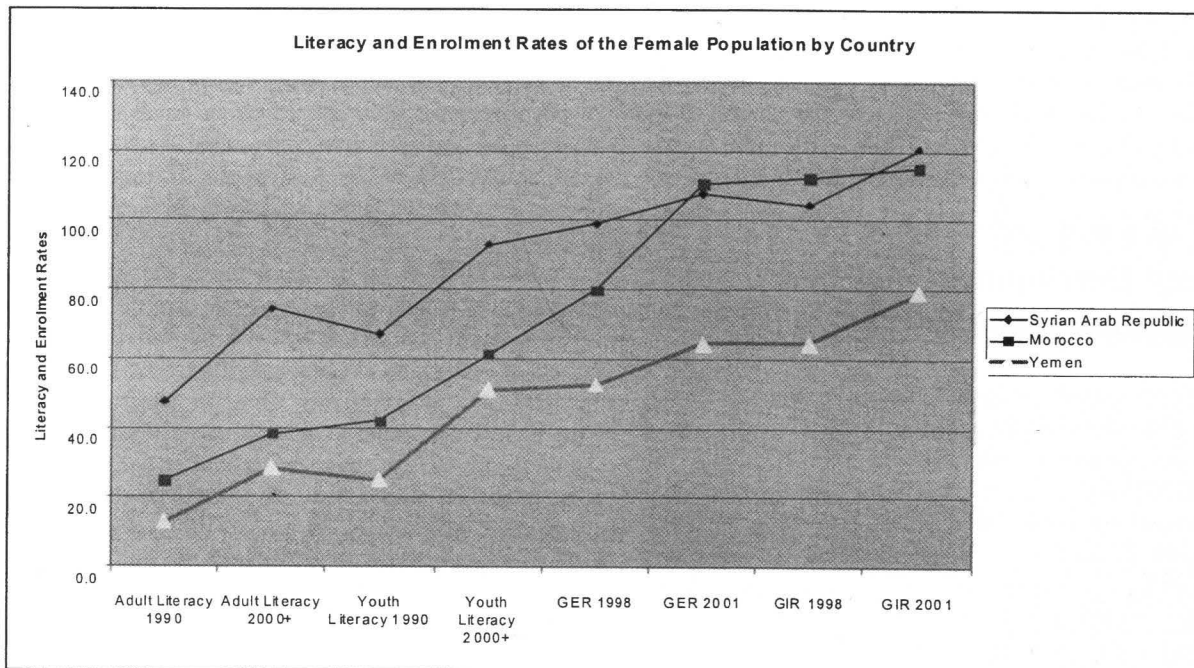


Fig. 2: Literacy and Enrolment Rates for three selected countries

religious-ideological position concerning women in Islamic countries, however, makes this a much more acute issue.

## Causes – the Cultural-Religious Factor

Gender roles are strongly stereotyped. Women are more or less confined to the house. They run the household, are supposed to bear many children and have to take care of them. In rural areas, the women play a major role in agricultural and animal husbandry tasks. Marriage is arranged between families, and the family of the bridegroom pays a bride price to the parents of the bride. In this context, and particularly in rural areas, the need for the education of girls is not evident. This attitude is reinforced by a very common, rigid interpretation of Islam, and by the fear that any modern education is “unis-

lamic” and corrodes the morals of the younger generation. Certain Muslim clerics reinforce such attitudes.

As the education indicators show, in urban areas, these factors loose some of their power. And even among the young women in small rural towns, the demand for education as a way out of the customary confinement has been on the rise for quite some time.<sup>6</sup>

## Education Policy and Planning in Yemen

Yemen is on its way to reform its education system. The country is signatory to the Dakar Framework of Action and the Millennium Goals. Education sector policy needs to be

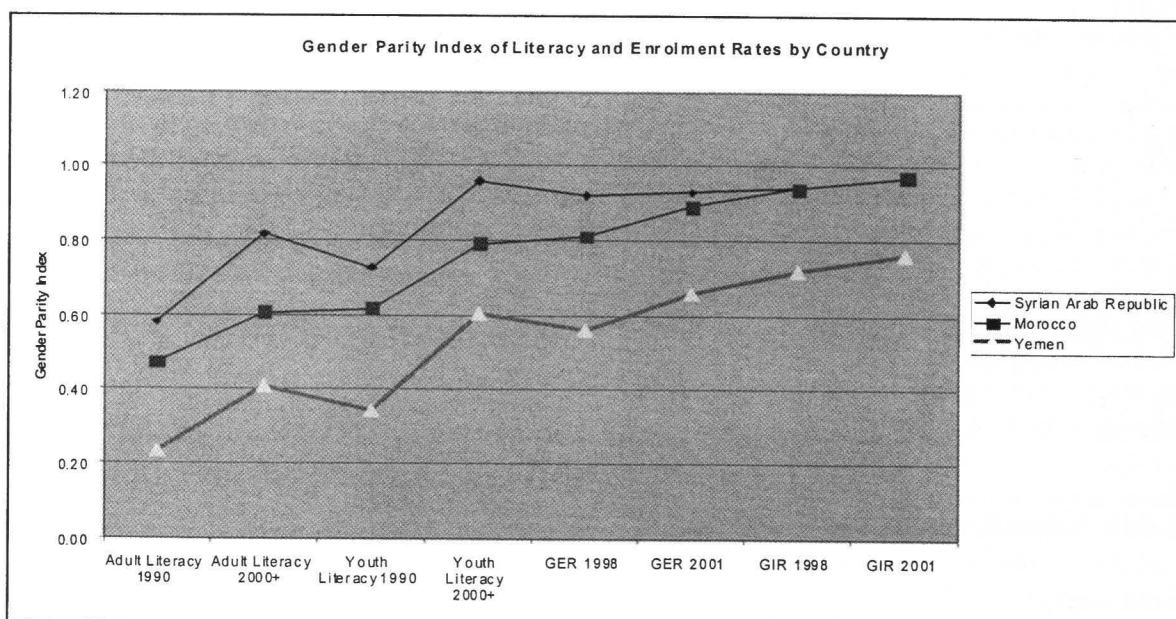


Fig. 3: Gender Parity in selected countries

guided by a political strategy, based on sound education planning. Education Planning is relatively new in Yemen. Although quite a number of people were trained at the IIEP during the nineties, hardly none of them was employed by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Thus, at the moment, the capacity to support the policy function of the MoE is limited.

## Strategy Development and Instruments of Education Planning

In 2002, the country designed a national strategy, the Basic Education Development Strategy (BEDS) with the support of German development co-operation. This strategy covers the period till 2015 and is thus in line with the MDG-(Millennium Development Goals)-time frame. It refers explicitly to the Dakar Framework of Action. It focuses exclusively on Basic Education. This covers grades one to nine, i.e. the primary and the lower secondary level. The specific characteristic of the BEDS is a strong element of participation. It was designed through a long participatory process. During 18 months, it involved stakeholders from all Governorates (actually 20 at that time), representing the administration, local councils, teachers, and civil society. More than 120 people participated at various stages of drafting the document. The strategy contains action plans for work in eight areas: (1) teacher education and guidance, (2) curricula and assessment, (3) School management, (4) education finance, (5) education management and decentralization of education, (6) girls' education, (7) school building, and (8) community participation. It has a detailed time frame, and the outline of an investment plan. In 2002, it was presented to the public through the First National Education Conference in Sana'a (October, 26<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>, 2002). In 2003, it was formally approved by the Cabinet. One of the distinguishing features of the strategy is the high level of genuine ownership at central and Governorate level. Due to the long participatory process and the low profile of external support in its elaboration, major actors see it as genuinely Yemeni.

Every year, the MoE conducts an annual school survey. This survey yields up-to-date data on students, teachers, and school infrastructure at all levels. The resulting national database is an ideal basis for policy support provided data are of good quality, and available on time. Since 2003, the survey is being decentralised to the Governorates (provinces). Provincial databases are being developed to fulfil the function of an EMIS (Education Management Information System) with the capacity to supply management data to the districts and schools. There are plans to develop a prognostic tool based on emerging time series. Such a tool is necessary to explore policy options for reaching the Millennium Development Goals in education.

## What can Yemen reach until 2015?

With a concerted effort, Education for All might be feasible up to 2015. The current emphasis of all donors on quality

could advance the country on the path towards primary education completion with good quality. One thing is obvious: the Dakar goal of gender equality at the primary level till 2005 will not be achieved. However, education for all is by definition only possible if all girls enter and remain in schools. As mentioned above, there are approaches and instruments in place to foster girls' education through community mobilisation. At the moment, it seems that traditional religious sentiments and norms are still on the rise. If this continues and grows stronger, the movement in favour of girls' education will be weakened, and there might even be setbacks in urban areas. Nobody can foresee yet, what kind of developments are possible. If, however, the situation stabilises, there are good chances that trends that have started to assert themselves continue and gain momentum. This, however, depends on political and economic factors beyond the control of national governments – also in other countries of the in the MENA region. Bearing this in mind one can ask: Quo vadis Yemen?

### Annotations

<sup>1</sup> The Imamate was a theocratic monarchy of more than thousand years, founded on a local variety of Islam. The last ruler excluded the country deliberately to protect the population of the western and socialist influences, assessed as unmoral.

<sup>2</sup> Combining the rates and the GPI, the rates for the male population can easily be calculated.

<sup>3</sup> MENA = Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>4</sup> These are not shown here but have been calculated in the course of developing EMIS (Education Management Information System) at the Governorate level.

<sup>5</sup> To a certain extent, this is also true in Western countries. The slow generalisation of secondary education to girls in Germany after World War II illustrates this point.

<sup>6</sup> An account of a German development worker from the early eighties shows this already very clearly: Frese-Weghöft 1986.

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