

Review of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.1.1

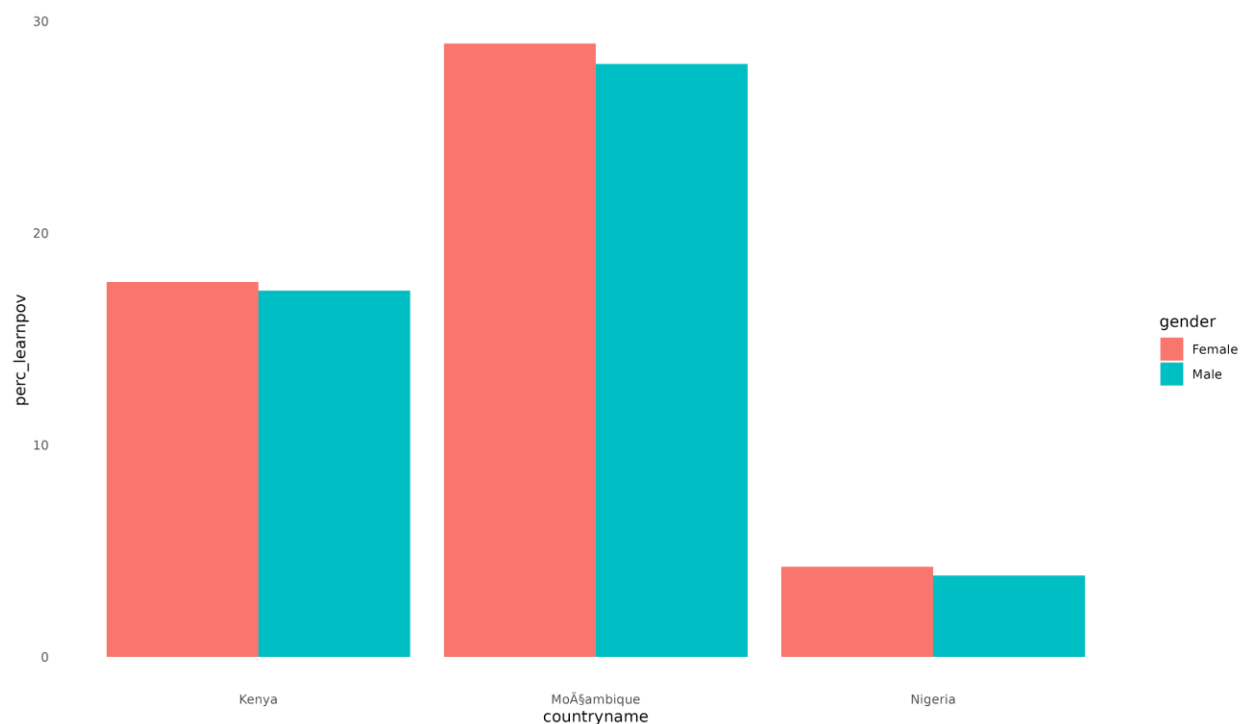
SDG 4.1.1 aims for the minimal achievement of reading and mathematics proficiency levels by gender for children and young people (a) in Grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary.

Consequently, PAL Network conducts large-scale, citizen-led assessments measuring children's foundational literacy and numeracy across Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA). Its 2022 survey contains household and children-level indicators collected from three countries in SSA. The following is a synopsis of the indicator's outlook in learning poverty and quality of education.

As defined by the World Bank, learning poverty accounts for children who cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10. The oldest surveyed children were 16 years old. In tandem with the definition, learning poverty analysis included children aged 10 years old and below.

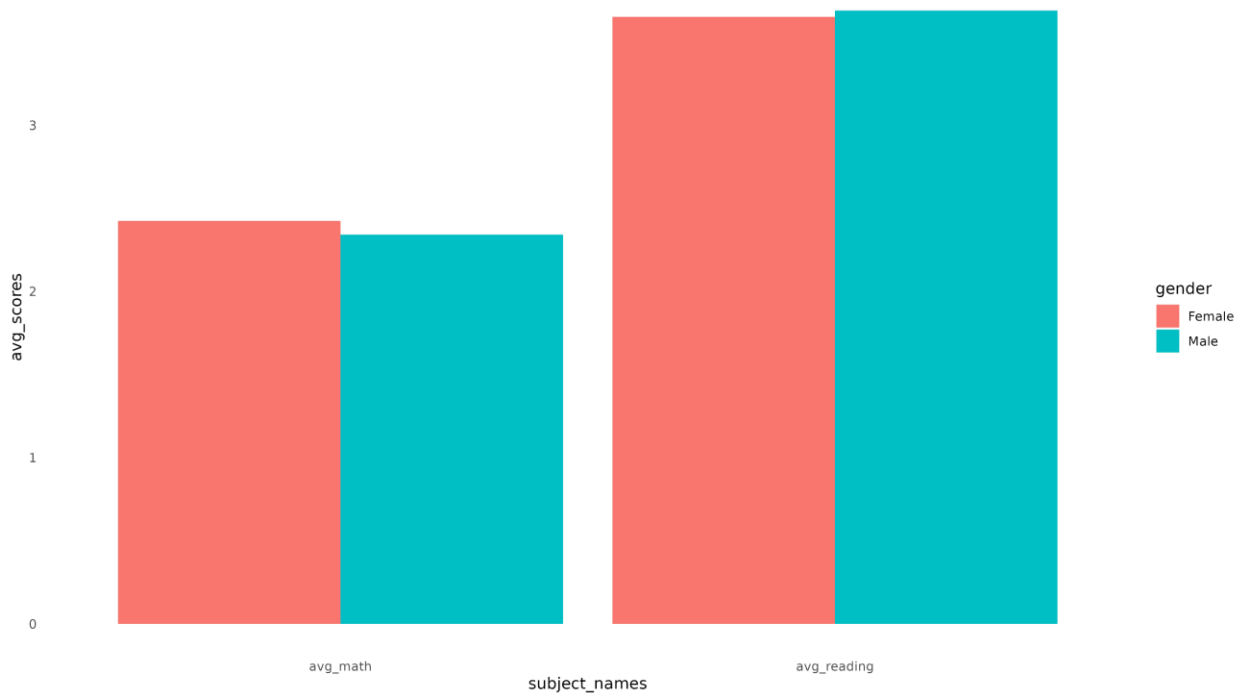
Across the three countries surveyed, the proportion of girl children who could not read, understand, and solve math problems at their age and grade level was slightly higher compared to their boy counterparts. They scored zero out of the fifteen questions selected to indicate proficiency in comprehension and mathematics.

Figure 1: Country Learning Poverty by Gender



Accounting for children who, on average, scored at least one question correctly – gender dynamics are revealed per academic subject. Girl children outrank their boy counterparts in mathematics while boys slightly outperform girls in reading. This dynamic is consistent with the learning poverty definition since Figure 1 shows that more girls appear to score nothing in reading compared to their boy counterparts.

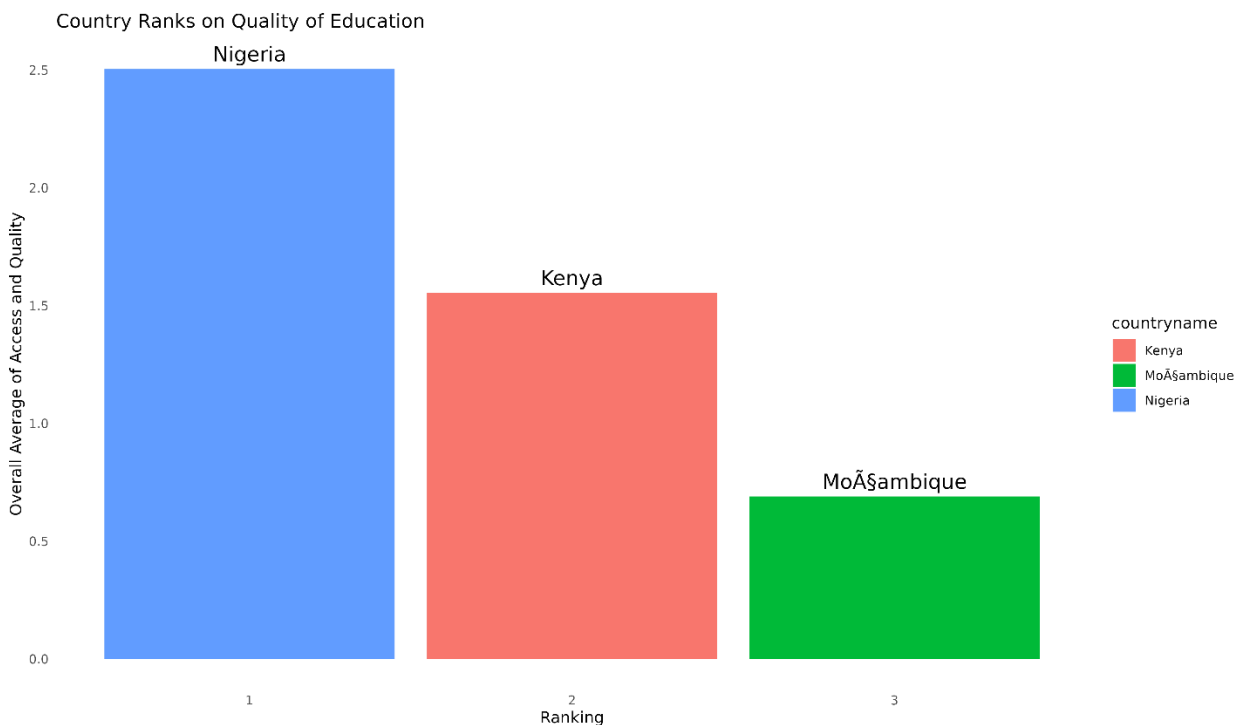
Figure 2: Gender Parity in Learning Poverty



Widening to include learners above 10 years of age, aforementioned student achievement measures were complemented with education access and quality dimensions. Indicators for education access included school enrollment, ownership of textbooks, and access to televised learning tools (computer, television, and smartphones). Indicators for learning quality included access to electricity and learning help at home.

Nigeria ranked first in the overall average of the dimensions followed by Kenya and Mozambique, respectively. Interesting enough is that the gap in performance is relatively equal across the three countries.

Figure 3: Overall Average of Education Access and Quality



To improve monitoring and achievement of SDG 4.1.1, regulatory organizations in African Education (The African Union, SADC and ADEA) need to prioritize investments in foundational learning from the moment a child reaches school going age. Possibilities of achieving this require improving education policy, management and service delivery. Policy needs a stringent quality assurance framework that holds educational actors accountable for implementing axes for education access and quality. Education management will need enhancement of educator training to a fun and engaging practice that attunes to children’s perspectives during instruction. Service delivery will require an inter-ministerial effort to widen access to quality education. For example, ministries for energy and technologies will need to bolster efforts to expand access to electricity and the internet in remote areas, leading to ripple effects of widened access to alternative forms of learning and increased time for student practice.