Youth Skills 2035: Exploring the Future of Education

The Challenge

The world's young people (ages 15-24) are the workforce, entrepreneurs, and leaders of tomorrow. But how educated will they be? Where will academic skills improve most dramatically, and where might population growth outpace educational gains?

Your mission: Use demographic and education projections to uncover compelling insights into the future skills landscape of young people in non-high-income countries by 2035.

The Data: Sources are the projections from the United Nations and the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital.

Core Question

How will the educational composition of young people (15-24) in (today's) non-high-income countries change between 2025 and 2035. What does this mean for the skills landscape? What are the consequences of these scenarios?

Angles to Explore

Teams are free to define their own focus, but here are some ideas:

🎯 **Improvement vs. Stagnation**

- Which countries will see the most dramatic improvements in youth education levels?
- Which countries closing the education gap vs. those falling further behind?

🌎 **Scenario Sensitivity**

- How do different projection scenarios change the education landscape?
- Which countries are most sensitive to scenario assumptions?
- Example: SSPs assume education-selective migration - more educated people may emigrate in higher numbers, leaving countries with higher shares of less-educated youth even as absolute education improves. Can you find this pattern?

🚺 **Gender Dynamics**

- Where are gender gaps in education closing fastest?
- Which countries will have the most educated young women vs. young men in 2035?
- Does gender parity vary by education level (e.g., primary vs. tertiary)?

📈 **Regional Patterns**

- How do World Bank regions compare in their education trajectories?
- Which regions face the biggest skills challenges?
- Heterogeneity within regions: stars vs. laggards

🎓 **Education Level Deep Dives**

- Focus on tertiary education: which countries will have the most university-educated youth?
- Or focus on basic education: where will "no education" finally be eliminated?
- Shifts in distribution: countries moving from primary-dominated to secondary-dominated
- Consequences: What will this imply for the future of these countries?

Metrics You Might Use

You're free to choose and combine metrics creatively:

- **Average years of schooling** (simple, comparable metric)
- **% with tertiary education** (focusing on high skills)
- **% with no/incomplete primary** (focusing on education access)
- **Education distribution shifts** (comparing 2025 vs. 2035 histograms)
- **Population-weighted education** (total skilled people, not just rates)
- **Gender parity indices** (female/male ratios at different education levels)
- **Education velocity** (rate of change in years of schooling)
- **Skill-population divergence** (where population grows faster than education)

What may the data be hiding?

We are trying to unearth insights from future scenarios. However, also keep in mind what the data may be hiding. The levels and years of education are standardized, but the quality of the education is not. Other datasets, like the World Bank's Human Capital Index, use learning-adjusted years of schooling. We would hope those also converge – but do the at the same pace?

What resources are available to you?

Four data sets with projections on (a) future population, (b) regional and economic income group country shares based on the projections, (c) projected educational proportions by education level, and (d) projected mean years of schooling.

Raw data sources and codes to convert these into the four files shared are made available.

Further details in the accompanying document "Documentation of provided datasets".