


Investing in early childhood
education: what does the
global and Pakistan-based
evidence tell us?

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**Immense strides
made but more
needs to be done
to improve
learning
globally and in
Pakistan...**

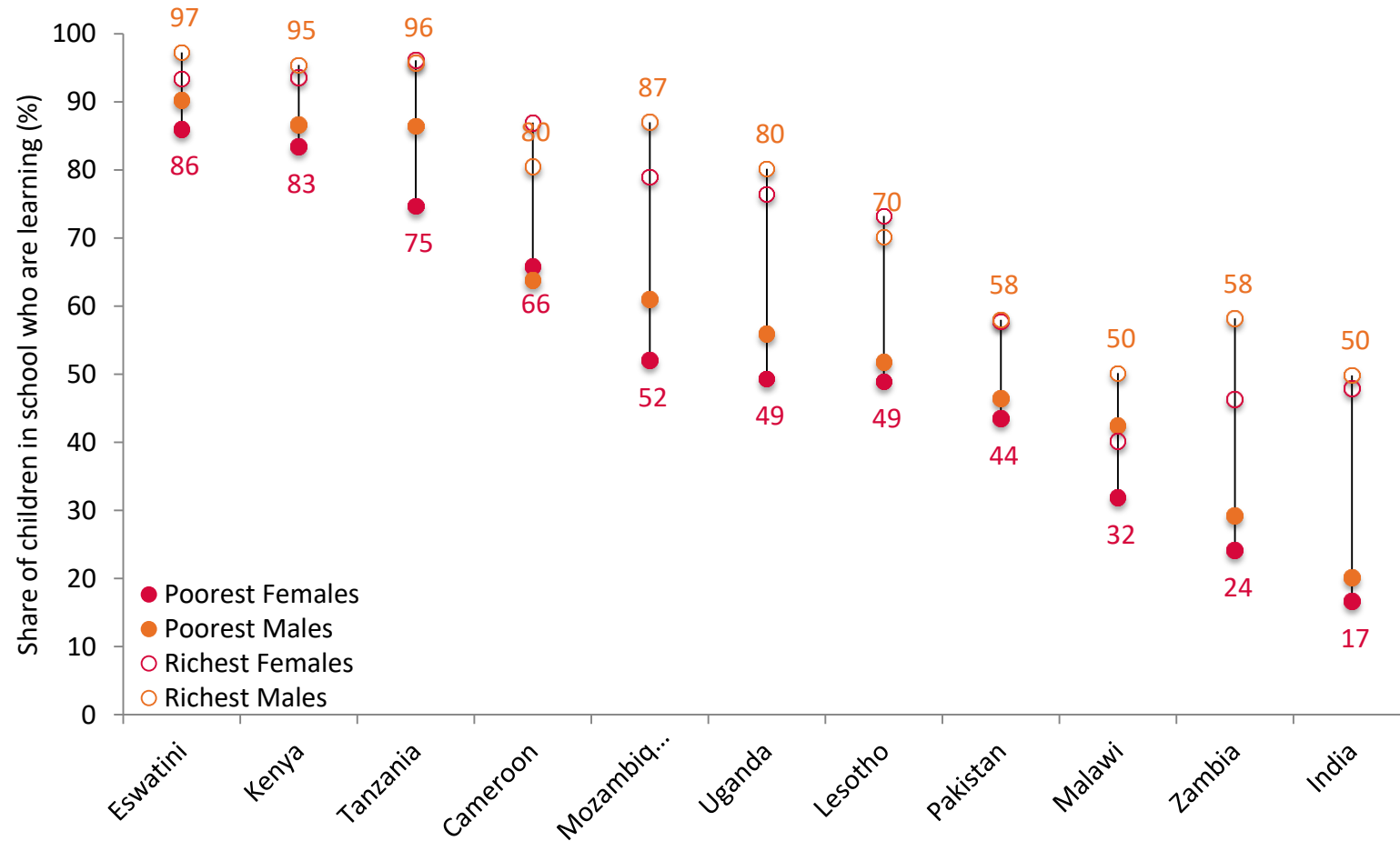
Schools cannot effectively produce learning without children who are 'prepared, present, [and] motivated learners' (World Bank, 2018).

The developmental years 0–8 years are especially crucial for investment in a child's learning and health and nutritional aspects.

Covid-19 – 'ticking time bomb' – and the 'learning crisis manifests early'

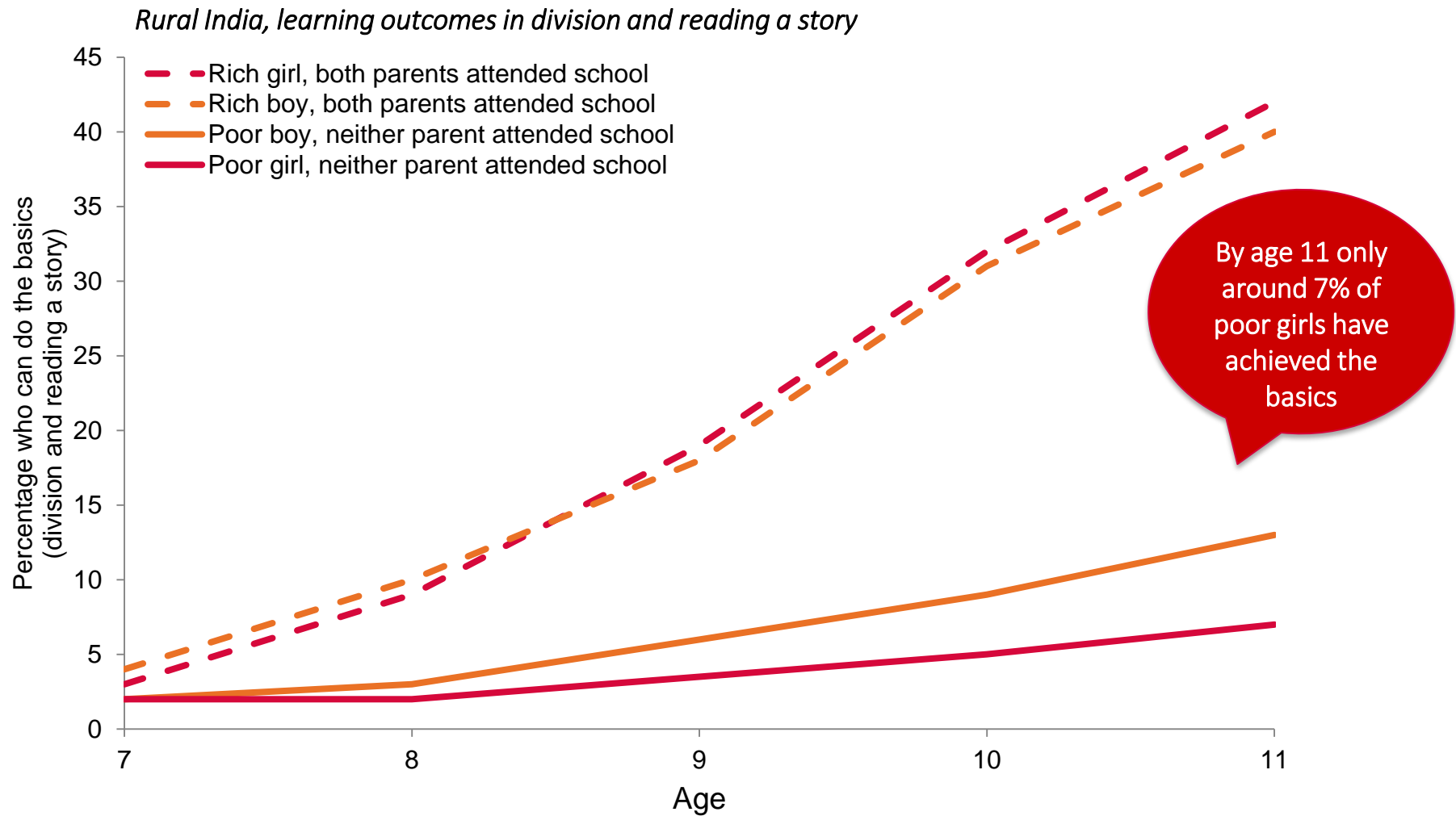
Global reality: Even when the poorest girls are in school they may not necessarily be learning

Share of children who are in school and learning the basics (%)



Source: Rose et al. (2016)

Global reality: These learning gaps are evident from early years in school



Source: Rose and Alcott (2015) Based on ASER, India

Learning levels remain low

Children are learning too little too slowly...

Under half of children in grade 5 in rural Pakistan have not reached Grade 1 level competencies (ASER 2021)



Fewer girls aged 5-16 years are reaching grade 2 competencies compared to boys (45% sampled girls able to read a sentence in Urdu/Sindhi/Pashto as compared to 49% boys).

Huge provincial variations persistently remain – with children in Sindh province performing persistently more poorly as compared to children in other provinces



Investing in the early years can pay off...

Targeting children early can reap rewards

<i>Good Buy</i>	<i>Promising but low evidence</i>
Interventions Pre-primary education (ages 3-5)	Intervention Early childhood stimulation programs (for ages 0 to 2), targeting parents
	

Summary of evidence on preparing children for school globally and in Pakistan

- Even small initial investments in a child's early years can lead to large returns in the form of better child development. Studies have also found larger effect sizes of child-focused educational programmes in low and middle income countries as compared to high income contexts.
- Young children especially vulnerable to disasters and pandemics – evidence from Pakistan earthquake (Andrabi et al. 2020).
- Pandemic had a differential effect on already disadvantaged families. World Bank (2023) preschools closed across the board and enrolments did not return to pre-pandemic levels (including in Pakistan). 'Alarming' declines in cognitive and social-emotional development noted in toddlers in Bangladesh.

Generate more evidence on ECE in Pakistan...

Some promising evidence of 'good buys' is starting to emerge...promising interventions globally taking the form of play based learning, parental engagement, community-based initiatives and cross-sectoral programmes showing promise.

The evidence on early childhood education is especially sparse in Pakistan. Some 40% of children aged five and under in the country are reportedly underweight and the country is ranked sixth in the world for growth-stunted children.

Pakistan: research showing the effectiveness of delivering responsive stimulation and enhanced nutrition interventions to young children with the responsive stimulation showing improvements in two-year olds' cognitive, language and motor development (Pakistan Early Child Development Scale-up PEDs and Yusufzai et al's studies) – longitudinal impact of integrating ECD interventions in community health services.

Early Learning Partnership (ELP) – ‘*what works*’ in ECE in low-resource settings?

- Early Learning Partnership – multi-donor fund managed by the World Bank, funded by FCDO
- Rich evidence from the contexts of Ethiopia, Pakistan, Liberia and Tanzania has also emerged on the state of early childhood education.
- A **Special Issue** coming out in late 2023 collates evidence on ECE in the global South

Four major themes:

- Effects of COVID-19 on ECE;
 - Effects of ECE on school readiness and learning outcomes;
 - Parental engagement in ECE;
 - ECE systems and methods.
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