A Path for Reducing Learning Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa

Set literacy goals
Set quantifiable national goals and standards for Arabic language learning outcomes with highest-level commitment.

Build bridge from colloquial to modern standard Arabic (MSA)
Harness common features/vocabulary of MSA and colloquial Arabic to help learn MSA.

Expand early MSA exposure
Expand children’s early exposure to MSA in engaging ways.

Align instructional resources to follow a systematic phonetic approach with a focus on reading comprehension in a literature-rich environment
Align Arabic instruction, resources, and assessments to focus on a systematic phonetic approach, emphasizing reading comprehension across the curriculum — with sufficient time in the school year — and make extensive use of children’s literature to build vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Revisit Arabic language teacher education programs
Align preservice and in-service teacher training programs to focus on effective methods of teaching Arabic with extensive practical experience opportunities.

Reduce achievement gaps
Recognize literacy achievement gaps — gender, regional, socioeconomic — and provide targeted support to schools with underperforming students.

Intervene early with struggling readers
Assess, diagnose, support with early interventions, and monitor struggling readers.

Promote family and community awareness
Encourage families, community groups, and the private sector to understand and prioritize children’s Arabic literacy development.

Balance purposeful use of technology
Ensure technology investments are based on evidence of effectiveness and that they encourage more MSA listening, speaking, reading, and writing and/or streamline the work of teachers, balanced with proven paper-pencil methods.