Pakistan’s progress in getting poor girls into schools is less than half of that in India and Nepal, and a quarter of Bangladesh, according to a new report published by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) this week.

The report titled “Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report” revealed that Pakistan has reduced the amount it spends on education to less than 2.3 per cent of the Gross National Product (GNP) despite having the second-largest number of out-of-school girls in the world. The report was released in the wake of the Taliban attack on child rights activist Malala Yousafzai.

“The poorest girls in Pakistan are twice as likely to be out of school as the poorest girls in India, almost three times as likely as the poorest girls in Nepal and around six times as likely as the poorest girls in Bangladesh,” stated the World Inequalities Database of Education (WIDE).

The EFA Global Monitoring Report showed how factors such as gender, poverty, location and ethnicity affect a child’s education chances.

The report added that two-thirds of children out of school in Pakistan are girls – a rate that is worse in only 16 other countries in the world. “The percentage of poorest girls out of school has fallen from 78 per cent to 62 per cent, a much narrower drop than in India (from 66 per cent to 30 per cent), Nepal (from 52 per cent to 22 per cent), and Bangladesh (from 91 per cent to 44 per cent),” the report stated.

Pauline Rose, Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report said, “How is it possible that since 1999 when governments around the world committed to getting all children into school, countries like Pakistan have managed to consistently fail to address – we must put girls first if we're to crack this challenge. Two thirds of girls in the poorest areas in Pakistan are still not getting the chance of an education – a rate that is not appropriate for 21st century.”
She hoped that the attack on the 14 year-old Swat school girl Malala would bring “shame on a country which has ignored the rights of its girls to an education for too long”.

Rose further called on Pakistan to change it priorities while stating that the country spends more on the military than it does on education.