for their children to attend overcrowded private schools of poor quality or withdrawing their children from school altogether.

Even in countries where primary schooling is free, the ancillary costs can leave people who live in poverty at a disadvantage. Students may have to purchase uniforms and classroom supplies or pay fees to take exams, and these taken together are often expensive enough to prevent children from attending school. While parents in Dhaka, Bangladesh, spend an average of 10 per cent of household income per child on schooling costs, this rises to 20 per cent in the poorest families. A recent survey of Sao Paulo, Brazil; Casablanca, Morocco; and Lagos, Nigeria, showed that families in the lowest income quintile spent more than a quarter of household income on schooling.53

Marginalized groups, including children living or working on the street, migrant children and the children of refugees and internally displaced persons, face particular challenges. Until recently in China’s cities, for example, migrants who were not officially registered had difficulty sending their children to school.54 And all too often, children who are seen as different – because of poverty, language or gender, for example – face discrimination.

Refugees and internally displaced people often live in informal settlements in urban areas, and schools that are already under strain may have great difficulty in coping with an influx of displaced children. Evidence suggests that displacement severely disrupts children’s education – and again, the worst affected are often those who were already marginalized because of poverty, gender, ethnic identity or other factors.55

Children from poor urban neighbourhoods are among the least likely to attend school. A survey in Delhi, India, found a primary school attendance rate of 54.5 per cent among children living in slums in 2004–2005, compared with 90 per cent for the city as a whole.56 In Bangladesh, according to 2009 data, the differences were even more pronounced at the secondary level: 18 per cent of children in slums attended secondary school, compared with 53 per cent in urban areas as a whole and 48 per cent in rural areas.57 Even where progress is made, it cannot be taken for granted. While enrolment improved in the rural and non-slum urban areas of the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe in the late 1990s, it worsened in urban slums.58

The quality of available schooling options in poor urban areas is another issue to consider. While data tend to focus on access, enrolment and retention, these are linked to the perceived quality and benefits of available education. Overcrowding and a lack of appropriate facilities such as toilets are among the factors that undermine the quality of education.59