

JOINING THE

Out-of-School Children Initiative

UNICEF AND UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR STATISTICS



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The Out-of-School Children Initiative – a partnership between UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics with support from the Global Partnership for Education – aims to significantly reduce the number of children out of school. The Initiative works with governments to determine how many and which children are out of school, assess the barriers that exclude them and develop innovative policies and strategies that will deliver children to the classroom and ensure that they are learning.

Why Join?

Business as usual is not reaching the most marginalized children. The Out-of-School Children Initiative uses innovative approaches to identify how many and which boys and girls are being left behind and help them reach their full potential. Barriers to education – including poverty, discrimination, disability and location – differ dramatically between and within countries. In order to address these barriers effectively, the Initiative works with governments to examine the data and provide concrete recommendations tailored to the local context.

Most importantly, education is a human right and a strong catalyst for social progress. Each dollar spent on education yields US\$10 to US\$15 in economic growth over a child's lifetime. Getting every child into school and learning – the core goal of the Initiative – is essential to reducing global poverty, improving health, fostering peace, bolstering democracy, improving environmental sustainability and increasing gender equality.

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How it Works

The Out-of-School Children Initiative analyses data from administrative records and household surveys to derive comprehensive profiles of children who are not in school and identify the reasons for their exclusion from education. Throughout the process, the Initiative works closely with national and local government officials. In each country, the Initiative:



- Forms a national team led by the Ministry of Education, including development partners and civil society leaders;
- Obtains a commitment of support from the country's government;
- Engages expert consultants to work with government statisticians to conduct the data analysis;
- Develops profiles of the children who are out of school and at risk of dropping out;
- Assesses the barriers children face, often employing UNICEF's Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES) framework;
- Develops and recommends policy options to overcome barriers to education; and
- Supports implementation of recommended policies and strategies.

Addressing Barriers



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

Most countries are close to universal primary and secondary education, although there are still around 1.0 million children of primary school age and 1.2 million adolescents of lower secondary school age out of school across the region. Children from the Roma community, children with disabilities and working children are most at risk of exclusion. Improving the data on children with disabilities is a high priority in the region in order to develop effective policies to improve access.



EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Most countries in the region have reached or are close to reaching universal primary education. Gender parity has been achieved in most countries and girls can now expect more years of schooling than boys. The children most likely to be excluded from school include those from ethnic minorities and those in rural areas. Improving equity in the education system is integral to ensuring that resources reach those with the greatest needs.



EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

One in nine children of primary school age in the region are not in school, and in some countries affected by conflict, this rises to more than two in five. Poverty remains the most significant barrier since hidden costs make schooling unaffordable for many poor families. Few countries have achieved gender parity, although Mozambique has introduced targeted policy initiatives to improve girls' access, such as scholarships.



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Across the region, 3.8 million children of primary school age and 2.8 million children of lower secondary school age are not in school. Indigenous people are less likely to have access to education and exhibit higher gender gaps. To address these barriers, partners are advocating for scaling up successful campaigns to help children develop reading skills at the right age.



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Despite substantial progress, there are still 5.1 million children of pre-primary school age, 4.3 million of primary school age and 2.9 million adolescents who are not in school. Along with persistent gender inequalities, the region suffers from high levels of dropout, particularly at the lower secondary level, and limited protection for children affected by conflict.



SOUTH ASIA

Enrolment rates for children of primary school age across South Asia reached 94 per cent in 2012, up from 80 per cent in 2000. Poverty remains the most prevalent barrier to education, followed by gender, living in a rural area, and child labour. In Pakistan, there are plans to promote public-private partnerships and to expand community schools particularly in remote areas.



WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

The region accounts for one-third of the world's out-of-school children, with 18.8 million primary school age children and 12.5 million adolescents out of school. Poverty, gender and distance to school are the greatest barriers to education. A high priority in the region is to distribute resources more equitably in order to reduce the costs that poorer families face to send their children to school.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
HOW TO JOIN THE INITIATIVE,
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