



FIXING THE BROKEN PROMISE OF EDUCATION FOR ALL

Findings from the Global Initiative
on Out-of-School Children

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO
INSTITUTE
for
STATISTICS



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UNESCO Institute for Statistics

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is the statistical office of UNESCO and is the UN depository for global statistics in the fields of education, science and technology, culture, and communication. The Institute is the official source of data used to monitor progress towards Education for All and related targets of the Millennium Development Goals.

The UIS education database is the most comprehensive in the world covering a wide range of indicators—from girls' enrolment in primary school to the mobility of university students. It is updated three times each year based on results of the UIS annual education survey, which is conducted in more than 200 countries and territories. Established in 1999, the Institute serves Member States and the UN system, as well as inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, research institutes, universities and citizens interested in high-quality data. Our central goal is to improve the opportunities and living conditions of children and adults around the world by producing the data needed for effective policies and interventions.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

UNICEF is a vital part of international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. UNICEF's Education Section provides policy and programming expertise on the ground for the Out-of-School Children Initiative. It is involved in advancing education in countries around the world and is a global leader in advocating for equity in education and improvements in learning outcomes. Among its contributions is serving as the secretariat for the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). UNICEF is also on the forefront of promoting inclusion of Education for All goals in the post-2015 development agenda.

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Foreword

Education represents the hopes, dreams and aspirations of children, families, communities and nations around the world—the most reliable route out of poverty and a critical pathway towards healthier, more productive citizens and stronger societies. Not surprisingly, when people are asked to list their priorities, education tops survey after survey, poll after poll.

There is consensus at virtually every level, from the poorest family in the most remote village to the global policy leaders who are shaping the world's future development goals: education matters. This consensus has been translated into concrete action, propelling millions of children once denied an education into the classroom. In the 15 years since the launch of the Millennium Development Goals—which set the target for every child to complete a full course of primary education by 2015—the latest data show that the number of primary school-age out-of-school children has dropped by 42%, and for girls by 47%, despite rapid population growth.

Why, then, are there still 58 million children, roughly between the ages of 6 and 11, out of school globally? Each and every one of these children is a stark reminder of the broken promise to achieve universal primary education by the original deadline of 2015.

Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All, a report produced by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF, could not be more timely. As the international community renews its commitment to advance every child's right to education, it explores why global progress has stalled since the early 2000s, when millions of additional children poured into the world's classrooms, and provides the data and analysis needed to move forward and reach every child excluded from education.

With its rich combination of data and analysis, this report provides a nuanced assessment of why some children never make it into the classroom at all, why some children start going to school far later than others, and why some children are more likely than their peers to drop out before they complete their schooling. It reminds us—if any reminder were needed—of the critical need for good data to inform the educational policies that can reduce the barriers that continue to stand between children and their fundamental right to an education.

This report sets out some of those policies and strategies. They include a deeper focus on improving the quality of education so that children will be more likely to go to school and *stay* in school if the education on offer is fit for purpose. And, given the alarmingly high number of adolescents out of school—63 million worldwide in 2012—it advocates for universal *secondary* education, drawing from and building on the lessons learned since 2000 on universal primary education.

Finally, this report shows the children behind the numbers. The boy who pushes a cart each day in a Kyrgyzstan bazaar to help feed his family. The girl pulled out of school in Yemen and married off against her will when still a child. The child in Sri Lanka, humiliated at school for lacking proper shoes, who drops out altogether rather than be demoted to a lower grade. The Namibian child with an undiagnosed hearing impairment who struggles at school. The Syrian refugee child turned away from one over-burdened school after another.

As the international community renews and expands its commitments as part of the post-2015 development agenda, we must focus on these children, and the millions of others struggling to realise their right to an education—and to fulfil their dreams for a better future. By working together and promoting greater investment, we can and must dismantle the barriers that stand in their way, one by one—and in doing so, deliver on our global promise of education for every child.



Irina Bokova
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Anthony Lake
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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Harish, a 16-year-old boy from Polonnaruwa, explained that he was sometimes punished for coming to school without proper shoes; but his family could not afford new ones. He was not good in his studies and the principal wanted to demote him to a lower grade. However, as he was 14 years old at the time, he was reluctant to be in a lower grade and so dropped out.

OOSCI Country Study on Sri Lanka
(UNICEF and UIS, 2013a)

The numbers are out, the data have been analysed and the conclusions are clear: despite substantial gains in school enrolment over the past 15 years, the world has missed the goal of universal primary education by 2015. The failure to deliver on what seemed to be such a realistic and achievable goal represents a broken promise to millions of children who continue to be denied their fundamental right to a primary education.

It is true that remarkable progress has been made on primary enrolment, particularly in the early 2000s, spurred in large part by the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals. As a result, the number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide fell by 42% between 2000 and 2012. However, the report *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children* confirms that progress has left millions of children unreached, progress has not been equitable and progress has stalled.

Progress on the rate and number of out-of-school children has stalled since 2007

9% of primary school-age children and 17% of adolescents of lower secondary school age are excluded from education

Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All draws on government-backed national studies from a diverse group of countries participating in the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, launched in 2010 and led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF. These reports have marshalled a wide range of data sources—both quantitative and qualitative—to reveal crucial information on the scale and magnitude of this challenge and provide detailed analysis of the barriers to education and potential policy solutions. For many countries, participation in this initiative was an unparalleled opportunity to shine a light on children who have been voiceless and invisible, and to show the human faces behind the numbers.

KEY FINDINGS

The report finds that despite the progress that has been made on primary enrolment, 58 million children of primary school age (aged roughly 6 to 11 years) are out of school worldwide (UIS and EFA GMR, 2014). If current trends continue, two-fifths of these children—or 15 million girls and 10 million boys—are unlikely to ever set foot in a classroom. Indeed, most

of the 30 million children who are out of school in sub-Saharan Africa will never go to school at all.

While primary education has long been viewed as essential for a child's full development, lower secondary education is also increasingly recognised as the foundation for the acquisition of the skills needed for a healthy and productive life and access to decent work. There is clear consensus within the international community to make universal secondary education a key goal in the post-2015 agenda. Yet here too, the report finds a lack of progress, with 63 million adolescents of lower secondary school age out of school—5 million more than children of primary school age, even though there are twice as many primary school-age children worldwide.

What's more, while access to education expanded considerably at the beginning of the 2000s, progress has stalled, with virtually no change in either the global rate or number of out-of-school children since

2007. The global primary out-of-school rate has now stagnated at around 9%—roughly 60 million children—for the past seven years, while the rate for children of lower secondary school age continues to hover at almost 18% (see **Figure E1**). Across both of these age groups, girls are still more likely to be out of school than boys.

The state of play

- 58 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2012. Of these children:
 - > 23% attended school in the past but left;
 - > 34% are likely to enter school in the future; and
 - > 43% are likely to never enter school.
 - 63 million adolescents of lower secondary school age were out of school.
-

One-third of all out-of-school children of primary school age live in West and Central Africa, the



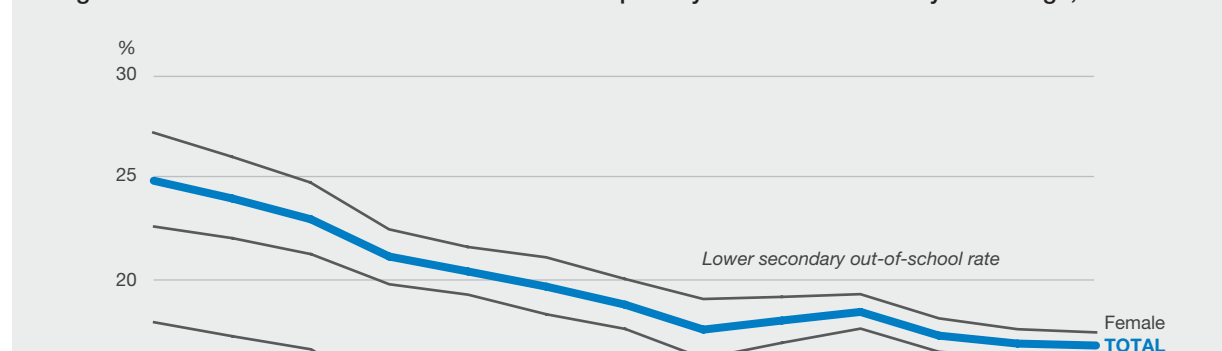
region with the highest out-of-school rate. Here, more than one in four children (31% of all girls and 23% of all boys) are not in school, far more than in any other region. In Eastern and Southern Africa and in South Asia, another 11 million and 10 million children, respectively, are out of school. In relative terms, however, South Asia was faring much better than the sub-Saharan regions because 94% of its primary school-age children were in school, compared to 85% of children in Eastern and Southern Africa and 73% in West and Central Africa. Out-of-school rates were lowest (ranging from 4% to 6%) in: South Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean (6%), in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) and East Asia and the Pacific (5%) and in Western Europe, North America and Australasia (4%).

The global number of out-of-school adolescents is similar to the global number of out-of-school children, even though there were nearly twice as many

children of primary school age in 2012 (650 million) as lower secondary school-age adolescents (374 million) (see **Table E1**). While adolescents are far fewer in number, they are nearly twice as likely to be out of school as children of primary school age (17% compared to 9%). More than 40% of all out-of-school adolescents live in South Asia and one-third in sub-Saharan Africa. Though South Asia had a higher number of out-of-school adolescents, West and Central Africa had the highest lower secondary out-of-school rate in 2012 (40%), followed by Eastern and Southern Africa (27%) and South Asia (26%). In the Middle East and North Africa, 12% of all adolescents of lower secondary school age were not in school. Similar to the primary out-of-school rate, the lowest percentages of out-of-school adolescents were found in Western Europe, North America and Australasia (3%) and in the CEE/CIS region (5%).

The reasons for non-attendance are varied, complex and often interlinked, but the report finds one common thread among these barriers: education

Figure E1. Global out-of-school rate for children of primary and lower secondary school age, 2000-2012



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