

Highlights

THE INVESTMENT CASE FOR EDUCATION AND EQUITY 2015, UNICEF

UNICEF Education Section

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Improving the Future of Children

There are approximately 650 million primary-school-age children and 370 million children of lower secondary school age in the world today. If children of pre-primary school age are included, the total rises to 1.4 billion.

Improving the futures of these children – whether they are poor, live in conflict situations, or face discrimination because of gender, disability or ethnic origin – is the most important reason to invest in education.

- Investment in education can have both economic and human development returns
- Has the potential for inter-generational effects

However, the amount of return reaped in future will depend upon the investments made at different levels of education, quality of learning achieved at pre-primary and school level and the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized children in education

Importance of education

- In low-income countries, the expansion of primary education contributes the most to national income growth
- Higher levels of education are associated with lower poverty rates
- The greatest reduction in poverty is associated with primary education, followed by secondary
- Women education improves child health
- Equity in education leads to conflict risk reduction
- Children of more educated mothers are more likely to attend school
- Increasing levels of access mask low levels of completion and learning
- Countries with lower pre-primary enrolment rates often have low primary completion rates
- Grade repetition have a significant effect on pupils dropping out
- Vulnerable and marginalized children suffer from high levels of exclusion
- Inequities also persist in many developed countries
- Gender is also a persistent source of exclusion
- Conflict is an important factor for non-enrolment or non-completion

Investment in education

- In the first decade of the 2000s, donor funding to education more than doubled
- Since 2010, there has been a decline in external aid to education
- The demand for education will only grow (By 2030, 619 million additional children aged 3–15 will need to be enrolled in school in order to provide education from pre-primary to lower secondary for all children)
- Demographics are bound to present a major challenge to education progress in the 2015–2030

A call for increased domestic and external funding to education, including private-sector involvement

Just 5% of the annual profits of the five highest-earning public companies in the world would be sufficient to raise US\$12.6 billion annually – almost half of the estimated gap in external funding for basic education. 5% of the profits of the 15 highest-earning public companies would suffice to close the entire gap.

Equitable & Cost-Effective Investment

Challenges in the education sector will not be addressed solely by increased funding. Policies that allow for the equitable targeting of resources and improve the efficiency of overall education spending are needed for development of countries.

- Low-income countries need a good-quality pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education – basic education.
- Middle-income countries need on an average, the secondary level (general and vocational/ technical) education.
- High-income countries need tertiary-level education.

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