

# QUALITY EDUCATION

*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*

## Overview

The United Nations' goals for sustainable development are all interconnected. Education can facilitate upward socioeconomic mobility and uplift children out of poverty. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of children worldwide were still out of school. The public health crisis threatens to further halt our progress towards ensuring inclusive and equitable education for all.



*Globally, there are only 92 literate women for every 100 men who are literate. Before the pandemic, less than 70% of adults in low-income countries were projected to have basic literacy skills by 2030.*

## Literacy and Proficiency Before the Pandemic

Even before the pandemic, formidable obstacles inhibited fulfilling the promise of education as a basic human right. Globally, more than 250 million children were out of school and only six in every ten students were projected to finish secondary school in 2030.

Bringing children into the classroom, however, is not enough. Enrollment and completion of studies are important objectives, but SDG 4 also seeks to ensure that students achieve a basic standard of learning while in school. According to a 2017 report, over half of primary school age students worldwide lack basic reading skills.

Recent estimates show that over one hundred million youth lack basic literacy skills. In low-income countries, one in every three young people cannot read. For adults, the literacy rate is 86%.

### BEFORE COVID-19

PROGRESS TOWARDS  
INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY  
EDUCATION WAS **TOO SLOW**



**OVER 200 MILLION CHILDREN WILL STILL BE OUT OF SCHOOL IN 2030**

# QUALITY EDUCATION



SCHOOL CLOSURES KEPT  
**90% OF ALL STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL**  
REVERSING YEARS OF PROGRESS ON EDUCATION

## The COVID-19 Disruption

School closures across all continents have impacted almost 95% of the global student population, affecting over 1.5 billion learners. As many as 40 million children around the world have missed out on crucial early childhood education in their pre-school year. This loss has translated into a lack of access to learning opportunities, social interaction, and, in some cases, adequate nutrition.

According to a 2019 UNESCO report, nine million girls of primary school age were projected to never set foot in a classroom—more than three times the number of boys who will never start school. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 23.8 million additional children and youth may drop out or not have access to school next year.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS USHERED IN THE

LARGEST DISRUPTION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN HISTORY.

## The Exposed Disparities

The global health crisis is exacerbating pre-existing disparities in our education systems. According to a UN report that surveyed twenty-one European countries, Grade 4 students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were half as likely to have access to the internet in comparison with their classmates. In seven low-income countries, less than 1 in 10 people living in the poorest households have electricity.

Girls' access to education is especially at risk during the pandemic. The work required to run households and look after family members can prevent them from sufficient learning opportunities. Children with disabilities are often overlooked when developing strategies for distance learning, which further exacerbates their marginalization. Lastly, refugee and forcibly displaced children are further deprived of access to services offered through schools, such as meals and psychosocial support.

## Building Resilient Education Systems for Sustainable Development

To prevent this health-turned-learning crisis from becoming a generational catastrophe, we must take urgent action at all levels. From television to radio take-home packages, distance learning solutions were developed around the world in partnership with UNESCO's Global Education Coalition. National governments play a paramount role in ensuring that students can access education and the lifetime opportunities that it accrues. This historic disruption to education must be met with sustainable solutions that prioritize equity and inclusion.

REMOTE LEARNING REMAINS  
**OUT OF REACH FOR**  
AT LEAST  
500 MILLION STUDENTS



### READY TO TAKE ACTION?

We're taking the fight to Congress. Email [takeaction@unanca.org](mailto:takeaction@unanca.org) for more information on how you can join us on Capitol Hill and beyond.