

Global learning crisis is costing \$129 billion a year

- ***In Latin America and the Caribbean, about 1 in 10 children of primary school age are not learning the basics in reading***

The 11th *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* reveals that a global learning crisis is costing governments \$129 billion a year. Ten per cent of global spending on primary education is being lost on poor quality education that is failing to ensure that children learn. This situation leaves one in four young people in poor countries unable to read a single sentence. The Report concludes that good teachers are the key to improvement and calls on governments to provide the best in the profession to those who need them most.

This year's Report, *Teaching and learning: Achieving quality for all*, warns that without attracting and adequately training enough teachers the learning crisis will last for several generations and hit the disadvantaged hardest. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where about 10% of children of primary school age are not learning the basics in reading, the share ranges from 4% in Mexico to 25% in Guatemala and 40% in Nicaragua. Meanwhile, about 3 in 10 children in the region are not learning the basics in mathematics. In Chile, where almost all primary school age children reach the minimum learning standard in reading, 20% are unable to do so in mathematics.

Poor quality education is leaving a legacy of illiteracy more widespread than previously believed. Around 175 million young people in poor countries – equivalent to around one quarter of the youth population – cannot read all or part of a sentence. Young people from poorer households are far less likely to be able to read. In Haiti, 42% of the poorest young people were literate compared to 92% of the richest. On current trends, the Report projects that it will take until 2072 for all the poorest young women in developing countries to be literate. In Honduras, it is projected that universal lower secondary school completion will be achieved in the 2030s for the richest but almost 100 years later among the poorest young people.

However, teachers also need training. In a third of countries analysed by the Report, less than three-quarters of existing primary school teachers are trained to national standards.

“Teachers have the future of this generation in their hands,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. *“We need 5.2 million teachers to be recruited by 2015, and we need to work harder to support them in providing children with their right to a universal, free and quality education. We must also make sure that there is an explicit commitment to equity in new global education goals set after 2015, with indicators tracking the progress of the marginalized so that no one is left behind.”*

The Report calculates that the cost of 250 million children around the world not learning the basics translates into a loss of an estimated \$129 billion. In total, 37 countries are losing at least half the amount they spend on primary education because children are not learning. By contrast, the Report shows that ensuring an equal, quality education for all can generate huge economic rewards, increasing a country's gross domestic product per capita by 23 per cent over 40 years. In Guatemala, adults just had 3.6 years of schooling in 2005, on average. If Guatemala had matched the regional average, it could have more than doubled its average annual economic growth rate between 2005 and 2010.

The Report shows that to achieve good quality education for all, governments must provide enough trained teachers, and focus their teacher policies on meeting the needs of the disadvantaged. This means attracting the best candidates into teaching; giving them relevant training; deploying them within countries to areas where they are needed most; and offering them incentives to make a long-term commitment to teaching. In Peru, to make sure there are sufficient teachers in all parts of the country, most teachers are now recruited in the region where they were born and educated. The Report also highlights the need to address gender-based violence in schools, a major barrier to quality and equality in education. It underscores the importance of curriculum and assessment strategies to promote inclusion and improve learning. Uruguay has made great strides in using assessments to identify and support children who are at risk of falling behind.

Pauline Rose, the director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report, said: *“What’s the point in an education if children emerge after years in school without the skills they need? The huge numbers of illiterate children and young people mean it is crucial that equality in access and learning be placed at the heart of future education goals. New goals after 2015 must make sure every child is not only in school, but learning what they need to learn.”*

The Report makes the following recommendations:

- 1. New education goals after 2015 must include an explicit commitment to equity so that every child has an equal chance of an education.** New goals need clear, measurable targets with indicators that will track the progress of the most disadvantaged.
- 2. New goals after 2015 must ensure that every child is in school and learning the basics.** Children do not only have the right to be in school, but also to learn while there, and to emerge with the skills they need to find secure, well-paid work.
- 3. Ensure the best teachers reach the learners who need them most.** National education plans must include an explicit commitment to reaching the marginalized. Teachers should be recruited locally, or have similar backgrounds to disadvantaged learners. Every teacher needs pre- and in-service training on ways to target support to disadvantaged children. Incentives must be provided to ensure the best teachers work in remote, under-served areas. Governments must work to retain their best teachers, providing pay that meets at least their basic needs, good working conditions and a career path.

-ENDS-

For interviews, photos, b-roll, pre-edited videos, quotes or case studies of teachers or children please contact:

Kate Redman k.redman@unesco.org 0033 6 71 78 62 34

Sue Williams s.williams@unesco.org 0033 1 45 68 17 06 or 0033 6 15 92 93 62

Notes to Editors:

Developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report is an authoritative reference that aims to inform, influence and sustain genuine commitment towards Education for All.

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