

EDUCATION FACTSHEET

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Photo: Taghrid Mohammad

Education is a key component of sustainable development and an effective means of overcoming poverty. It also fosters social cohesion and growth. To this end, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) works to ensure that children and young people have better access to education and lifelong learning.

Challenges

There are still marked inequalities in access to education, especially for girls, minorities and migrants. The number of children and young people worldwide who do not go to school is over 258 million, half of whom live in regions where there is conflict. These crisis situations impact on educational opportunities and condemn children to precarious circumstances.

While school enrolments have increased since 2000, the number of pupils completing primary school remains low – particularly in low-income countries, where 35% end up dropping out of school.

This learning crisis, which was already cause for concern before the global pandemic, has been greatly exacerbated by COVID-19. In 2019, even before the pandemic broke out, 57% of 10 year-olds in low and middle-income countries were unable to read or understand simple texts. One of the principal reasons for this is the lack of good quality education. Since then, this percentage has risen dramatically – because of school closures and other disruptions to learning due to the pandemic – and is expected to reach 70% in 2022. This situation has been compounded by the fact that as a result of the pandemic, education spending dropped significantly in 41% of low-income countries.

In order to achieve access to good quality education for all, it is vital to focus on the regions and contexts where the sector is most at risk. Today, there are 222 million children and young people affected by crises who are in urgent need of educational support. Of these, 78.2 million children do not go to school (54% girls); almost 120 million do attend school but do not learn even basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Strategic priorities

To meet current and future challenges, the SDC uses its own know-how and Switzerland's specific expertise in this field (e.g. making learning objectives and content relevant, developing the permeability of education systems, promoting multilingualism and decentralising the sector). It also contributes to the UN's education goal (SDG 4 of the 2030 Agenda) by focusing on the following priorities:

1. Supporting education sector governance

The SDC provides support to education systems in order to ensure good quality education for all children and young people, including those who have been excluded, by strengthening governance and institutional capacities at national and decentralised levels.

2. Improving quality and relevance of education programmes

The SDC works to improve basic education through better teacher training, good teaching materials, and curriculums that are relevant and appropriate to local contexts, particularly multilingual teaching models.

3. Ensuring equal access to basic education

The SDC is committed to ensuring access to good quality basic education for all, particularly disadvantaged and marginalised communities as well as displaced people. It works to address the needs of children and young people who are unable to go to school by making the system more inclusive through alternative education programmes. It is also involved in developing bridging programmes to help them reintegrate into the regular schooling or vocational training system.

4. Aligning basic education and vocational training

The SDC takes a holistic approach to basic education and vocational training with a view to bolstering the complementarity and correlation between the two. It also supports the development of training programmes that combine basic knowledge and vocational skills.

SDC basic education projects

Countries and regions



FDFA, STS, CMC-Geoservices
 Source: Natural Earth Data, CGIAR, Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development SDC / © 2014 Natural Earth
 General Remarks: The boundaries and names shown, as well as the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Switzerland.
 *Occupied Palestinian Territory

Project examples

Mali: basic education – decentralising management and improving quality

Many children have not been able to go to school because of crises and school closures. Thanks to specially designed catch-up courses, more than 8,000 8–12 year-olds, 60% of whom are girls, have managed to re-enter school. A large number of children from the pastoral and nomadic populations in the Niger Delta can also receive an education thanks to new mobile schools where the curriculum and equipment have been specially adapted to fit the pupils' environment.



Photo SDC

Lebanon and Jordan: rehabilitating state schools

Thanks to the SDC's work to rehabilitate schools, more than 87,000 Lebanese, Jordanian and Syrian refugee children have access to a safe and quality learning environment. In addition to lessons, pupils and teachers take part in a number of activities to foster this conducive learning environment, such as music and group games that have a positive impact in terms of social cohesion.



Photo SDC

Burkina Faso: responding to the humanitarian crisis

In Burkina Faso, hundreds of schools have been closed for several months due to conflict. The SDC is therefore supporting an innovative radio education programme to help ensure that more than 60,000 children continue to be taught French, their local language, maths, and other topics such as violence prevention and health.



UNICEF/UN0217820/BINDRA

Mongolia: education for sustainable development (ESD)

The SDC has been helping to integrate ESD topics in basic education programmes in Mongolia since 2015. To date, more than 700 schools country-wide now include ESD in their core secondary-school curriculum. Capacity-building activities for national institutions to expand this initiative are also being undertaken.



Photo SDC

5. Scaling up education programmes in fragile contexts and humanitarian crises

In emergency and crisis situations, the SDC prioritises the needs and rights of children and young people to protection and education. The SDC's support in the field of education aims to strengthen resilience to violence and natural disasters, and to promote social cohesion and conflict management skills. This also helps improve coherence with its humanitarian aid and development cooperation activities.

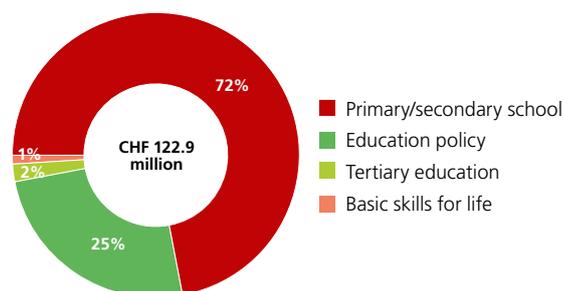
6. Mainstreaming education and recognising it as a driver of change

The SDC is committed to using the transformative potential of education to foster sustainable development, civil society participation, and social cohesion. For example, key aspects of the 2030 Agenda are also included in topics concerning the environment, health, water and food security, particularly in basic education programmes.

Partners

The SDC has a number of partners at international, regional, national and local level. It also supports the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which is one of Switzerland's priority partners and receives an annual contribution of CHF 10 million. In addition, the SDC supports the activities of the UN global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises (Education Cannot Wait), UNESCO's specialised institutes, and civil society partners such as education policy analysis networks in advocacy, training, services, and the research and analysis of international policy.

Expenditure by sector (2021)



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