

# Every Day Counts

An outlook on education for the most  
vulnerable children in Syria



In 2022, 11 years into the Syria crisis, the conflict's impact on children is abundantly clear: **2.4 million children have been forced out of school.** UNICEF, as a leader of the No Lost Generation Initiative, has spearheaded efforts to set up safe learning environments and child-centred curricula, and ensure the availability of much needed resources to keep children catching up and learning. **UNICEF has reached a quarter of all school-aged children in Syria, helping to prevent school drop-out and learning loss.**

But economic turmoil and the COVID-19 pandemic have compounded mass displacement and destruction of schools, further jeopardizing children's education. Going into 2022, a shift is needed away from an 'education-in-emergencies' response to a **longer-term integrated approach that will strengthen the resilience of learners, teachers, communities and the education system itself** and allow a generation of children to develop the skills necessary to cope with a protracted post-conflict context.

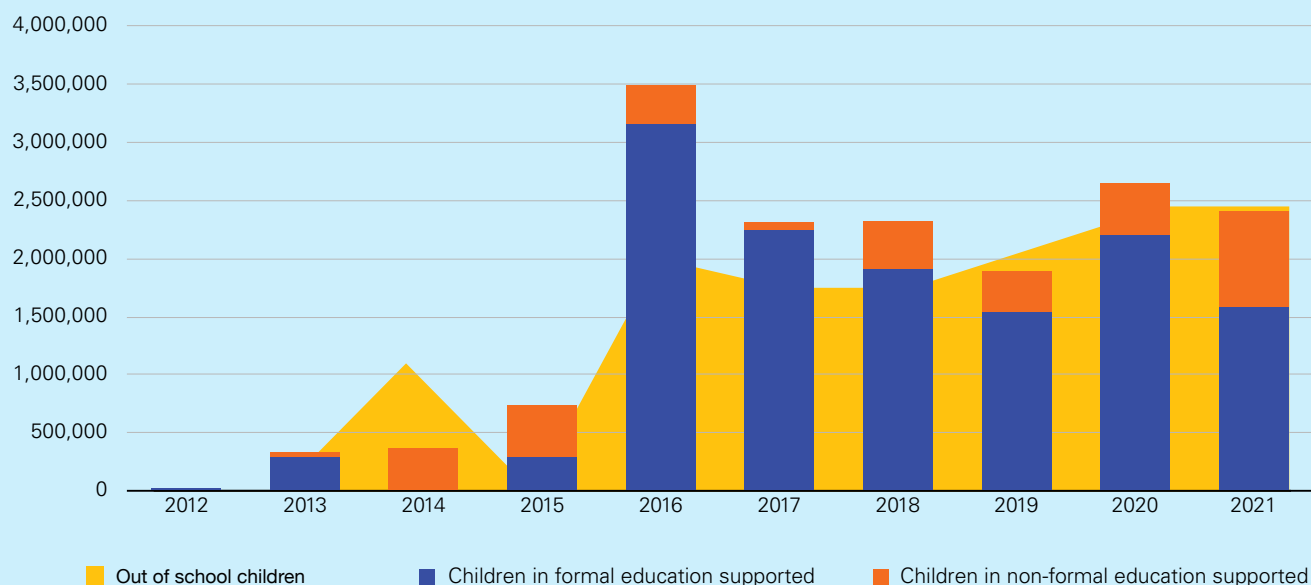


## What has UNICEF done for Syrian children's education during the past 10 years of conflict?

**Over the past 10 years, UNICEF has led the education response in Syria with the aim to prevent the education loss of a generation.**

Over 1.5 million children have been supported every year since 2016; this is nearly every fifth school-aged child in the country. Throughout the crisis, UNICEF has rehabilitated schools and provided prefabricated buildings; distributed furniture, learning supplies and textbooks; mobilized communities to enroll their children; trained teachers; and developed pedagogies and materials for accelerated and self-learning. Opportunities have also been extended to 300,000 adolescents and youth a year to learn life skills and to participate actively in their communities. Education interventions have also been on-going in north-west Syria (NW Syria), with more focus on short-term emergency response.

## Students supported by UNICEF compared to out-of-school children



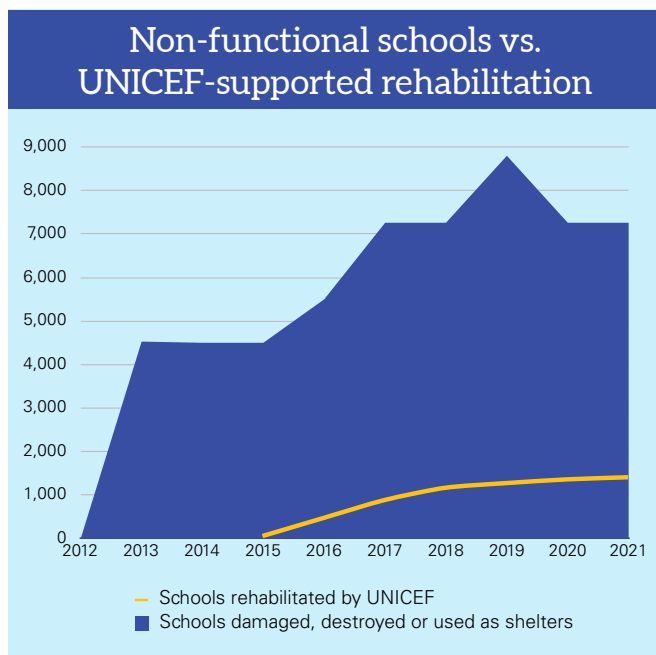
## The Education situation in Syria in 2022

**Barriers to education in Syria abound.** A national economy in pieces, widespread displacement, areas of active conflict, high poverty rates, damaged school buildings, overcrowded classrooms, lack of affordable transportation, too few teachers, low teacher salaries and COVID-19 all contribute to 2.4 million children remaining out-of-school and 1.6 million children being at risk of dropping out. In NW Syria, unpaid teachers leave public schools managed under non-governmental authorities to look for other work, leaving schools unable to operate. Economic pressures mean teachers in rural areas across the country cannot afford to travel to school. School buildings and schools in camp settings have toilets and washrooms for girls and children with disabilities, electricity, heaters and school furniture, as well as playgrounds and recreational materials for children. Early childhood development (ECD) remains an underfunded and non-obligatory education pillar, despite its developmental importance.

A third of schools were non-functional according to the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview, with few schools functioning in north-east (NE) or NW Syria. Low rates of school rehabilitation will







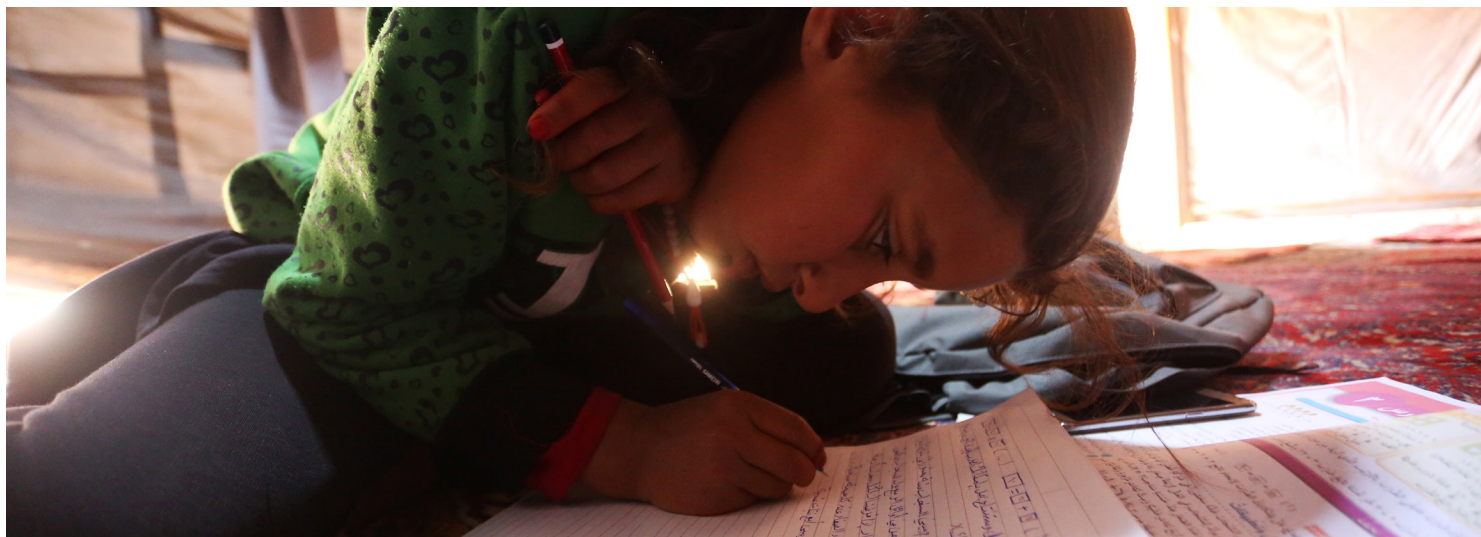
continue to deter access to schools and mean overcrowded classrooms for years to come negatively impacting school participation and learning outcomes. If all non-functional schools were rehabilitated today, this would create space for 2.8 million students. **At the current rate of funding, UNICEF and education partners would need another 30 years to rehabilitate all damaged and destroyed schools, so creating another generation of children lost and left behind.**

**In NW Syria, where insecurity continues, needs are particularly acute.** Thirteen attacks on schools were verified in 2021. Few IDP sites have spaces for learning: In 1,017 assessed sites there were only 196 schools. Many schools remain severely damaged and/or contaminated by unex-

ploded ordnance, and there are widespread shortages of teachers, textbooks and school supplies. Schools are substantially overcrowded, and 1 million out of the 1.7 million school-age children in NW Syria are out of school. Accredited education is available only to the small handful of children able to cross into Government-controlled areas to sit for Grade 9 and 12 exams. Those attempting to cross face security and safety challenges.

In NE Syria, more than 1 in 10 schools have been damaged. Over two-thirds of schools have no running water, over half supply no drinking water at all for children and nearly three-quarters have no electricity during school hours. COVID-19 closed schools for long periods during the 2020-2021 school year, delaying children's education. Less than a fifth of schools had soap and water for children to wash their hands in 2021, despite the ongoing pandemic. The curriculum situation in NE Syria remains complex. Curriculum A, Curriculum B (accelerated learning for children that have been out of school for more than two years) and self-learning materials are available for the children in NE Syria where local authorities are implementing their own curriculum not recognized by the Government of Syria.

Whereas Government of Syria allocations to the Ministry of Education increased from SYP 56 billion in 2010 to SYP 300 billion in 2021, in real terms, **allocations have declined more than six-fold during this period** (an 81 per cent decline). This is the highest annual decline recorded since the beginning of the crisis. Recurrent expenditures such as salaries represent 88 per cent of all planned expenditures, leaving only SYP 42 billion



for capital investments. These are allocated to technical education (SYP 12 billion) and the central administration of the Ministry (SYP 26 billion). Humanitarian aid has kept education services functional for children and families.

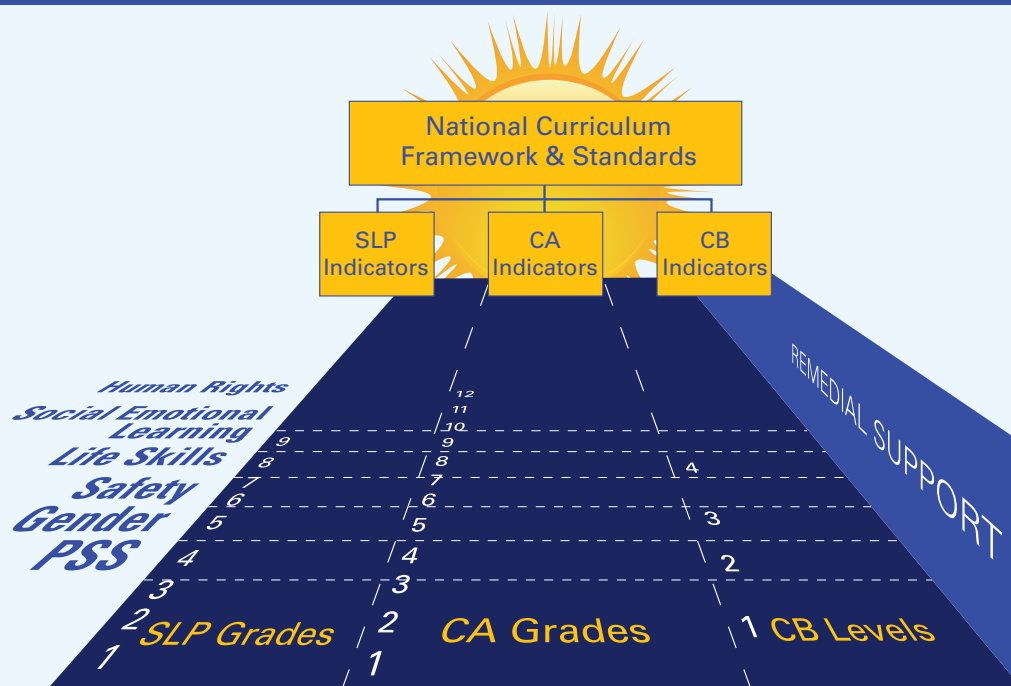
## What can UNICEF do for children in the next 10 years?

During the first 10 years of the crisis, UNICEF education emergency assistance was, out of necessity, heavily supply-driven, providing facilities and supplies to communities where neither were available. This meant, for example, that UNICEF invested \$15.5 million in school bag distribution, instead of cognitive, vocational or life skills results. UNICEF in NW Syria focuses particularly on short-term interventions as there is continued security and political uncertainty. Considering the ongoing economic crisis, high levels of poverty and insecurity, UNICEF will need to continue to provide supplies for the most vulnerable and marginalized. At the same time, **UNICEF will shift the bulk of its investments into cognitive, vocational and capacity building efforts to promote learning and sustain the resilience of families, schools and communities.**

**In the short term**, risk-informed education programming for resilience can best be fostered by:

- ▶ Helping children return to and learn in **child-friendly, violence-free and inclusive public schools and alternative learning platforms** (see Figure 1) offered through Education Sector partners.
- ▶ Implementing **safe-school and school health protocols** in formal and nonformal education settings.
- ▶ Providing **food- and cash-for-education support** for children to overcome poverty-related barriers to education (e.g. transportation and school supplies).
- ▶ **Rehabilitating and maintaining schools** (considered to be *humanitarian infrastructure*) making them 'welcoming schools' that meet the psychosocial needs of children and teachers.
- ▶ **Aligning multiple education pathway curricula** with the national curriculum, to facilitate and monitor transitions back into public schools

Figure 1



CA: Curriculum A  
CB: Curriculum B (accelerated learning for children out of school for more than two years)  
SLP: Self-Learning Programme





- ▶ **Developing teacher capacity:** Teachers are among the most important *humanitarian workers* and require pedagogical skills development, learning assessment skills and training to provide life skills and psychosocial support.
- ▶ Supporting community-based and public **ECD** and engaging adolescents and youth in ‘**learning beyond schooling**’ and ‘**learning to earning**’ for skills development, participation and social cohesion.
- ▶ Facilitating crossline and cross-border children **to sit the national Grade 9 and 12 exams to be able to continue their education.**
- ▶ Exploring **distance learning** and remote/online examination modalities, in particular during pandemics or conflict situations. This should also include support to parents to help children in home or remote learning.

**In the medium and long-term** it will be necessary to:

- ▶ Conduct a comprehensive **Education Sector Needs Analysis**, considering also returnee children.
- ▶ Develop a **Recovery Plan** that allows for accelerated and climate-change compatible rehabilitation/reconstruction of schools, as well as public, remedial and accelerated learning for at least seven million children in ‘welcoming schools’.
- ▶ Advocate for and support development of an **education finance plan** that shifts resources from recurrent costs into systems strengthening and sustainable integrated services for children. Explore ways to improve the efficiency by increasing the technical capacity of the Ministry.
- ▶ Provide technical support to reach a **consensus on education platforms** that resonate with the identities of different stakeholder groups while allowing children access to conflict-sensitive learning.
- ▶ Build **data management** capacities to assess and monitor the performance of the education system as well as education supervision modalities to demand accountability and quality improvement.
- ▶ Develop and operationalize a strategy to guarantee **inclusive access for children with disabilities** to education, in the framework of the child-friendly and safe school protocols.
- ▶ Strengthen **cognitive, numeracy, life skills and IT literacy.**

- ▶ Support schools with mechanisms to prevent and end **violence and abuse**.
- ▶ Provide food and cash for education support for children and teachers to go to, and stay in, schools
- ▶ Support long-term **ECD** systems strengthening
- ▶ From **Learning to Earning**: Help children unable to return to school to develop cognitive and foundational skills demanded and sought through local job markets. Bring to scale innovative partnerships with the private sector to provide opportunities to engage in learning through work.
- ▶ Operationalize **electronic education**, through the digitalization of learning modalities so that

children inside and outside of Syria can learn online, through blended learning platforms.

A continued failure to invest in education infrastructure, services and quality will result in squandered opportunities to help children learn and thrive. A substantial number of children and adolescents will stay out of school, and abandon intentions to ever return to school. Transition rates to secondary school will remain low for boys and even lower for girls. Boys and girls will join the informal labour force which will leave them ill-prepared to serve the needs of their families and communities in dignity. Child labour, youth exploitation, education inequality, early marriage, violence and (drug-related) crime, as well as social corrosion will emerge as some of the many other spill-over effects in countries where social safety nets and services are unfit to help Syrian children reach their full potential.

### Estimated budget requirements for 2022-2024

<b>Pillar 1:</b> Availability and Access	\$130,000,000
<b>Pillar 2:</b> Quality	\$30,000,000
<b>Pillar 3:</b> Resilient Systems	\$140,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,000,000</b>





UNICEF Syria

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