

## BUILDING FUTURES

# URGENT INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION FOR YEMEN'S RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

### YEMEN'S EDUCATION CRISIS

Over the past decade, Yemen has faced relentless conflict, leading to a collapse of its education system and casting a dark and enduring shadow over its children's futures. By 2024, 3.7 million children aged 5 to 17 were out of school, including 1.2 million primary school students.<sup>1</sup> Equally alarming, 1.5 million internally displaced children face severe educational interruptions, drastically increasing their dropout risk.<sup>2</sup>

Amid this situation, those still attending school struggle in overcrowded classrooms with overworked, unsupported, and often unpaid teachers. 2,783 schools have been destroyed or damaged, impeding any semblance of normalcy and continuity in education<sup>3</sup>.

The impact on girls and boys has been particularly severe while the quality of education has plummeted. Economic hardship has compounded the problem, forcing families into coping mechanisms like child labour and early marriage, thus widening the gender gap and further endangering children's futures.

Urgent, decisive action is imperative to turn the tide, ensure Yemen's children receive the education they deserve, and pave the way for the nation's recovery and development.

**> 94.7 per cent of 10-year-olds in Yemen are unable to read or understand a simple text<sup>4</sup>, an issue called learning poverty.**

### FACTS & FIGURES



- > **3.7 million children** aged 5 to 17 years are out of school.
- > **23%** of children are out of school at the primary level
- > **45%** of primary-school aged children in the poorest households are out of school.
- > **1 in 3** children do not complete primary schooling.<sup>5</sup>
- > **Only 22.4% of girls and 37.5% of boys** achieve secondary education.<sup>5</sup>

### NET ATTENDANCE RATES<sup>4</sup>



**EARLY  
CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION**

**1%**

children aged  
36–59 months

**BASIC  
EDUCATION**

**75%**

**SECONDARY  
EDUCATION**

**34%**

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, 2024 MICS-EAGLE Yemen Education Fact Sheets, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation Economic Studies and Forecasting Sector, Yemen Socio-Economic Update, Issue (82) October – 2023, 'General Education in Yemen Reality and Development Prospects'.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics from Yemen Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2022–2023.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, 2024 MICS-EAGLE Yemen Education Fact Sheets, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation Economic Studies and Forecasting Sector, Yemen Socio-Economic Update, Issue (82) October – 2023, 'General Education in Yemen Reality and Development Prospects'.



Children in a classroom for the UNICEF's catch-up classes programme in the internally displaced persons' camp in Marib, Yemen.  
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## EDUCATION'S MULTIPLE BENEFITS

Investing in education yields significant benefits. For children, it enhances cognitive skills, fosters critical thinking, and lays a foundation for financial independence, which is key in breaking the cycle of poverty. Families benefit through economic stability – educated individuals are more likely to secure better employment opportunities and earn higher incomes. This economic upliftment extends beyond individual households, positively impacting broader community well-being. At the national level, investment in education is integral to economic growth and development.

Empirical evidence suggests that every additional year of primary education can boost individual earnings by about 9 per cent annually.<sup>7</sup> A mere 10 per cent increase in primary school enrolment could raise GDP per capita growth by up to 0.3 percentage points.<sup>8</sup>

## CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

However, the failure to take decisive action in Yemen will have severe impacts. Not only is it likely that the number of out-of-school children will increase, but for children who are in school, the extensive damage to educational infrastructure and the exodus of teachers from the system risk worsening the learning crisis. This loss of educational opportunities is not just a setback, it is a significant obstacle to Yemen's future and the well-being of its youngest generation.

Moreover, the long-term consequences extend beyond individual lives, impacting national health and economic stability. Lower educational attainment is directly linked to poorer health outcomes, including higher rates of malnutrition and disease. Furthermore, an uneducated workforce stymies economic growth and recovery, leaving Yemen ill-equipped to rebuild and advance post-conflict.

Therefore, to prevent these dire outcomes, immediate and sustained efforts are needed to restore and improve the education system in Yemen.

<sup>7</sup> Psacharopoulos, George; Patrinos, Harry Anthony. 2018. Returns to Investment in Education: A Decennial Review of the Global Literature. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 8402. © World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, The Investment Case for Education and Equity, 2015.

## UNICEF'S EFFORTS IN YEMEN

To enhance educational access, UNICEF is working with local partners to construct new classrooms and set up temporary tented classrooms in remote areas. Alternative learning paths, such as non-formal education and distance learning, are also supported to ensure education reaches every home. UNICEF is also prioritizing girls' education. Efforts are focused on creating safe and nurturing school environments, thereby empowering the next generation of women.

### KEY UNICEF ACHIEVEMENTS

#### IN 2024

- **1,171 schools rehabilitated or constructed.**
- Over 454,700 girls and boys gained access to education.
- **Nearly 400,000 children (47 per cent girls) provided with essential teaching and learning materials**
- Over 44,870 teachers received monthly incentives, enabling them to continue teaching.
- **Over 33,300 out-of-school children (47 per cent girls) enrolled in alternative learning programmes in basic literacy, numeracy, accelerated learning or self-learning.**



A volunteer physics teacher with secondary school students in the school lab, Ash-Shamaytayn, Taiz.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Every child in Yemen, irrespective of their socio-economic background, needs to be given the opportunity to learn and thrive. The following policy recommendations are designed to turn this vision into reality:

### 1. Prioritize education in humanitarian aid frameworks

Education is a key part of humanitarian aid efforts, and should be prioritized alongside food, shelter, and health care. In line with the commitments of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit's Grand Bargain, which emphasized more effective, inclusive, and accountable humanitarian action, education must be recognized as an essential service in crisis response. Advocating for the integration of education into humanitarian aid frameworks can lead to dedicated funding designed to meet the needs of vulnerable children and secure a more stable and hopeful future for them.

### 2. Foster an inclusive and quality education system

A learning environment grounded in equity and evidence-based strategies should be cultivated to ensure all students have access to education and can thrive academically and socially. This involves adopting inclusive curricular frameworks and differentiated instruction that respect diverse learning styles and abilities.

### 3. Rebuild safe schools

Creating a safe school environment should be a priority – with rigorous safety measures implemented to protect students and teachers. This entails updating school buildings to meet safety standards, collaborating with health authorities to ensure coordinated responses to potential threats such as disease outbreaks, and integrating a mental health support system within schools to address the emotional well-being of students and educators.



Walls of a school in Ibb, Yemen being painted after rehabilitation done to the school. In 2024, UNICEF has rehabilitated and constructed 1,171 schools in Yemen, to help children study in healthy environment. ©UNICEF/Yemen



Albara'a, 14, with his classmates in grade six. Albara'a should have been in grade nine now but displacement and working to support his family made him drop out for a couple of years. Today, he struggles with his commitments to his family, yet he is keen to continue studying. He dreams of becoming a pilot in the future. ©UNICEF/Yemen

### 4. Empower teacher and promote gender inclusivity

All teachers deserve to receive salaries to maintain motivation, reduce dropout rates, and enhance teaching quality. Concurrently, recruiting and supporting female teachers can ensure the development of gender-responsive classrooms. This dual approach aims to boost the retention and effectiveness of high-quality teachers and fosters an inclusive learning environment that directly benefits girl students.

### 5. Implement emergency education plans

Ensuring that education remains a stable element in the unpredictable lives of children affected by crises is vital, so they do not face disruptions in their learning. Emergency education plans should include setting up temporary learning spaces, providing teachers with training in resilience-oriented pedagogy, and ensuring access to necessary educational materials. Technologies such as mobile learning platforms can offer continuity in education where physical infrastructure is lacking.

### 6. Create nurturing environments for children

Schools should equip parents with the knowledge to help their children with homework and encourage them to go to class consistently. This creates nurturing home environments that support school attendance and engagement. Additionally, by partnering with local community organizations, schools can create programmes that are culturally relevant and widely supported. These partnerships can facilitate after-school programmes, tutoring services, and community-driven educational events.

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