

Media Update

28 October 2021

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

Government of Gilgit Baltistan launches Equity & District profiles with UNICEF support

Government of Gilgit Baltistan and UNICEF partnered to generate data supporting targeted, inclusive programmatic responses for the most vulnerable children

GILGIT, 28 October 2021 – Today the Government of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) launched four equity and ten district profiles developed with support from UNICEF in Gilgit. The data will help identify the most vulnerable children living in the territory and better plan for evidence-based, equitable programmatic interventions.

The analysis of Equity and District profiles in GB has already revealed an overall pattern of inequality between different groups and geographical areas. In particular, it found that children who belong to the lowest wealth quintile, have the least educated mothers and live in rural areas are more vulnerable to stunting, child marriage, early childbearing and school dropout. Moreover, the profiles highlighted differences between districts; for instance, Hunza has the highest rate of birth registration (84 per cent) while Diamer has the lowest (2 per cent).

“Government of GB needs to divert resources from brick & mortar towards human development to address the inequalities highlighted in these equity and district profiles launched today,” said Javed Ali Manwa, Minister for Finance, GB.

The four Equity Profiles developed for Gilgit Baltistan in partnership with the Planning and Development Department help determine whether public resources are efficiently contributing to reducing socio-economic inequalities

among children and to improving their lives; whether inequalities have increased or decreased; and progress against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 10 District Profiles provide the Government with reliable district-level indicators to better identify the most vulnerable families. This will help plan more efficient, integrated programmatic interventions that reach the most marginalized children and ensure equitable allocation of resources at district level. It will also help decision-makers evaluate the performance of each district against development indicators.

“When children do not have a fair chance in life, significant inequalities emerge between those who have the most and those who have the least. Those inequalities have significant economic, political and social consequences,” **said Ms. Aida Girma, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan.** “UNICEF commends the Government of Gilgit Baltistan for developing Equity and District profiles that go beyond statistical averages which can hide wide disparities between districts and communities. These new tools will help the Government plan smart child-centered, targeted programmatic interventions and ensure that the most vulnerable children are the first to benefit from them. UNICEF will continue to support the Government to provide every girl and boy with equitable chances of fulfilling their potential.”

Since 2017, UNICEF Pakistan has supported all provincial Bureau of Statistics and Planning and Development Departments in Pakistan to include an Equity profile analysis in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICs). This helps ensure that resources are allocated strategically to reach the most marginalized populations first, in an equitable manner.

This is part of a 2015 initiative launched by UNICEF regional office in South Asia and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) to strengthen national statistical systems in the region. The goal is to improve reporting on the inequity and deprivations which children, women and other marginalized groups face.

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UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

At least 200 million schoolchildren live in countries that remain unprepared to deploy remote learning in future emergency school closures – UNICEF

According to a new report, among the 31 countries unprepared for remote learning, almost half kept their schools closed for at least half of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving 102 million students without any form of education.

NEW YORK, 28 October 2021 – At least 200 million schoolchildren live in 31 low- and middle-income countries that remain unprepared to deploy remote learning in future emergency school closures, according to a new UNICEF report released today. Among that group of students, 102 million live in 14 countries that have kept their schools fully or partially closed for at least half of the COVID-19 pandemic – locking many schoolchildren out of any kind of education.

The *Remote Learning Readiness Index* measures countries' readiness to deliver remote learning in response to disruptions of in-person education, covering almost 90 per cent of students in low- and lower-middle-income countries. The analysis focuses on three domains: the availability of home-based assets and parents' education levels; deployment of policies and

training for teachers; and the education sector's preparedness for emergencies.

“Even in the midst of an ongoing emergency, we know there will be another one, but we aren't making enough progress to ensure the next time students are forced out of the classroom, they have better options,” said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director. “While disruptive, the past 19 months have given us a glimpse of what is possible during and after the pandemic. Together with partners, we have been hard at work to leverage the power of technology and to provide learning opportunities for children and young people everywhere.”

Benin, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger and Togo are among the countries with the most significant need for improvement within the education sector.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of lack of remote learning readiness was especially felt by students living in countries where schools were fully or partially closed for at least half of the past 19 months, such as Congo and Madagascar.

The report outlines the limitations of remote learning and inequalities of access, warning that the situation is likely far worse than the available data shows. Beyond the countries assessed, anecdotal and qualitative data reveals that learners have faced challenges with remote learning globally, including in higher-middle and high-income countries.

Other key findings from the report include:

- Of 67 countries assessed, 31 countries are not ready to provide remote learning at all levels of education, with schoolchildren in West and Central Africa most affected; 17 countries have average readiness; 19 countries have above average readiness.
- Pre-primary education is the most neglected level of education, with many countries not deploying a corresponding policy during COVID-19 lockdowns, leaving behind the youngest learners during their most critical years of development.
- Other crises, such as those caused by climate change, can also significantly impact access to education. Of the 31 countries, 23 countries also face high or extremely high exposure to climate and environmental shocks, putting 196 million schoolchildren at greater risk of school disruptions in emergencies.

- Argentina, Barbados, Jamaica, and the Philippines have the highest level of readiness. However, even among those with higher national scores on the index, within-country disparities mean children living in poorer households or rural areas are by far the most likely to miss out during school closures.
- Encouragingly, many countries with relatively low gross national income scored above-average on the index, indicating the possibility for international cooperation and exchange of best practices.

There is no replacement for in-person learning, the report says. Yet, resilient schools with robust remote learning systems, especially digital learning, can provide a degree of education during school closures in times of emergencies. Moreover, once schools reopen, these systems can support students to catch up on their lost learning.

Through the Reimagine Education initiative, UNICEF is working with public and private partners to give children and young people equal access to quality digital learning, with the goal of reaching some 3.5 billion with world-class digital learning solutions by 2030. One of the ways UNICEF is working towards these goals is through the Learning Passport, a global learning platform developed in partnership with Microsoft, supporting 1.6 million learners during school closures. In addition, Reimagine Education is also bolstered by Giga – a UNICEF and ITU global initiative to connect every school and its surrounding community to the internet. As of last week, Giga has mapped 1 million schools in 41 countries and connected over 3,000 schools across four continents, benefiting 700,000 learners.

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Notes to editors:

Read the report [here](#).

Download multimedia content [here](#).

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