

# Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2026, Key Highlights

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With the 2030 deadline for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 only a few years away, the Global Education Monitoring Report has released its 2026 edition focusing on access and equity.

## About Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2026

- The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2026 is an **annual publication by UNESCO**.
- It provides a **comprehensive assessment of global progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)**, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030.
- The 2026 edition of the report **focuses specifically on issues of access and equity in education**, highlighting the challenges faced by marginalized and vulnerable learners.
- It **analyses factors contributing to differences in educational progress across countries and regions**, evaluating whether students have meaningful opportunities to learn, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- It **examines education systems at all levels**, including early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary education, and assesses the roles of financing, teacher quality, infrastructure, and technology in

promoting equitable learning outcomes.

- The report includes 35 **country case studies**, highlighting successful policies and interventions that have helped reduce out-of-school populations and improve learning outcomes.
- It also **identifies countries where progress has been limited, providing insights** into structural, economic, and social barriers that hinder educational development.

## Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2026 Key Highlights

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2026 provides a detailed assessment of global progress towards inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4), highlighting both achievements and persistent challenges in education systems globally.

- **Progress in Enrollment:** Since 2000, enrollment has increased by 30% in primary and secondary education globally, by 45% in early childhood education, and by 161% in postsecondary education.
- **Poor Quality Education:** Despite improvements in enrollment rates, many students continue to face poor-quality education due to overcrowded classrooms, inadequately trained teachers, and insufficient learning materials, which limits their ability to achieve meaningful learning outcomes.
- **Improvement in Completion rates:** Completion rate has increased from 77% to 88% in primary education, from 60% to 78% in lower secondary education, and from 37% to 61% in upper secondary education.
- **Out-of-School Populations:** In 2024, approximately 273 million children, adolescents, and youth were out of school globally, which corresponds to one in six school-age individuals.
  - This figure excludes an estimated 13 million children in conflict-affected countries, indicating the actual number of out-of-school learners is likely higher.
  - Certain countries have achieved remarkable reductions in out-of-school populations, including Madagascar and Togo for children, Morocco and Viet Nam for adolescents, Georgia and Turkiye for youth, and Cote d'Ivoire, which halved its out-of-school rates across all age groups.
- **Vulnerable populations:** Vulnerable populations, including girls, children with disabilities, rural populations, and displaced learners, face systemic barriers that restrict both their access to education and their ability to participate fully in learning.
- **Digital divide:** The report highlights the growing significance of digital education, noting that while technology has the potential to expand access, millions of learners lack access to devices, connectivity, and digital skills, which risks widening existing inequalities.
- **Declining Education Budgets:** Financing remains a critical challenge, as only 22 per cent of countries met international benchmarks by spending at least 4 per cent of GDP or 15 per cent of public expenditure on education in 2023, and many countries have reduced education budgets since 2015.
- **Growing Shortage of Qualified Teachers:** Only 11% of low-income countries require a bachelor's degree for primary teachers, and only 78% of primary teachers are academically qualified (down from 89% in 2013). Urgent action is needed from governments to tackle this shortage of qualified teachers.

The report emphasizes that achieving universal and equitable education requires more than just enrollment; it necessitates addressing equity gaps, improving quality, ensuring affordability in higher education, and adopting systemic approaches tailored to local contexts.

