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Key highlights

Global report on early childhood care and education

The right to a strong foundation

The world is off track in meeting the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 4.2**, which commits countries to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education by 2030. Our youngest children are not receiving the early care and learning opportunities they need to reach their full potential. Young children, especially those facing disadvantage, need urgent help to build the foundational conditions for school readiness, flourishing and lifelong success.

[The Tashkent Declaration](#) adopted at the 2022 World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education marked a significant milestone for transforming learning during the early years and accelerating actions. **Member States pledged to work towards allocating at least 10% of their education expenditures to pre-primary education.**

As one of the commitments of the Tashkent Declaration, the first *Global Report on Early Childhood Care and Education*, offers new findings and key recommendations to enhance ECCE worldwide. The report is co-published by UNESCO and UNICEF, with the support of GPE, ILO, OECD, WHO, as well as The LEGO Foundation.

GLOBALLY,
ONLY **46**
COUNTRIES

OUT OF **194** HAVE ADOPTED AT
LEAST ONE YEAR OF BOTH FREE
AND COMPULSORY PRE-
PRIMARY EDUCATION

KEY DATA ON THE STATE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

LEARNING CRISIS

If we don't act now, **37%** of the world's children, equivalent to more than **300 million** children, will not reach minimum proficiency levels in reading by 2030



IMPERATIVE OF LEGAL PROVISION

83% of children aged between 36-59 months in countries with free pre-primary education are developmentally on track, compared to **66.6%** in countries without this provision



ENROLMENT

The enrolment rate for one year of organized learning before the start of primary school fell to **72%** in 2022 from **75%** in 2020. To meet SDG target 4.2, **1.4 million** children would need to be enrolled in early childhood education every year until 2030



HOME ENVIRONMENT

In 97 countries with data, only **4%** of the poorest children live in households with children's books, and only **46%** of them have playthings at home



CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Children with disabilities are **25%** less likely to attend early childhood education



HOW TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING

ADDRESS TEACHER SHORTAGES:

At least **6 million** more teachers need to be recruited to reach national benchmarks for one year of pre-primary education by 2030

PROVIDE TEACHERS WITH PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING:

Only **57%** of pre-primary teachers in low-income countries have received the minimum required pedagogical training

IMPLEMENT FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES:

Out of **185** countries that adopted statutory provisions for maternity leave, only 115 offered paternity leave. Of these, **123** countries offered fully paid maternity leave, and only **102** countries offered paid paternity leave

FINANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION



INVESTMENT CALLS

Since 2015, calls have been made for governments to allocate at least **1%** of GDP or **10%** of national education budgets to pre-primary education. The Tashkent Declaration is the first international commitment adopted by Member States recommending that governments work towards allocating at least 10% of education expenditures to pre-primary education.



DOMESTIC SPENDING

Out of 98 countries with data, the global median spending on pre-primary education – for children aged from 3 years until the start of primary education – is only **0.4%** of GDP, far below the **1%** recommended.



THE FINANCING GAP

In low- and lower-middle-income countries, the annual average financing gap to achieve national targets for one year of pre-primary education is estimated to be **\$21 billion** between 2023 and 2030.



INTERNATIONAL AID

Development aid for one year of pre-primary education has increased, reaching a peak of \$282 million in 2022. This marks a **40%** rise from the 2021 allocation of USD 201 million. However, despite this growth, pre-primary education still represents a small portion of overall education aid, accounting for only **1.7%** of total direct aid to education in 2022.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENSURING CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO A STRONG FOUNDATION

PROMOTE ECCE FOR SCHOOL READINESS: Countries must develop early learning opportunities that include a strong focus on foundational skills such as emerging literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills to better support educational outcomes.

PRIORITIZE VULNERABLE CHILDREN: Extend access to quality early childhood care and education, particularly to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

SUPPORT PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS: Governments must take a whole-of-society approach and include parental support programmes and family-friendly policies to improve children's early learning experiences.

VALUE ECCE PERSONNEL: Governments must invest more in recruiting and training ECCE personnel to have the skillsets for creating safe, healthy, and stimulating early learning environments.

INVEST IN DATA: The international community must develop new indicators and mechanisms to better support and monitor the development of the ECCE sector, particularly for children younger than 3.

LEVERAGE RESEARCH: Governments must adopt a multidisciplinary and scientific understanding of learning and development to improve the relevance and quality of ECCE curriculum and pedagogy.

INCREASE INVESTMENTS BY GOVERNMENTS: Governments are called on to allocate at least 10% of national education budgets to pre-primary education.

ENHANCE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS AND PARTNERSHIPS:

The international community must establish a global initiative or alliance to better work together for children from (before) birth to 8 years. Leverage ECCE through the [Global Partnership Strategy \(GPS\)](#).

EXPAND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION: The creation of a legally binding international framework establishing the right to ECCE is needed to articulate states' obligations, promote accountability and monitoring, as well as ensure minimum resource allocation for ECCE.



Download the global report on
early childhood care and education

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