

LOST POTENTIAL TRACKER

Imagine if you had not been able to read
and understand a simple story at age 10.
Where would you be today?





Age 10 is a critical milestone in a child's life. It's the age at which they should be switching from learning to read to reading to learn. This crucial milestone sets children up for a lifetime of learning. This increases their ability to earn, innovate, improve their own opportunities, and contribute to their societies, including becoming the next generation of doctors, nurses and teachers.

But millions of children around the world won't hit this milestone. The Lost Potential Tracker is a real-time counter, building on the learning poverty indicator released by the World Bank and UNESCO, that racks up the number of children who reach their 10th birthday and cannot read and understand a simple story.

If we do not act today, millions more children around the world will miss the chance to fulfil their potential. This will not only be devastating for individuals, but will have an outsized impact on communities, countries, and economies.

The scale of the challenge is large, but not impossible. We know what must be done. The Tracker also shows us how we can change the story.

Here is the scale of the problem and what we can do.

- 1. Age 10 is a critical milestone in a child's life.** It's the age at which they should be switching from learning to read to reading to learn. From simply reading words on a page, to being able to understand concepts, this crucial milestone sets children up for a better life.¹
- 2. Between 2015 to 2030, over a billion children could fail to acquire basic literacy skills by age 10, missing this milestone.** These children could miss the opportunity to secure a better future where they can earn more, innovate and build a more prosperous future. In 2021 alone, that number will be over 70 million children, equivalent to the combined population of Senegal and Kenya. Let's break that down:
 - 8,050 children every hour or enough to fill 29 UK primary schools.²
 - Over 193,000 children a day, or nearly twice the capacity of the Camp Nou Stadium, the largest football stadium in Europe.³
 - Over 1.3 million children a week, or equivalent to 50% of total secondary school enrollment in Canada.⁴
 - Nearly 6 million a month, or equivalent to the population of Johannesburg.⁵

3. The poorest countries in the world and sub-Saharan Africa are the worst hit. Nearly 40% of the children who miss the age 10 milestone to secure a better future will come from sub-Saharan Africa. In low-income countries, more than 9 out of every 10 children miss this milestone.⁶

4. COVID-19 has made this worse. At the peak of the pandemic, over 1.6 billion schoolchildren were impacted.⁷ One-third of children globally do not have access to any form of remote learning, putting a pause on their education progress.⁸ For some, this pause will become a permanent stop. This year alone, the impact of COVID-19 on education systems could contribute 11.4 million of the 70 million children who will fail to acquire basic literacy skills by their 10th birthday.

5. Girls, in particular, may experience the impact of COVID-19 the worst. The pandemic could mean that 20 million more secondary-school aged girls could be out of school after the crisis has passed.⁹ With the pandemic also predicted to increase the risk of sexual violence and exploitation, up to one million girls in sub-Saharan Africa may be blocked from going back to school because of pregnancy during COVID-19 closures.¹⁰

6. We know why this global learning crisis is happening:

- Children who cannot access formal education are less likely to learn. But nearly 260 million children are out of school globally.¹¹
- Nearly half of all preschool aged children globally are not enrolled in preschool. In low-income countries, it's only 1 in 5.¹² These children are less likely to develop the skills they need to succeed in the education system.¹³
- If children aren't taught at the right level, in a language they understand and to a quality curriculum their learning will be inhibited.
- Teachers are one of the most influential stakeholders in a child's education. But they do not always have the adequate support to be effective in the classroom, preventing children from learning.

7. Effective funding with a focus on those most at risk is one way out. But it won't be cheap. In low-income countries where 90% of 10-year-olds fail to acquire basic literacy skills, ensuring children are learning in school will come at a price. Every US\$1 billion of education funding to low-income countries can set over 8.6 million children on the path to acquiring basic literacy skills by age 10. It is the difference between slipping through the cracks into lost potential to one where their opportunity is secured. Yet, despite the scale of investments required, we are seeing the opposite: two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have cut their education budgets since COVID-19 began, and aid to education is likely to decline by 12%.^{14 15}

8. **The impact of that funding goes beyond just changing a child's path.** It has consequences for the future of our world. Every dollar invested in education for low-income countries could yield US\$4.8 in economic growth, generating tax revenues and lifting people out of extreme poverty. Every billion dollars for education in low-income countries could save nearly 175,000 lives, ensure over 146,000 future children are not stunted, and prevent nearly 160,000 girls from early marriage.
9. **But funding alone is not enough! It must be spent well to create an impact.** It must be spent to ensure that children access education and stay in school, that they enroll in pre-primary education, that they have supportive learning environments tailored to their individual needs, and that every child has good teaching.



What can you do?

Explore the Lost Potential Tracker and help us spread the word. Visit ONE.ORG/LostPotential to find out more about the global learning crisis and read personal stories. Share the Lost Potential Tracker with others. And help us get the message out that governments must fund education adequately from all sources and ensure that financing is spent effectively, targeting the most marginalized. There are several key opportunities to act on this in the next few months:

- Call on G7 governments to commit to the global education targets set out by the UK to ensure 40 million more girls are in school and 20 million more girls can read at age 10 by 2026. G7 leaders can sign up to these targets at the G7 Summit on June 11-13, with an important opportunity to signal buy in at the G7 Foreign & Development Ministers meeting on May 4-5.
- **Raise your hand** and call on world leaders to fund the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) at the Global Education Summit on July 28-29. With at least US\$5 billion for 2021 to 2025, GPE can transform education systems in up to 90 countries and territories.
- Call on developing country governments to protect their education budgets and spend it effectively, targeting the most marginalized. Governments can commit to doing so at the Global Education Summit on July 28-29.

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