What is the MENA OOSCI?
The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) is part of the global OOSCI launched by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2010. The overall objectives of the Initiative are to:

- Improve the statistical information and analysis on out-of-school children and understand not only how many children are out of school, but also who they are and where they are;
- Identify the barriers that contribute to their exclusion from education; and
- Analyse the existing and needed policies and strategies related to enhanced participation in education and learning.

The ultimate goal is to contribute to building inclusive and flexible education systems providing learning opportunities within reach of all children. This is key in MENA, where participation in education is affected by protracted crisis and high inequalities in economic and social status among and within countries. OOSCI work is based on the rights of children to a full course of free and compulsory good-quality education (pre-primary, primary and lower secondary).

Thirteen countries in MENA have already undertaken an analysis on out-of-school children within the framework of the Initiative (Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen). In addition, Djibouti, Jordan and Syria are working on a new round of updated OOSCI studies.

Efforts are also ongoing in all countries of the region to strengthen tracking systems and improve the response. The work within the framework of OOSCI is led by the ministries of education, working closely with a team of national and local education officials and partners from civil society, along with experts and think-tanks.

How does it work?
The OOSCI analytical framework uses and analyses diverse data from administrative records and household surveys to derive comprehensive profiles of children who are not in school, count them, and identify the reasons for their exclusion from education. A Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) Model has been introduced to build profiles of excluded children. The Model represents a broad, complex and equity-focused approach that profiles out-of-school children as well as those at risk of dropping out. The statistics generated from this Model are part of the monitoring framework of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

The Five Dimensions of Exclusion Model

Dimension 1 (DE1) represents the group of children who do not benefit from pre-primary education and who may, therefore, not be adequately prepared for primary education, placing them at risk of not entering into primary education or, if they do enter, at risk of dropping out. For all countries in MENA, this dimension targets children at the age of 5.

Dimensions 2 and 3 (DE2 and DE3) represent the group of out-of-school children who are at primary and lower secondary school age (6-14 in most MENA countries). Each of the two Dimensions is divided into three categories based on past or future school exposure: children who attended in the past and left school, children who are likely to never enter school, and children who are likely to enter school in the future (over-age children).

Dimensions 4 and 5 (DE4 and DE5) represent the group of children who are in school but at risk of dropping out. They are grouped by the level of education they attend, regardless of their age.

The 5DE Model disaggregates statistics on out-of-school children according to characteristics such as wealth, disability, location, gender, race/ethnicity and age group. It also allows to make linkages between the profiles of children out of school and the barriers that led to their exclusion.

Building on the OOSCI experience in MENA in the past years, and in response to emerging programming priorities in the region, the MENA OOSCI has been extended to include more complex tools and special fields customized to the needs of countries, such as the pathway analysis, the cumulative risk analysis, early childhood education exclusion, and exclusion from education and employment at the post-basic education age.

Dimension 6 (DE6) refers to the exclusion of youth at post-basic upper secondary age (15 to 17 in most countries). This is a much more complex group compared to the age groups covered by the OOSCI 5DE Model. It is outside the bracket of compulsory education in MENA, and youth at post-basic age also have access to different forms of education and are allowed to work legally. Some entry points to explore the DE6 include:

- What is the level of education attainment?
- What is the employment status?
- What are the reasons for non-education or employment attendance?
- What is the level of education?
- What is the type of education, general or technical vocational education and training (TVET)?
- What are the patterns of transition between levels of education?
- What is the sector of employment?
- What is the skills level required for this sector?
- What are the patterns of transition between school and work?
- Who is not in education, employment or training (NEET) and why?

Recent OOSCI studies in the region, including the newly launched one for Palestine, the finalized one for Lebanon and the ongoing updates for Djibouti and Jordan, all cover the discussion of DE6 to some extent. In 2019, the global OOSCI working group will discuss a more standardized and structural guidance about DE6 analyses.
1. Progress on out-of-school children

**Pre-primary**
Progress in access to pre-primary education was made between 2005 and 2016, but more than half of the 5-year-olds remain excluded from education.

**Primary and lower secondary**
There was around a 30 per cent drop in the number of out-of-school children from 2005 right up until the Syria crisis started, but progress was largely reversed after.


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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 1</td>
<td>Children one year before the official primary entry age who are not in pre-primary or primary school</td>
<td>4.5 million</td>
<td>5.3 million</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<td>Dimension 2</td>
<td>Children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school</td>
<td>47.5 million</td>
<td>5.7 million</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dimension 3</td>
<td>Children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school</td>
<td>20.1 million</td>
<td>3.9 million</td>
<td>16%</td>
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Overall figures mask high disparities across the region:
- Range from below 10% in Lebanon, Qatar and UAE to over 90% in Djibouti and Yemen.
- For the younger group of children aged 3 to 4, three quarters of them do not attend early childhood education.
- Range from below 1% in Iran and Tunisia to over 30% in Djibouti, Sudan and Syria.
- More than half of primary age out-of-school children live in Sudan.
- Range from below 3% in Iran and Oman to over 30% in Djibouti, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.
- Iraq, Sudan, Syria and Yemen together account for two thirds of lower secondary out-of-school children.

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2 Calculation based on data from UIS. Data retrieved in June 2018. For MENA countries, the calculation of Dimension 1 refers to children aged 5. The additional statistics for children aged 3 to 4 retrieved from UNICEF Data in May 2018 (https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/overview/).
3. Out-of-school population as a result of ongoing crises

By the end of 2017, the armed conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen brought back the number of regional out-of-school children to its 2007 level of over 15 million. Of these out-of-school children, an estimated number of over 3 million should have been in school if the crises never happened. For these children to return to school, certain crisis-related issues linked to protection and livelihood concerns need to be solved for both children and teachers.

4. Zoom in on the Syria Crisis (as of Brussels Conference 2018)

In the five host countries:
- Progress in accessing education is steady with 1.25 million (or two out of three) school-age Syrian children attending either formal or regulated non-formal education (NFE). Most of them, seven out of eight, are in formal schools.
- Although the percentage of out-of-school children has reduced from 41% in 2016 to 35% in 2017, almost 700,000 children remain out of school.

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3 Inside-Syria figures are calculated using data from the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Damascus, OCHA, UNHCR and UNICEF. Out-of-school figures in hosting countries are calculated using data from UNHCR, 3RP monthly update and UNICEF Syrian Crisis Situation Reports up to December 2017. Figures for Iraq are calculated using data from MOE Iraq Centre, MOE in Kurdistan region, Iraq, and OCHA. Due to the data limit in emergency context, the population refers to children aged 5-17, while the enrolment figures (used for out-of-school calculations) are for students in primary or secondary education. Iraq non-IDP figures are estimated based on the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) population projection and the assumption of an increase of 8 percentage points in the out-of-school rate after the civil war. Yemen figures are estimated based on the UNICEF Yemen Humanitarian Situation Reports.

4 See full report: NLG. 2018. We Made a Promise: Ensuring Learning Pathways and Protection for Syrian Children and Youth, footnote 14 and Annex 2 for explanation on calculations. For the statistics on refugees, “out of school” applies to both formal school and non-formal education. Updates on the status of education are made available each year during the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. The upcoming Brussels Conference will be held in March 2019.
5. Expansion of pre-primary education (Dimension 1)\(^6\)

- Age-5 enrolment rates in pre-primary or primary school vary a lot across countries in the region.
- Progress in most countries, in particular Algeria and Oman, is due to robust government engagement.
- There is stagnation or decline in age-5 enrolment rates in crisis countries and those receiving an influx of refugees.

6. Out-of-school children by background characteristics (Dimensions 2 and 3)\(^6\)

- Persisting inequalities in relation to household wealth, location and gender.
- Gender and wealth-based inequalities expand at lower secondary age.

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\(^6\) Data from UNICEF Data (https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/overview/) retrieved in May 2018. The calculations are conducted on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), or MICS/DHS-style household survey for all MENA countries except Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. The country figures are then aggregated to regional figures weighted by their school-age populations.
7. Children at risk of dropping out (Dimensions 4 and 5 in 2016)\textsuperscript{7}

- **Dimension 4**:
  - Children in primary school but at risk of dropping out: 13% (6.7 million)
  - **87%**

- **Dimension 5**:
  - Children in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out: 18% (4 million)
  - **82%**

**Limited pre-school attendance**
Over 90% of Yemeni and Djibouti children enter primary school without exposure to pre-school.

**Late entry**
Over 10% of primary school students in Djibouti, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Yemen are over-age.

**Repetition**
Around one fifth of lower secondary students repeat grade(s) in Algeria and Tunisia.

**Child labour**
About a quarter of Sudanese and Yemeni children 5-14 years old are involved in child labour.

8. Education exclusion by gender\textsuperscript{8}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Pre-primary age out-of-school</th>
<th>Primary age out-of-school</th>
<th>Lower secondary age out-of-school</th>
<th>Primary at risk</th>
<th>Lower secondary at risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Girls are more likely to be out of school as the education level rises, and they are more likely to never enter school.

When girls make it to enter lower secondary school, they have a greater chance than boys of staying in school.

\textsuperscript{7} Calculation mainly based on data from UNESCO UIS, retrieved in June 2018. The rates for Syria are from 2011 assuming the pre-crisis at-risk rate applies to in-Syria students that are still attending schools. Due to data unavailability, the rates for Iraq are from OOSCI report using 2012/13 administrative data, and the rates for Libya are set to be the same as regional average. Regional Dimensions 4 and 5 are calculated as 100% minus the survival rate. Data for pre-school attendance and child labour are from UNICEF Data (https://data.unicef.org) retrieved in May 2018.

\textsuperscript{8} See footnote 2 and footnote 7.