

Detailed SUMMARY of the Article **“Out of School”, Dawn Editorial,** **October 18th, 2023**

The issue of millions of out-of-school children in Pakistan is a critical problem that needs immediate attention. An estimated 28 million children are currently out of school, and it's not just about the numbers; it's about an entire generation at risk. To address this, the central government has sent a letter to provincial ministers, urging them to create a unified national strategy. The effectiveness of this initiative largely depends on provincial governments due to the decentralized nature of the education sector. In the past, various efforts have been made to get these children into schools, but they have not yielded satisfactory results. Poverty and a lack of awareness are at the core of the problem. Many low-income families can't afford to send their children to school as they rely on child labor to make ends meet. Even if children are enrolled, they often drop out for the same reason. To truly solve this issue, it's not enough to merely enroll these children; they must stay in school, receive a quality education, and avoid returning to labor. To achieve this, the government should introduce financial incentives for families below the poverty line to send their children to school. Additionally, labor laws need strengthening to ensure children below a certain age are not employed, and schools should consider flexible timings for older working children.

The debate over whether there are 28 million or 22.8 million out-of-school children is irrelevant; even one child missing out on education is a problem. What's crucial is the government's commitment to addressing this issue. Pakistan currently allocates only 1.7% of its GDP to education, indicating its low priority in the budget. To bring about real change, experts suggest increasing this allocation to at least 4%. However, resources alone are not enough; they must be efficiently utilized with transparent governance and modern, child-friendly curricula. Investing in education is an investment in the future, and the number of out-of-



school children, whether it's 28 million or 22.8 million, should serve as a wake-up call to the nation.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

Millions of children in Pakistan are out of school, putting the nation's future at risk. The central government's call to provincial ministers for a national strategy is a positive step, but the responsibility for implementation lies with the provinces. Poverty and lack of awareness are the root causes, as many low-income families can't afford to send their children to school. Even if they enroll, they often drop out to work. To solve this issue, financial incentives for poor families to send their children to school are essential, along with strengthening labor laws and providing flexible school timings for working children. Pakistan's education budget is only 1.7% of GDP; experts recommend increasing it to 4%. Efficient resource utilization, transparent governance, and modern curricula are crucial. Every child out of school is a missed opportunity for progress.

SOLUTIONS of The Problem:

1. Financial Incentives and Labor Laws:

To address the out-of-school children issue, the government should introduce financial incentives for families below the poverty line to send their children to school. Simultaneously, labor laws should be strengthened to prevent children below a certain age from working.

2. Flexible School Timings:

Schools should consider flexible timings to accommodate older working children, allowing them to attend classes.

3. Increase Education Budget:

Pakistan's education budget, currently at 1.7% of GDP, should be increased to at least 4% to allocate more resources to the sector.

4. Efficient Resource Utilization:

Efficient utilization of resources, transparent governance, and the development of modern, child-friendly curricula are essential components in addressing the problem.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the article:

- Approximately 28 million children are out of school in Pakistan, indicating a severe education crisis.
- The central government has urged provincial ministers to create a unified national strategy to address the issue.
- Poverty and a lack of awareness are the main factors leading to children dropping out of school.
- Pakistan currently allocates only 1.7% of its GDP to education, which experts recommend increasing to at least 4%.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures out of the article:

- No specific additional facts or figures were provided in the article.

MCQs from the Article:

1. *How many children are estimated to be out of school in Pakistan?*
 - A. 1 million
 - B. 28 million
 - C. 10 million
 - D. 5 million

2. *What is the recommended percentage of GDP allocation for the education budget in Pakistan?*
 - A. 0.5%
 - B. 2%
 - C. 5%

D. 4%

3. *What are the main factors contributing to children dropping out of school in Pakistan?*
 - A. Lack of qualified teachers
 - B. Lack of schools
 - C. Lack of textbooks
 - D. *Poverty and lack of awareness*

4. *What is the government urged to introduce for families below the poverty line to encourage their children to attend school?*
 - A. Free uniforms
 - B. *Financial incentives*
 - C. Free school meals
 - D. After-school tutoring

VOCABULARY:

1. *Devolved* (adjective) (□□□ □□□□□): Transferred or delegated to a lower level, especially from a central government to a regional one.
2. *Incentives* (noun) (□□□□□□ □□□□□): Things that encourage or motivate someone to take action or work harder.
3. *Utilisation* (noun) (□□□□□□□□): The practical use or application of something.
4. *Governance* (noun) (□□□□□□□□): The way an organization or country is managed and controlled.
5. *Curricula* (noun) (□□□□□): The subjects comprising a course of study in a school or college.

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Out of school
Editorial

WE are at the precipice of an education catastrophe. With a reported 28m children out of school, the nation faces a daunting task. But beyond the alarming statistics lies a deeper problem: a generation at risk. A letter from the centre urging provincial ministers to formulate a uniform national strategy to address the issue is a welcome step. We can only hope it will lead to a substantial action plan. The onus of effective implementation lies with provincial governments given the education sector's devolved nature. While several initiatives were rolled out in the past to send these children to school, the outcomes were subpar, indicating the need for a deeper dive into the problem. Poverty and lack of awareness are at



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its root, experts say. Lower-income families simply cannot afford to send their children to school when they are labouring — quite literally — to keep their families afloat. Even if the state manages to enrol them, they drop out for the same reason. Children forced into such situations are deprived of their basic right to an education and remain trapped in a cycle of poverty. Therefore, simply enrolling these children is not the solution. Ensuring they stay enrolled, receive quality education and don't go back to labour is the real challenge. To this end, the government must introduce financial incentives for families below the poverty line to send their children to school. In tandem, labour laws must be strengthened so children below a certain age do not work. And for older working children, schools must consider flexible timings.

The argument over whether the figure stands at 28m or 22.8m is moot. Even one child out of school is one child too many. The focus, instead, should turn to how serious the state's commitment is. With Pakistan allocating a mere 1.7pc of its GDP to education, the budgetary priority afforded to the sector is evident. For any tangible change, it is recommended that this be increased to at least 4pc. Resources alone, however, are not the panacea. Efficient utilisation, transparent governance and modern, child-friendly curricula are equally vital. To invest in education is to invest in the future. Every child out of school today is an opportunity lost for progress tomorrow. Let the number, be it 28m or 22.8m, serve as a wake-up call. The nation's future rests on how it responds.

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