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Six Million: Half of Myanmar's Students Are Shut Out of School

At the start of the 2026–2027 academic year, more than 6.3 million school-age children and young people are left out of school, losing their right to a basic education due to various reasons. Let alone aspiring to a high quality education, Myanmar's education system is grappling with a far more fundamental crisis: ensuring access to basic education.



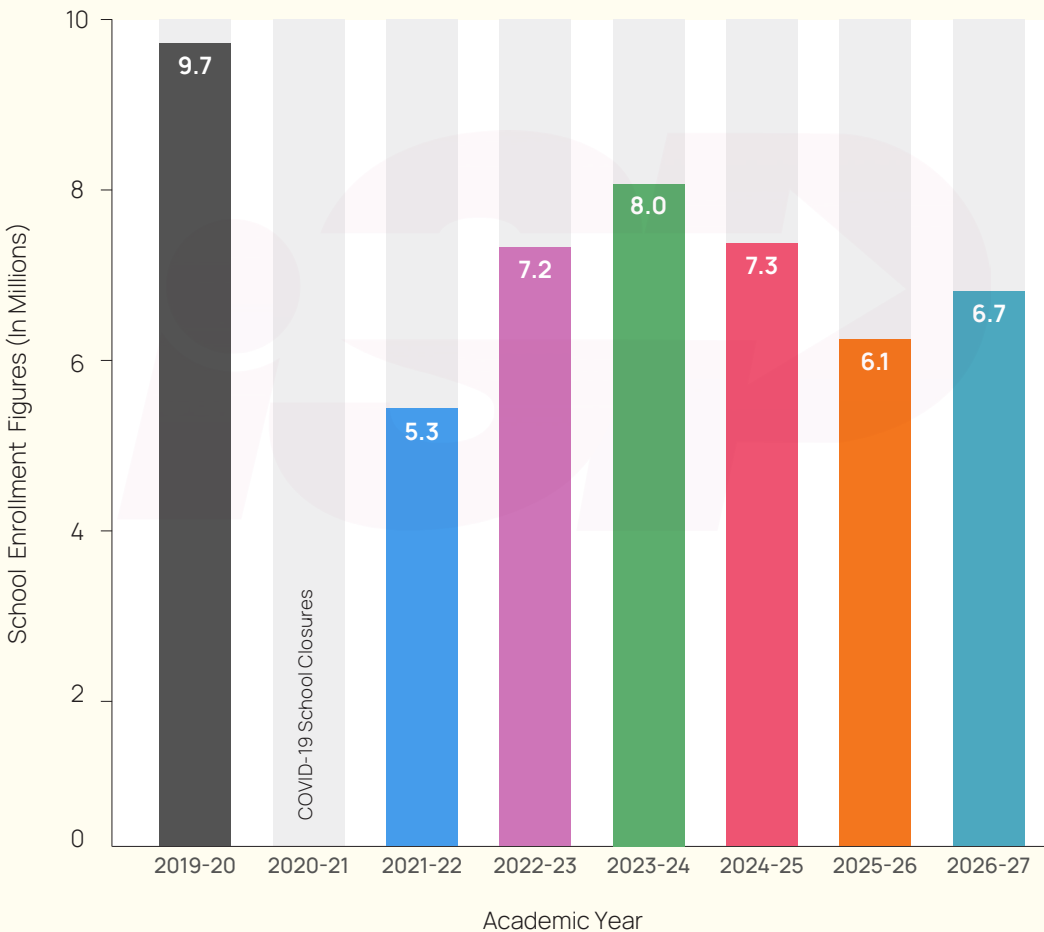
Six Million: Half of Myanmar's Students Are Shut Out of School

Amid the ongoing post-coup conflict in Myanmar, the right to basic education for school-age children remains in a severe crisis. New data highlights the depth of the shortfall: for the 2026–2027 academic year, enrollment in basic education schools stands at only 6.7 million. While this represents a modest increase of around 600,000 enrollments (10 percent) compared to last year, it falls drastically short of actual needs (**See ISP-DM2026-048**). Estimates based on the 2019 and 2024 census suggest that the school-age population that should be enrolled in basic education is around 13 million. Consequently, more than 6.3 million school-age children and young people remain out of school for various reasons. The decay is visible at the top of the ladder, too: the number of candidates sitting for matriculation exams has cratered from over 900,000 in 2020 to roughly 250,000 this year.

Starting in the 2026 academic year, public schools introduced placement tests paired with children of equivalent ages. However, these tests are capped at age 15 and primarily apply only to the primary and middle school levels. This policy has left many high school-age students who hope to return to education stranded in limbo. For students fleeing conflict and displaced in other regions, enrollment faces major administrative barriers. Many lack school-acknowledged records or find themselves unable to obtain official transfer certificates from their previous institutions. For those who can attempt to enroll, economic hardship blocks the way. Soaring prices and weak household incomes have burdened working-class families with the costs of even the most basic school supplies, such as notebooks and pencils.

Over 6.3 Million Myanmar Students Unable to Access Basic Education

In the 2026–2027 academic year, the number of basic education school enrollments stands at **6.7 million**. While enrollment rose by **600,000** compared to last year, the increase remains marginal given that census data from 2019 and 2024 place the school-age population at **around 13 million**. Therefore, **over 6.3 million** students are out of their school campuses for various reasons, losing their right to basic education. Representing only a single academic year, this figure likely understates the cumulative loss of education access over the five-year post-coup period.



Data as of June 18, 2026, is part of research conducted by the ISP-Myanmar's Socioeconomic Studies. It may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology and data availability.



Meanwhile, the regime's financial allocations for education have yet to recover to pre-coup levels. In the 2024–2025 fiscal year, 6.02 percent of the national budget was spent on education. For the 2026–2027 fiscal year, the plan is to increase this share to 6.92 percent, with official statements of the Min Aung Hlaing administration projecting an increase to at least 10 percent next fiscal year. Min Aung Hlaing has stated that over the five years of his tenure, the education budget will be increased by up to 20 percent. Currently, however, funding struggles to reach the 8.07 percent mark allocated during the 2020–2021 fiscal year.

Various groups involved in the conflict are attempting to provide alternative education options in the areas under their respective control. However, volatile conflict conditions and a severe lack of infrastructure impose serious limitations, preventing these decentralized efforts from operating at full capacity. At the same time, access to the interim education programs run by the National Unity Government (NUG) remains limited. The NUG reported that 727,860 students attended its programs during the 2023–2024 academic year, though enrollment figures for the current 2026 academic year are not yet available. According to the Ta'ang Land Education Council (TLEC), enrollment reached nearly 70,000 students in the 2024–2025 academic year. But after the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) recaptured towns and stepped up airstrikes, around 200 schools were forced to close for the 2026–2027 academic year, and student numbers fell to roughly 50,000 (See [ISP-DM2026-049](#)).

It will still be difficult for Myanmar's education sector to return to its pre-coup state. More than 6.3 million school-age children are currently outside the school system—whether because they left school to support their families, could not afford the cost of education, were displaced by war and conflict, or migrated abroad in search of work. At a Union Government meeting on June 9, Min Aung Hlaing said, “a quality education system needs both systematic physical infrastructure and systematic and effective teaching.” Yet all talks and no concrete plans in sight; there is still no clear plan or strategy for reforming the education sector. Right now, rather than aspiring to a high-quality education, Myanmar's education system is grappling with a far more fundamental crisis: ensuring access to basic education. ■

Status of Ongoing Efforts by Various Groups for Alternative Education

Various organizations involved in the conflict are trying to provide alternative education through different means. However, volatile conflict conditions, infrastructure constraints, and other practical challenges continue to impose serious limits, making large-scale implementation difficult. According to the National Unity Government (NUG), its schools on the ground accepted 727,860 students in the 2024 academic year.

Organizations	Department/ Council	Academic Year	Number of Schools	Number of Teachers	Number of Students
National Unity Government (NUG)	NUG Ministry of Education	2023-2024	5,949	61,645	727,860
Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)	KIO Education Department	2024-2025	448	2,600	-
New Mon State Party (NMSP)	Mon National Education Committee (MNEC)	2025-2026	146	800	-
Karen National Union (KNU)	Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD)	-	1,467	9,512	123,331
Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC)	IEC Department of Education	2025-2026	470	4,619	57,580
Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF)	Ta'ang Land Education Council (TLEC)	2024-2025	603	3,404	69,064
		2026-2027	400	-	50,000
Myanmar National Truth and Justice Party (MNTJP)	Special Region (1) Myanmar Education Committee	2026-2027	150	-	10,000

Data as of June 18, 2026, is part of research conducted by the ISP-Myanmar's Socioeconomic Studies. These figures represent physical on-the-ground school openings. It may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology and data availability.