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EDUCATION ACCESS IN CRISIS: NEARLY 7 MILLION CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

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Education Access in Crisis: Nearly 7 Million Children Out of School

Since the 2021 coup, access to basic education has shrivelled, with school-enrollment rates steadily falling. In the pre-coup academic year (2019–20), more than 9.7 million students were enrolled in basic education. By 2025–26, that figure had dropped to just 6.1 million. After the 2018–19 academic year, Myanmar’s schools should have enrolled at least 10 million students annually—based on population growth—from primary through secondary levels. However, that target has not been met for the past five academic years, and numbers have decreased further this year. According to the 2019 interim census and figures from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the number of school-age children could be around 13 million. Based on that, roughly 7 million school-age children in 2025–26 are missing out on basic education¹. Based on the gross enrollment ratio, over half of Myanmar’s school-age children, about 53 percent, are missing out on basic education. On the other hand, the pathway to higher education is also narrowing: in 2020, more than 900,000 students sat the matriculation exam; by 2025, only about 200,000 did.

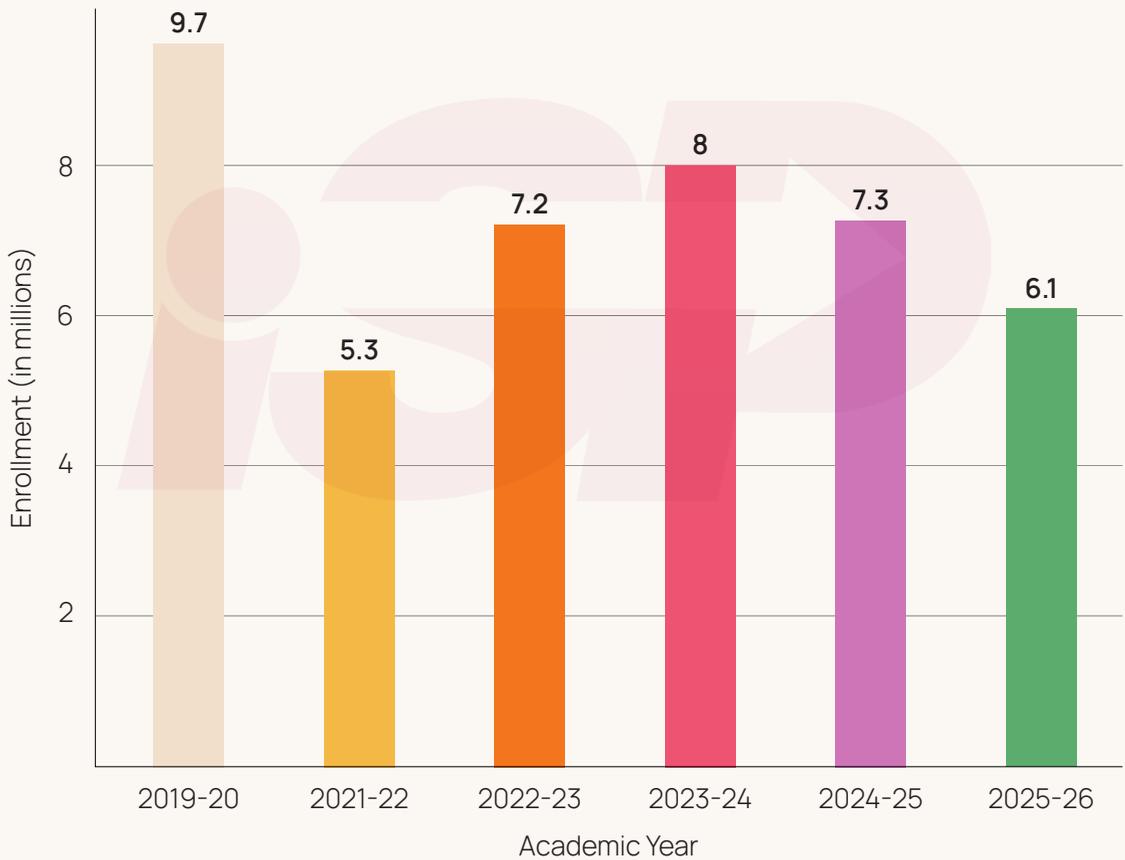
The figures underscore that access to basic education has been a steep obstacle for children in Myanmar. Economic instability, widening gaps between household income and expenses, and the insecurity caused by armed conflict are lowering enrollment rates. In conflict-hit areas, the situation is even dire: most schools remain closed, and some are built alongside bomb shelters to shield students from the State Security and Peace Commission’s (SSPC) airstrikes. ■

Data as of July, 2025. (1) The number of school-age population is based on the 2019 interim census, as the 2024 census provides only preliminary data without age-specific breakdowns. Consequently, the number of school-age children in 2025 may be underestimated. This Situation Brief No. 2 (English Version) was published on August 7, 2025, as a translation of the original Burmese version published on August 6, 2025.

Only 47 Percent of School-Age Children Enrolled in Class

ISP Data Matters Number 165

Since the 2018–19 academic year, average school enrollment in Myanmar should have exceeded 10 million annually, based on population trends. Yet in each of the past six years, it has fallen short. By 2025–26, enrollment had dropped to just 6.1 million, amounting to only 47 percent of school-age children, according to the gross enrollment ratio.



Data as of July 2025 is calculated using Gross Enrollment Ratio and based on the 2019 interim census, as the 2024 census provides only preliminary data without age-specific breakdowns.