

# Assessing National Action on Children's Right to Education



The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) commits nations to guaranteeing civil, political, social, and economic rights to children. This fact sheet series by the WORLD Policy Analysis Center examines the extent to which countries have enacted and passed laws and policies consistent with CRC commitments.

## Background

- The CRC explicitly identifies the right to education in Article 28, which calls on all parties to make primary education compulsory and free to all children, make secondary education available and accessible to all children, and take measures to introduce free secondary education.
- Worldwide, approximately 57 million children are not enrolled in primary school. Another 69 million children are not in secondary school.
- Education has a significant impact on health and economic opportunity: higher education levels are associated with greater longevity in adulthood, lower morbidity rates, and higher earnings. Greater maternal education is also associated with lower infant and child mortality.
- While States Parties have made progress in improving primary school enrollment, large gaps remain at the secondary level. Cost is a significant barrier to increasing school attendance.

## Findings

### Progress in Foundational Rights

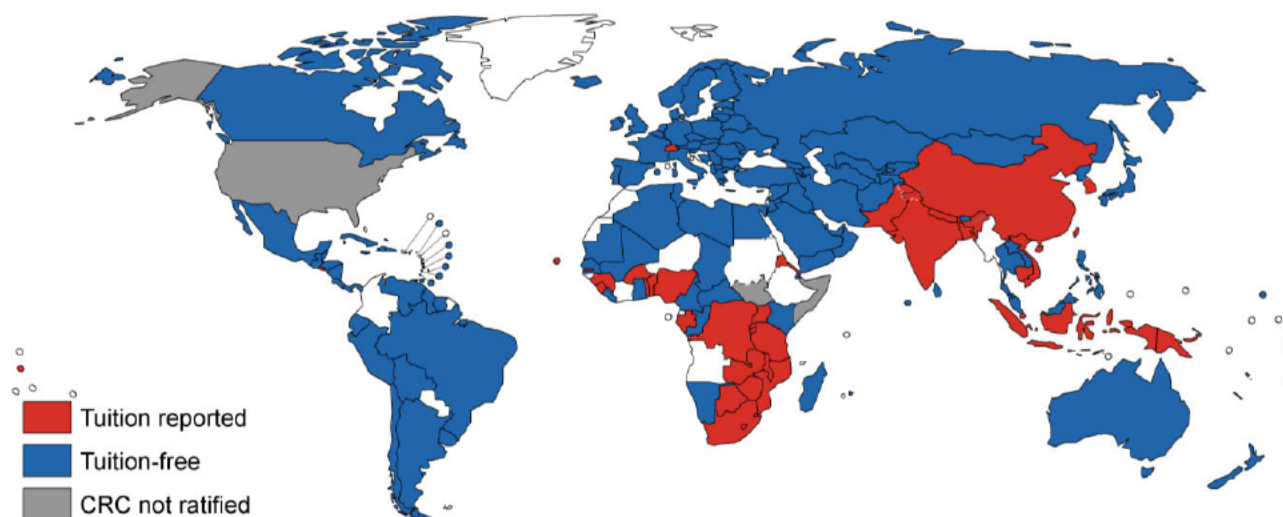
- As fundamental building blocks of a nation's government and laws, constitutional guarantees provide a foundation for demanding greater equity in the delivery of and access to basic services, such as education.
- Constitutional protections of both primary and secondary education are stronger in constitutions adopted after CRC ratification compared to those adopted before:
  - 97% of constitutions adopted after CRC ratification protect some aspect of citizens' right to primary education or education broadly, compared to only 82% adopted before.
  - 65% of constitutions adopted after CRC ratification guarantee either free primary education or free education, compared to 47% of constitutions adopted before CRC ratification.
  - 49% of constitutions adopted after CRC ratification provide some protection of the specific right to secondary education, compared to only 33% of those adopted before CRC ratification.
- The majority of States Parties also constitutionally protect equity in education. Protections are strongest based on gender (63%), religion (57%), and race/ethnicity (56%). Only 19% of States Parties constitutionally protect the right to education of children with disabilities.

## Findings (Continued)

### National Action to Make the CRC Real

- Most States Parties have met their CRC commitments to make primary school tuition-free and compulsory (90%). However, 9% of low-income Parties and 3% of middle-income Parties still report charging tuition fees at the primary level.
- Significantly more States Parties charge tuition fees at the secondary level. Fourteen percent charge fees in the first year of secondary school and nearly a quarter charge fees before secondary school is completed.
- Tuition fees are more common in low-income countries, where families may be less equipped to pay tuition. Sixty-two percent of low-income States Parties charge tuition fees during secondary school compared to only 22% of middle-income and 6% of high-income Parties.

### Map: Is completing secondary education tuition-free?



Source: WORLD Policy Analysis Center, Education Database, 2014

**Table: Provision of education by level and country income group**

	Low-income	Middle-income	High-income	Total
Primary education is not tuition-free	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)
Primary education is tuition-free, but not compulsory	4 (12%)	6 (7%)	2 (4%)	12 (7%)
Primary education is tuition-free and compulsory	26 (79%)	81 (90%)	48 (96%)	155 (90%)
The first year of secondary education is not tuition-free	12 (41%)	9 (10%)	2 (4%)	23 (14%)
The first year of secondary education is tuition-free	17 (59%)	78 (90%)	47 (96%)	142 (86%)
Secondary education is not tuition-free through completion	18 (62%)	18 (22%)	3 (6%)	39 (24%)
Secondary education is tuition-free through completion	11 (38%)	65 (78%)	45 (94%)	121 (76%)
Higher education is not tuition-free	14 (47%)	33 (47%)	21 (43%)	68 (46%)
Higher education is tuition-free	16 (53%)	37 (53%)	28 (57%)	81 (54%)

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