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DFID Department for
International
Development

Keeping our promises: Delivering education for all



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Foreword

In 2005 Make Poverty History forced governments to make promises on aid.

Now, in 2006, it is time for us to keep our promises. None is more important than the Millennium Development Goal that by 2015 every one of the world's children is able to go to school.

And schools which are both free of charge, and of high quality.

Today and every day more than 100 million of the world's children do not go to school. Most are in Africa, more are girls, all are denied the most basic chance to reach their potential.

Education benefits not just children, but families, communities, and whole countries. It improves job chances and prosperity; promotes health and prevents disease. And education is the single greatest investment we can make to ensure growth and economic development.

Education - by putting opportunity directly into people's hands - is the key to the ultimate development goal: the empowerment of the poor, and of the world's poorest countries.

So now we must ensure that all the world's children, not just some of them, go to school. It is a promise that must be kept: child by child, class by class, and school by school.

Keeping that promise is a great challenge, and this pamphlet sets out what must be achieved: nothing less than a new educational partnership linking countries that have promised funding with those desperately in need of it.

Rich countries must keep their 2005 promise of increased aid that is stable, long term and predictable.

For \$10 billion a year every child in every continent could have teachers, books and classrooms.

That's only £7.50 a year, or 15 pence a week, for each of us in the richest countries. Indeed, for just two pence a day each, we could finance schooling for every child denied it today in the poorest countries.

And with this certainty of long term finance, developing countries can put in place the long-term, ambitious 10 year plans for investment to achieve this.

We know what education can achieve. We know that delivering free education is a test of our resolve to keep our promises.

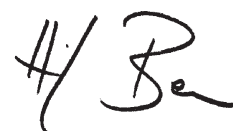
The history of our world so far is that of the triumph of the human spirit - but also of the cruel waste of the human potential of millions.

So let us become the first generation in history to develop the potential of not just some but all our children.

We can afford it; and we cannot afford not to do it.



Chancellor of the Exchequer



Hilary Benn

Education - the power to change

At Kerezange School on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, two young boys are feeling lucky. Mrisho and Benadi have both started school because the government has abolished school fees. “My parents say that it is a blessing that they do not have to pay for us to go to school”, says Mrisho. “If they did, my brother and I may not have been able to come to school.”

Since the government abolished school fees in 2001, Tanzania has enrolled 95 per cent of children into primary school, up from 53 per cent.

There are still many challenges – with overcrowded classrooms, not enough textbooks and a shortage of qualified teachers – but the boys know that their prospects for the future have been transformed.

Education has the potential to change the direction of someone's life for good and it is central to the eradication of global poverty.

It is not only a fundamental human right, it is a means by which people are able to fulfill their potential.

"Education has the potential to change the direction of someone's life for good, and it is central to the eradication of global poverty"

This booklet focuses on the importance of education in making poverty history and shows how rich and poor nations, working together, can make sure that every child in every country receives a good quality, free primary education.



THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The international community needs no reminder of the power of education to fight poverty. Education is central to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a series of targets that the world has pledged to reach by 2015, which would halve the proportion of people living in poverty.

The MDGs have very specific aims such as reducing child mortality and improving maternal health, and are now at the centre of international efforts on development.

The education MDGs aim to ensure that, by 2015, all boys and girls are able to complete a full course of primary schooling and to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education by 2015.

What price the MDGs?

Several studies have estimated the extra money that developing countries need to achieve the MDGs. In 2001 a High Level UN Panel, led by former President Zedillo of Mexico, estimated that an additional \$50 billion in aid each year would be needed. The Commission for Africa, reporting in 2005, concluded that aid to Africa alone needed to increase by an extra \$25 billion a year. Finally the Sachs UN Millennium Project, commissioned by Kofi Annan, estimated that an extra \$50 billion a year was needed by 2010, rising to almost \$75 billion by 2015.

And while these estimates vary, with each calculated on a different basis, what is striking is that they all suggest a similar increase in aid is essential for the world to have any chance of achieving the MDGs.

Millennium Development Goals agreed in 2000

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development



Grandmother Natividad Chub (50), mother Olga Beatriz Cucul (29) and daughter, Florencia Coc Cucul (9) who is in 3rd grade. Neither Natividad or Olga ever went to school. Olga says "I send my daughter to school so she can do much better for herself, so she can have a brighter future than me. I didn't go to school and I don't know how to read or write. Florencia says "I like the fact that I'm able to go to school to learn, and to have the chance to complete my studies. Maybe then I could become a teacher."

Bridging the gap

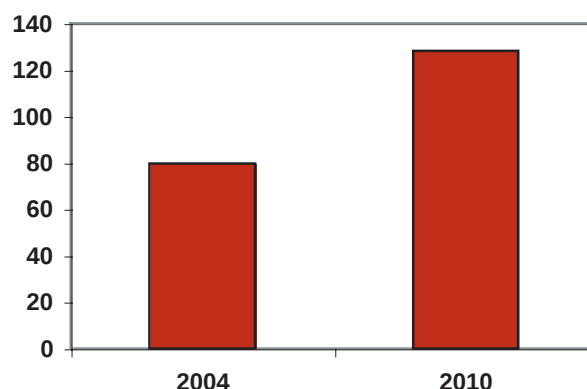
Progress has been made. Aid to developing countries has been increasing since 1997 and, since 2001, has grown as a proportion of the income of rich countries. Over the last few years a number of countries, including the UK, have pledged to meet the internationally agreed target of spending 0.7 per cent of their national income on aid.

In 2005, millions of ordinary people worldwide put international development at the top of the political agenda and significant new steps followed. The fifteen members of the European Union agreed to reach the 0.7 per cent target by 2015, with the new members also making significant pledges. They also agreed an interim target, which means that by 2010 total EU aid will be twice as much as it was in 2004. Taken with the other commitments agreed by the G8 and other international donors, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates

that total official development assistance will be \$50 billion higher in 2010 than it was in 2004. And \$25 billion of this increase will go to Africa – doubling aid to the continent.

"Donors have committed to provide an extra \$50 billion a year in aid by 2010, with \$25 billion of this going to Africa"

Official Development Assistance (ODA)
(US\$ billions)



WHY EDUCATION?

Progress towards all of the MDGs is absolutely essential and none of them will be achieved in isolation. But everyone agrees that it is fundamentally important to get all children into school. Education is a basic human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And the critical role of education for the success of development has been recognised in a string of international commitments:

- At the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, the international community committed to ensure universal access to primary education by the year 2000.
- The 1990 World Summit for Children reaffirmed the right to an education as a legally binding obligation.
- The 1995 World Summit for Social Development committed to achieve – by 2005 – universal access to basic education, the completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary-school-age children, and to close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education.

These commitments culminated in the agreement reached in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, and reflected in the MDGs, which pledged the world to achieve universal primary education before 2015 and gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005.

Win-win: economic growth

Good quality education enables people to read, write, reason, communicate and make informed and healthy choices. As the proverb goes, 'Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach him how to fish and he will eat for life'.

It is not just sentiment or wishful thinking that tells us education enables us to fulfill our potential and better provide for our families – the evidence stacks up. Education contributes to increased economic

growth rates in the long-term. The more children who get a full education, the richer a country will be. In low-income countries, with each year of additional education, average earnings increase by 11 per cent.

People who have received an education can not only fulfil their potential but also contribute to their local communities. People with literacy and numeracy skills are better placed to start their own enterprises and create wealth – for themselves and those around them. Businesses also need an educated, skilled workforce if they are to compete and expand. And the beneficial effect of education in combating diseases like AIDS means developing countries benefit from a healthier workforce.

Providing the finance for universal education today will make for a better qualified, more productive, healthier and richer population tomorrow. It will also be a population increasingly able to carry the burden of financing education for the next generation. Developing countries that invest in education now will gain in the future, as an educated workforce boosts economic growth and prosperity.



Girl power

The advantages of education are nowhere seen more clearly than in the education of girls and the benefits this brings to society as a whole. Even a few years of basic education empowers women to have smaller and healthier families. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, women with seven or more years of schooling had between two and three fewer children than women with three or less years of education. Educated mothers are more likely to send their own children to school, and their kids do better at school than the children of unschooled parents. It's a virtuous cycle of development.

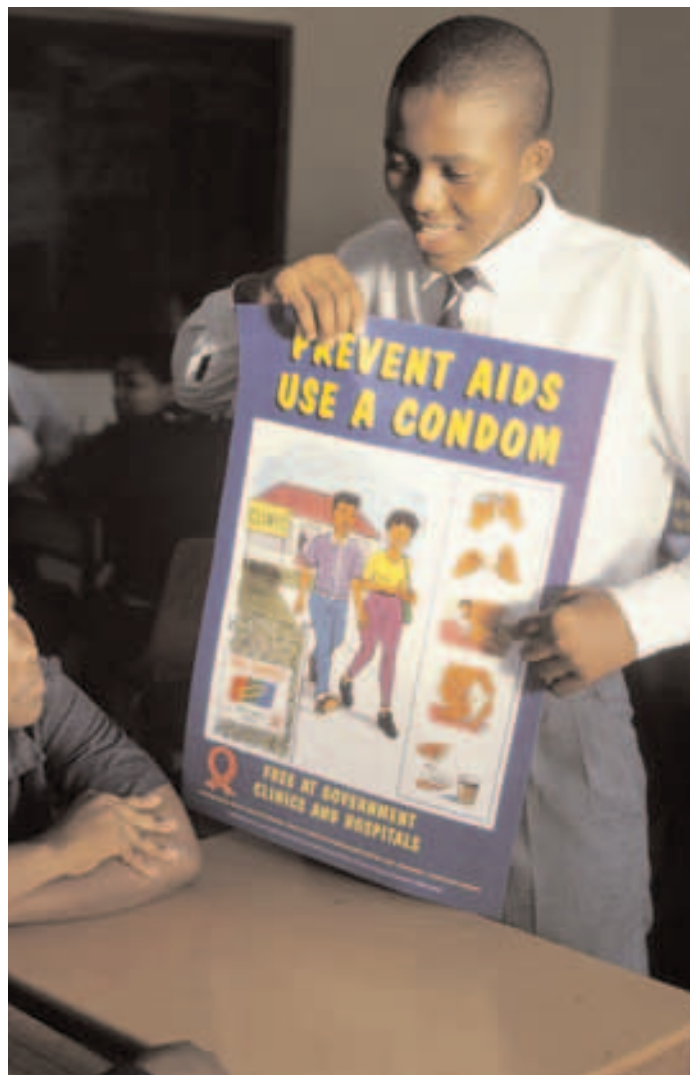
"Educated mothers are more likely to send their own children to school, and see their kids do better at school than the children of unschooled parents"

Evidence across countries show that for each additional year girls spend in school there is an 8 per cent reduction in the death rate of children under five. And it is estimated that each year of education a girl receives will boost her eventual wages by 10-20 per cent.

"It is estimated that each year of education a girl receives will boost her eventual wages by 10-20 per cent"

Fighting diseases

AIDS is a huge barrier to development across the world – in some countries threatening decades of progress. Education is at the centre of any successful strategy to turn back the tide of HIV and AIDS. Simply keeping girls in school is one of the most effective HIV prevention strategies. For instance, infection rates among educated women in Zambia have declined, while remaining constant among those who have not received basic education. One of the keys to Uganda's relative success in tackling the epidemic has been a focus on education. In Swaziland, two-thirds of teenage girls in school are free from HIV while two-thirds of girls out of school have HIV.



"In Swaziland, two-thirds of teenage girls in school are free from HIV, while two-thirds of girls out of school have HIV"

Just as improved education is vital to tackling HIV and AIDS, a co-ordinated response can improve a country's capacity to educate its children. Put simply, implementation of an effective AIDS strategy is critical if a country wants to avert a devastating loss of teachers. So investing in education and teachers is essential to improve the health of a country; and investing in health is critical for a properly functioning education system.

"Investing in health is critical for education; just as investing in education is critical for health"

SOME PROGRESS MADE

Good efforts

Over the past decade many developing countries have made significant progress. In 2002 seventy-five million more children were enrolled in primary school than in 1990. Several countries with large populations have taken bold steps to reduce illiteracy rates. Many poor countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, are making far faster progress than industrialised nations did when they were at the equivalent development stage.

Several countries have also significantly reduced the gap between the numbers of boys and girls in primary schools. Chad, Benin, Guinea, Gambia, Yemen, Morocco, Mauritania and Nepal, for example, all increased the proportion of girls enrolled relative to boys by 20 per cent or more during the 1990s.

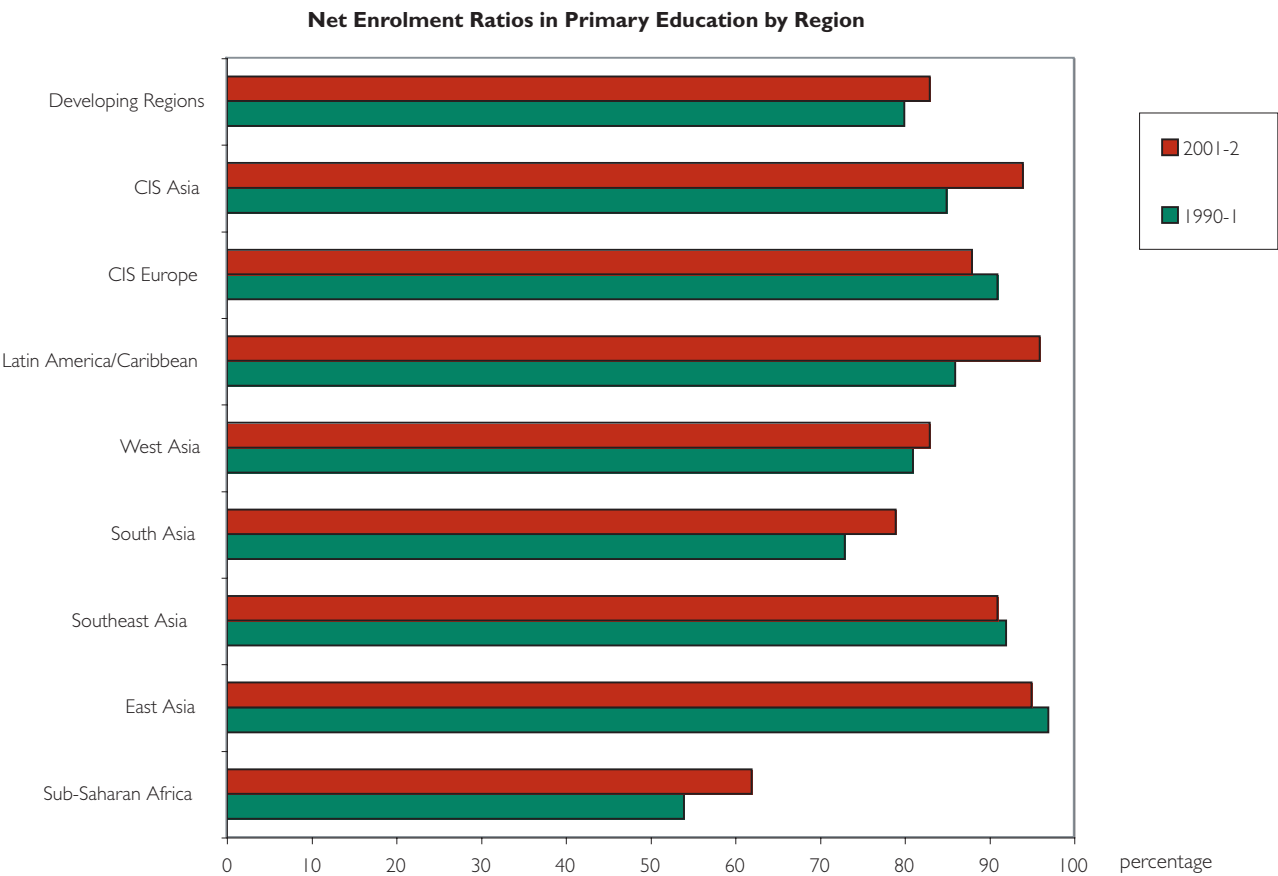
Education catching on

In Zambia, enrolment rates for girls climbed from 65.9 per cent in 2000 to 81.5 per cent in 2004. This

improvement was largely brought about by the abolition of school fees in 2002. In addition to this, there have been targeted initiatives which particularly support the participation of girls in school. These include bursary schemes and community programmes.

In Nicaragua, \$3.5 million from a scheme called the Education For All /Fast Track Initiative (EFA/FTI) helped pay for an improvement in teacher facilities and an increase in the number of children receiving a daily meal in school. The number of children receiving meals doubled from 200,000 in 2004 to 400,000 in 2005 and levels of retention rose - a major goal of the country's FTI plan.

"In Nicaragua the number of school children receiving meals doubled from 200,000 in 2004 to 400,000 in 2005"



In the Gambia, \$4 million from the FTI has enabled the Government to purchase thousands of text books for grades 1–4, as well as offering housing and allowances for teachers in remote areas where communities were unable to provide housing. The pilot has been successful in recruiting teachers, and the Government is planning to include such allowances in its education budget in the future. All of these have had a positive effect on the quality of education in poor rural areas.

"In the Gambia the Government has been able to purchase thousands of text books for grades 1–4, as well as offering staff quarters for incoming teachers in remote areas"

In Yemen, \$10 million is being used to increase the quality of education and to encourage more girls to enrol in rural areas, where only 30 per cent attend school. Already, 14,000 teachers have been trained, 86 new schools are being built and female teachers are being hired. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world and there is a wide disparity between the sexes in school attendance. There are only two-thirds as many girls as boys in primary

school, and only half as many at secondary level. In 2003, the Yemen government committed itself to full primary enrolment by 2015, with special emphasis on achieving gender equity.

"In Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the world, 14,000 teachers have been trained and 86 new schools are being built"

Rwanda's education system was devastated by the genocide in 1994. But with the help of support from the UK, France, the World Bank and other donors it has made great strides in rebuilding its education system and is now on track to achieve Education for All by 2015. Enrolment is already the highest in sub-Saharan Africa at 91 per cent, with the same number of girls and boys at primary and secondary levels.

"In Rwanda school enrolment is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa at 91 per cent, with equal representation of girls and boys at primary and secondary levels"

Pressing the accelerator: the Education For All Fast Track Initiative (EFA/FTI)

Launched at the Kananaskis G8 Summit in 2002 as a global partnership between donor and developing countries, the FTI aims to accelerate progress towards the education MDGs.

The FTI helps countries to develop education plans and helps to raise the money necessary to fund them - either by endorsing plans so that donors can finance them directly or through the FTI Catalytic Fund.

The results are good – on average, FTI countries saw a 43 per cent increase in aid for basic education within one year of joining the Initiative.

Governments also significantly increased domestic investment in basic education in FTI countries.

The FTI has already provided direct funding to support educational plans in 20 countries and provided technical support to over 50 countries. Around 40 more countries will seek FTI endorsement over the next two years.

Within three years, under the FTI framework, up to 60 countries could have credible plans in place to achieve universal primary education by 2015. This would cover 67 million children who currently get no education.

At the Gleneagles G8 Summit in 2005, the G8 committed that every FTI country should have the resources necessary to implement their education strategies.

Must do better

In spite of the advances that have been made, and the enrolment of 75 million more children since 1990, much more needs to be done. The Fast Track Initiative, while delivering some successes, so far has only provided direct funding to 20 countries. Everyday more than 100 million primary school-aged children do not go to school.

"Every day more than 100 million primary school-aged children do not go to school"

Eight out of ten of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa in particular continues to fall a long way short of universal primary education, with only 62 per cent of children enrolled in primary education.

These children are still more likely to be girls than boys. The goal of getting the same number of girls as boys into school by 2005 has not been achieved. The target was missed in 94 countries and 55 million girls are still missing out on a basic education.

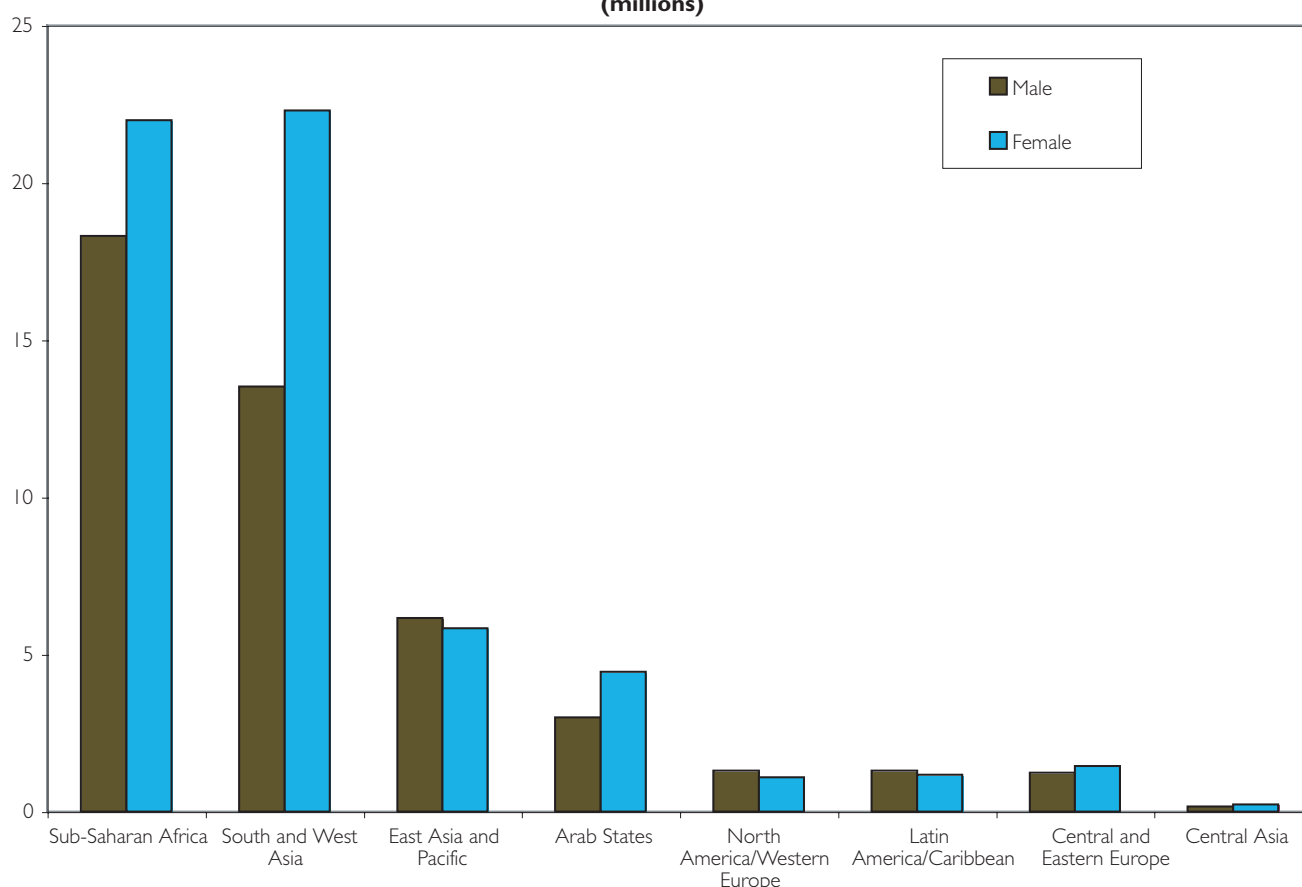
What is more, meeting the education MDGs in 2015 does not just mean getting 100 million more children into school. Growing populations mean that the need for extra primary school places will be much higher – perhaps by as much as a further 100 million. This underlines the scale of the renewed effort that is required.

Missing teachers

Teachers in developing countries often work in tremendously difficult conditions, teaching huge classes with few materials for low wages. Based on the UN recommended standard of one trained teacher for every 40 school aged children, there is currently a global shortage of nearly two million teachers.

As populations of children grow, and as HIV/AIDS and other diseases take their toll on teacher numbers, the need for new trained teachers will rise. UNESCO estimates that around 15-20 million new teachers will be needed before 2015.

Number of Out-of-School Children
(millions)



MEETING THE CHALLENGE

The Basics

The fundamental ingredients of a good education are the same the world over – a school to learn in, books to read, and teachers to learn from.

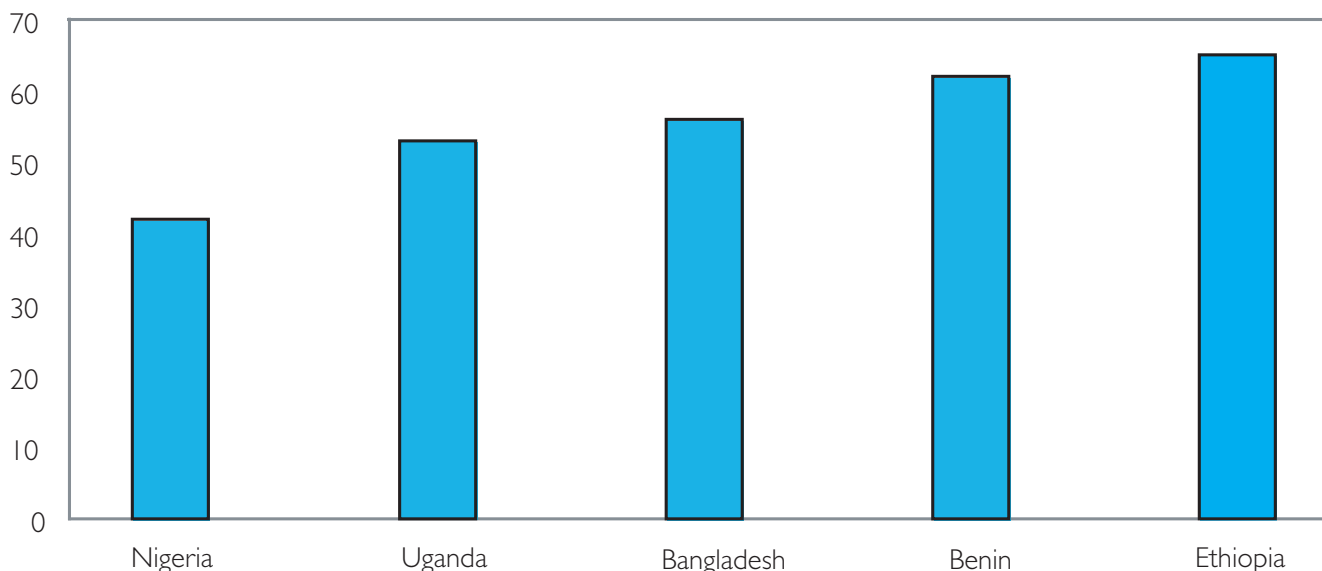
Many children in developing countries have to travel miles to reach their nearest school. When they arrive there is often a shortage of books and basic learning materials. This often discourages children from attending school regularly, and means they are denied the education they need. Governments and their partners need to build new schools and provide children with access to relevant books and learning materials. Countries such as Uganda and Kenya have made rapid progress in building schools, improving the supply of books by opening up local markets for publishing and bookselling and providing support to low cost community building programmes.

Even more than classrooms and books, the critical factor in children's learning is the quality of the

teaching they receive. Many teachers in poor countries do a remarkable job in trying circumstances – sometimes faced with classes of more than 100 pupils, not enough books and poor facilities. In some countries a lack of resources and teachers means that children have to go to school in shifts. To teach the children currently out of schools, and to reduce class sizes so that everyone gets a quality basic education, it is estimated that 15-20 million additional teachers will be needed. All developing countries will need to ensure that they are putting measures in place to increase the supply and improve the quality of teachers. They will also need to take steps to ensure that they provide adequate salaries and conditions to enable them to do their jobs well. The spectre of AIDs makes this particularly challenging. In 1999 alone, one million children in Africa lost their teacher to AIDs.

"Globally, 15-20 million additional teachers will be needed to achieve the universal primary education goals"

Primary Pupil-Teacher Ratio (2002/3)



Encouraging children to school

Getting the basics right of schools, books and teachers is not sufficient. Many poor households cannot afford to send their children to school. The most obvious reason is because governments charge user fees. It is estimated that out of 94 poor countries, 77 have some type of education user fee. But there are many other costs that families have to bear such as paying for school uniforms, books and meals. Often parents depend on their children to work – either paid, and sometimes dangerous, work outside the house, or unpaid domestic work such as water collection. For example, in Tanzania there was a 12 per cent increase in school attendance when water was fifteen minutes away from home rather than an hour. Coupled with the loss of vital income from their child's work, the real cost of education is very high for poor families.

"It is estimated that out of 94 poor countries, 77 have some type of education user fee"

Fees alone can often represent a sizeable proportion of the spending of poor households – from 29 per cent of the household spending among the poorest people in Nepal, to an average 16 per cent of household non-food expenditure in Zambia. Fees are a huge deterrent to schooling as illustrated by the dramatically increased enrolment in countries when they abolish fees – a 70 per cent rise in Uganda, for example, and a 51 per cent rise in Malawi.

"The major stumbling block for poor families who want to educate their children is school fees"

Governments charge fees not for any political reason but because they can't afford not to charge them. And while they can provide governments with vitally needed revenue to pay for teachers and books, their main impact is to reduce the overall cost of an education system by limiting the number of children who can afford to go to school. When fees are removed, often the lost revenue is dwarfed by the massive additional cost of educating the millions of children who suddenly flood into school.



But while abolishing fees brings large numbers of children into school, it may not keep them there. In both Uganda and Malawi, dramatic increases in enrolment led to a drop in the quality of education, with a consequent decline in average test scores. This in turn led to an increased proportion of students repeating school years.

To be successful, and to protect standards, the abolition of fees must be part of a comprehensive, long-term plan for universal primary enrolment. This has to include complementary measures such as teacher recruitment and training, and the provision of teaching and learning materials.

"To be successful, the abolition of school fees must be part of a comprehensive and long-term plan for universal primary enrolment"

What happens when school fees are abolished

- In 2003 Kenya abolished school fees and a significant increase in enrolment followed. In 2003 there were 1.2 million more children in school, with total enrolment climbing to 7.2 million in 2004 – 84 per cent of primary school age children.
- In 2001 Tanzania abolished school fees and enrolments in primary education increased by 50 per cent. Tanzania now spends over \$150 million more on schools and teachers than four years ago and is implementing a long-term plan for universal primary education. The country is on track to get every child into primary school in 2006 – nine years ahead of the target – and succeeded in achieving the goal of gender equity in 2005.
- In 1996, Uganda abolished fees for up to four children from each family (two of whom should be girls), and for all orphans. This led to an increase of more than 70 per cent in total enrolments – with 2 million more children in education. The share of education in the overall national budget rose from 22 per cent in 1995 to 31 per cent in 1999.
- In 1994, the newly elected government in Malawi abolished school fees resulting in a jump in enrolments of 50 per cent – an increase of more than 1 million children going to school. Regular public spending on education more than tripled. Spending on primary education increased over five-fold in real terms between 1990 and 1995.

Especially girls

Girls are particularly affected when households have insufficient incomes to send all of their children to school. If there is a limited amount of money available to educate children, families will often choose to send their sons, rather than their daughters to school. Girls are more likely to undertake unpaid domestic work in the household, and to be expected to look after younger brothers and sisters. There can also be particular concerns about sexual harassment which deter girls from attending school.

Given the virtuous developmental cycle created by the education of girls – their health, their future economic prospects, the fight against HIV and AIDS, the nutrition and subsequent welfare of their future families – it is vital to focus special efforts on getting girls into school. A wide variety of measures may be needed: from scholarship schemes; to providing adequate water and sanitation facilities; to ensuring protection against sexual harassment. But it is imperative that girls are given an education. Better sanitation facilities in Bangladesh and Malawi resulted in an 11 per cent increase in girls' enrolment in schools.

A comprehensive approach

Overall a comprehensive approach is required. It is not sufficient just to build schools or to abolish fees. Actions need to be taken across the board to improve infrastructure, address health issues, ensure there are enough teachers and encourage children into school. Particular measures are necessary for girls. Most importantly governments cannot implement a successful education strategy simply by making an upfront investment – what they require is money now to build new schools but also money in the future to pay for the ongoing costs of teacher training and salaries. It doesn't make sense to abolish fees or invest in the necessary infrastructure if there isn't a plan in place to cover the costs in the future. To meet the education MDGs means being able to cover the costs not just over one or two years, but over the full ten year period to 2015.

"To meet the education MDGs means being able to cover the costs not just over one or two years, but over the full ten year period to 2015"

Fragile States

About one-third of the world's poor people live in what are known as 'fragile states'. These are nations whose stability is at risk for one reason or another, and where there are limited or no government systems in place to deliver public services. Unless there is tangible progress in health and education in fragile states, the Millennium Development Goals cannot be reached. Over a third of the children who don't go to school live in such countries.

"Over a third of the children who don't go to school live in 'fragile' states"

Donor agencies are not doing enough to help, and when they do so, the flow of aid is often volatile, poorly co-ordinated, and focused on short-term humanitarian aid rather than long-term development. The education needs in fragile states are massive, and a significant push from international agencies is needed if the MDGs on education and gender equality are to be met.

Education remains a basic human right, whatever the circumstances, even during conflict. In fact if it

is maintained in the midst of conflict, it may provide an important mechanism for the registration of young children and protection against abuse. Focus on education within fragile states also builds the capacity of a society to recover from the conflict, increase its stability and deliver services to future citizens.

"Focusing on education within fragile states helps a society to recover from conflict, increase stability and deliver services to its citizens"

The challenge of funding education in fragile states is to find a suitable channel when governments don't have the capacity to fulfil their obligations. But education in fragile states can be funded in alternative ways, for example through the World Bank, the UN agencies or the EC and Regional Development Banks. It is also possible to support programmes with the educational departments of individual states and to provide direct grants or technical support to civil society and faith-based groups which enable them to deliver services.



COUNTING THE COST

Meeting the challenge will require significant financial resources. Building schools, employing teachers and abolishing user fees all cost money. Some of this can come from the countries themselves but a significant proportion will need to be funded from rich countries. The good news is that aid for basic education to poor countries has doubled since 2000 and stands at \$2.6 billion a year. But even so it remains far too low and – at 6 per cent – represents only a small fraction of the total aid that is given.

Various estimates have been made of the additional resources that are needed to ensure that by 2015 every child can receive a basic education. In 2002 the costs were estimated as between \$2.5 billion and \$6 billion a year. Taking into account the fact that costs will increase over time, and the need to make up for limited progress in the last five years, DFID estimate that by 2010 between \$7 billion and \$10 billion extra will be required each year.

"To achieve the education MDGs will require an extra \$10 billion a year in aid by 2010"

An extra \$10 billion a year would mean a very significant increase in the amount of aid that is spent on education. But it is only 20 per cent of the extra \$50 billion of aid that was committed in 2005 and is less than 10 per cent of expected total aid flows by

2010. For each person in the rich countries of the world it is only \$10 a year – or two pence a day for every person.

"For two pence a day each we could finance the schooling of every child denied it today and give girls the same chances as boys"

Long-term finance

For developing countries, just as important as the extra finance, is the need for certainty about future flows of money. Only with this certainty can a comprehensive education strategy be implemented. Historically, aid to poor countries has varied significantly from year to year making it impossible to make long-term plans. Providing a basic quality education for children requires not just upfront investment in schools and teacher training but ongoing finance to pay teachers' salaries and school materials. No prudent government will make the necessary investments or abolish user fees without some assurance that they will be able to pay the recurrent costs of maintaining and servicing a basic primary education system.

"No prudent government will invest in training additional teachers unless there's an assurance of long-term financing to meet salaries"



ACTION PLANS

Keeping promises

So donor countries must provide the necessary finance and should do so not just for one or two years but over the full period to 2015. They should agree to provide the money to support countries' education plans over a ten year period.

"Donors need to provide financing over a ten year period to support countries' education plans"

Providing this money doesn't mean making new commitments or increasing aid budgets further than already planned. It simply means delivering on commitments that have already been made, and using the fact that targets for aid budgets have been set to 2010 and 2015, to allocate money in advance to support education plans. All donors need to do is keep to the promises that have already been made.

"Donors need to keep the promises they have already made"

Planning to meet the MDGs

To make this happen the plans need to be in place for countries to meet the MDGs. The Fast Track Initiative should be scaled up, more countries should be encouraged to join and the plans prepared under it should be extended to cover the full period up to 2015. And countries for which the FTI is not appropriate also need to be given assurances. The aim should be that all developing countries have ten-year plans to meet the education MDGs. So that all children get the opportunity of a quality basic education.

"The aim should be that all developing countries have ten-year plans to meet education MDGs"

This is not about asking governments to throw away their existing plans. Instead – and some countries are already doing this – they should use existing plans, scale them up and make them more ambitious with a realistic assessment of what needs to be done

to reach the 2015 goals. The plans should cover not just two or three years but the full period up to 2015.

The cycle needs to be broken whereby countries have scaled back their plans due to concerns about the availability of financing and donors have not provided the financing because the ambitious plans have not existed. For example, without the assurances of long-term financing some countries have not been prepared to invest in training additional teachers. And yet without this investment, there has not been the demand on donors to provide the sort of finance necessary.

"The cycle needs to be broken whereby countries have scaled back their plans due to concerns about the availability of financing and donors haven't provided the financing because the ambitious plans have not existed"

A step change is required so that the financing commitments made in 2005 are transformed into concrete actions that help developing countries achieve the MDGs. The international community has committed to help developing countries achieve the MDGs, and developing countries should now plan for how they are going to achieve them.

It will take a joint effort by all involved to put this into practice. Developing country governments and donors will need to work together to produce plans that reflect country priorities and other international institutions – such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – will need to ensure that their policies support this effort and give sufficient priority to the importance of ongoing expenditure on key public services.

The best investment for the future of the world

There is no more valuable investment in the development of a country than education. The returns are multiple, wide-ranging and long-running. So far progress has been slower than it should have been and action must now follow to speed up the education of millions – and the development of their countries.

"There is no more valuable investment in the development of a country than an investment in education – the returns are multiple, wide-ranging and long-running"

The Commonwealth Education Fund

The Commonwealth Education Fund, launched in 2002, aims to increase access to primary education in Commonwealth developing countries and has focussed attention on the vital role of civil society - groups such as trades unions, faith communities and community associations - in helping achieve the MDGs. Its strength lies in its role as a catalyst – galvanising civil society organisations to take an active part.



GLOBAL ASSEMBLY

In the modern globalised economy, education develops knowledge about the world and forges links between countries and continents.

With an increasingly mobile and globalised labour force, knowledge about other cultures and countries is ever more valuable. An effective way of strengthening these links is by twinning schools in the developed world with schools in developing countries.

Global Schools Partnership

One such example is the Global Schools Partnership, which includes the British Council, Cambridge Education Foundation, UK One World Linking Association and Voluntary Service Overseas. The

partnership is developing a programme to encourage students, as part of the school curriculum, to learn more about their counterparts in the developing world. This is funded by the UK Government's Department For International Development (DFID).

UK schools are encouraged to develop innovative and sustainable partnerships with schools in developing countries. Those involved will have access to grants to fund visits to each others' schools and to develop shared activities.

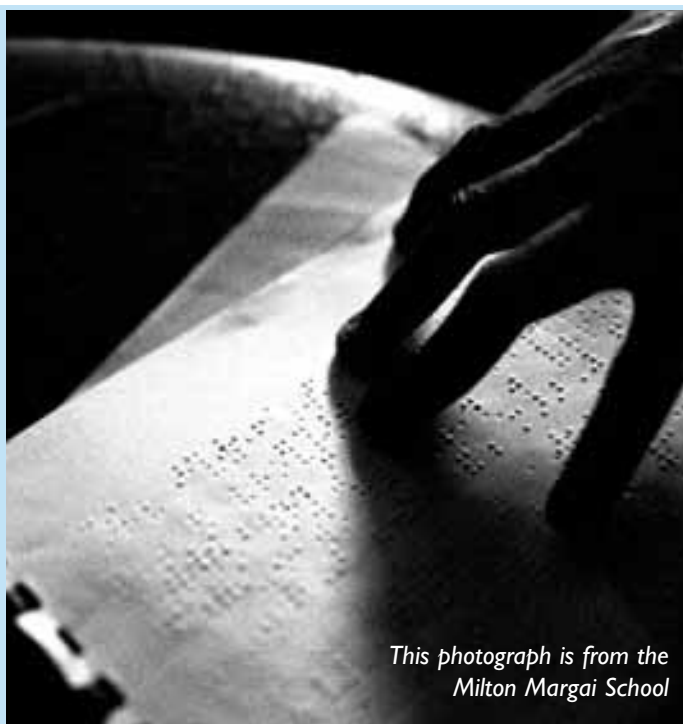
"An effective way of strengthening global links is by twinning schools in the developed world with schools in developing countries"



Partnerships in action

The Anderson High School in Shetland is partnered with the South Peninsula High School in South Africa. Shared modules between senior South African history students and Shetland modern studies students have explored the theme of 'Sharing Pasts: Shaping Futures'. And discussions between Year Two biology students on videos of science experiments, have highlighted the importance of avoiding HIV infection as part of healthy living.

Dorton House School for the Blind in Sevenoaks, is partnered with the Milton Margai School for the Blind in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Pupils and staff in both schools are working to broaden the experiences of blind and partially sighted young people. Students have been exchanging Braille letters and some have formed lasting friendships. The schools are developing a joint scheme of work on Conflict Resolution, starting with a discussion



This photograph is from the Milton Margai School

on the meaning of conflict at a personal level, and broadening out to encompass conflict within the family, community and recent civil or international conflict.



To find out more about the Global Schools Partnership go to:

www.britishcouncil.org/globalschools

For further information about establishing a school-to-school link, see:

www.globalgateway.org

www.bbc.co.uk/worldclass

To get involved in this year's UK Global Campaign for Education's 'My Friend Needs a Teacher' activities, see:

www.sendmyfriend.org

For further information about Comic Relief's activities with schools, see:

www.comicrelief.com/teachandlearn

For information about Action Aid's school work see:

www.actionaid.org.uk/schools

And to find out more about the work Oxfam does with schools see:

www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet

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