



UNITED NATIONS

WE CAN END POVERTY

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND BEYOND 2015

FACT SHEET

GOAL 2

Achieve universal primary education

TARGET

Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

FAST FACTS

- ✧ Literacy rates among adults and youths are on the rise and gender gaps are narrowing.
- ✧ New national data show the number of out-of-school children dropped from 102 million to 57 million from 2000 to 2011.
- ✧ Primary education enrolment in developing countries reached 90 per cent in 2010.

WHERE WE STAND

Developing regions have made impressive strides in expanding access to primary education. From 2000 to 2011, the enrolment rate grew from 83 per cent to 90 per cent, and the number of out-of-school children dropped by almost half from 102 million in 2000 to 57 million in 2011. Achieving gains in education will have an impact on all MDGs.

Even after 4 years of primary schooling, as many as 250 million children cannot read and write, worldwide. Without these fundamental skills, the basis for all future learning is severely undermined. Going to school is not enough; improving learning is critical.

Early school leaving remains persistent. Among the 137 million children who entered first grade in 2011, 34 million are likely to leave before reaching the last grade of primary school. This translates into an early school leaving rate of 25 per cent—the same level as in 2000.

Literacy rates are rising. The greatest rises in youth literacy rates between 1990 and 2011 were in Northern Africa (from 68 to 89 per cent) and Southern Asia (from 60 to 81 per cent), where gender gaps narrowed.

Poverty, gender and place of residence are key factors keeping children out of school. Children and adolescents from the poorest households are three times more likely to be out of school than children from the richest households. Even in the richest households, girls are more likely to be out

of school than boys. Globally, 123 million youth aged 15 to 24 lack basic reading and writing skills; 61 per cent of them are young women.

Progress in reducing the number of out-of-school children has come to a standstill as international aid to basic education in 2011 fell for the first time since 2002. This stalled progress, combined with reductions in aid, has put the chances of meeting the 2015 target at risk.

WHAT'S WORKING?

Afghanistan, Bangladesh: [Let Us Learn initiative](#) uses innovative approaches to address barriers to education for the most excluded children.

Under this programme, UNICEF enrolled 3,917 five-year-olds (60 per cent girls) in school readiness programmes, including 153 disabled children from the most disadvantaged region of rural Bangladesh. In Afghanistan 9,339 children and youth, over 84 per cent of whom were girls, participated in community-based accelerated learning programmes, exceeding the initial target of 8,600 students. In addition, of the 286 humanitarian crises of varying scales that UNICEF and partners responded to in 79 countries in 2012, UNICEF helped some 3.56 million children, and adolescents, gain access to formal and non-formal basic education.

Cambodia: Schools connect remote villages.

Children in Tuol Pongro village can now continue their education after the Inter-Commune Cooperation project, with [UNDP](#) support, built a local secondary school. The project is now

reaching 54 of Cambodia's 171 districts, prompting the government to consider integrating it into national policies for local governance. Since 2006, more than 260 projects have built roads, bridges and schools in remote communities.

Brazil: Millions step out of poverty into school. A conditional cash transfer programme is making it easier for parents to send their children to school. Since 2003, [Bolsa Família](#) has lifted 50 million people out of poverty in 5,500 communities, with steady reports of improved school attendance and health conditions.

Guatemala: Potential unleashed among indigenous girls. Since 2004, [Abriendo Oportunidades](#) has reached more than 4,000 girls from 45 Mayan communities in poor, isolated areas. The project is improving opportunities for girls, who often face a future of limited schooling and early marriage. Girls are building their self-esteem and literacy, staying in school and breaking the cycle of poverty.

United Republic of Tanzania: Maasai girls' school grants scholarships for those at risk. Around 140 million girls are living with the consequences of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), a practice often linked to early marriage and the end of a girl's education. [UN Women](#) and the **Maasai Women Development Organisation** (MWEDO) are providing scholarships to girls, many of whom would otherwise have been circumcised and/or married.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Commitments are growing for the Secretary-General's [Global Education First initiative](#) (GEFI). For the launch of the initiative in 2012, dozens of companies and private foundations made pledges mobilizing over \$1.5 billion to ensure all children have a quality, relevant and transformative education.

GEFI efforts include ING/UNICEF's [Chances for Children](#) programme that aims to provide 1 million with access to quality education and improved living conditions by 2015 and Microsoft/Intel/Millennium@EDU's Education Solution Packs that aim to reach 15 million children in 150 countries. Member State Champions Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, China, Croatia, Denmark, Guyana, South Africa and Tunisia continue to galvanize support for education.

The [Youth Advocacy Group](#) of GEFI drafted "[The Youth Resolution: The Education We Want](#)", which was presented in July 2013 at the UN Youth Assembly. During the event, education activist Malala Yousafzai said, "We want schools and education for every child's bright future."

UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank are joined by many partners and stakeholders engaged in achieving [Education for All](#) goals around the world.

The [Global Out-of-School Children Initiative](#), launched by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2010 to accelerate efforts towards universal primary education by 2015, now operates in 26 countries.

The [Global Partnership for Education](#) (GPE) has helped more than 19 million children go to school since 2003. Leading donors at the first-ever GPE Pledging Conference in 2011 promised an initial \$1.5 billion over the next three years. The pooled education fund aims to secure predictable funding to put 25 million more children in school by 2014.

The [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Cluster for Education in Emergencies](#), which is co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children, helps to coordinate the efforts of UN agencies, government partners, and national and international non-governmental organizations in communities affected by conflict and natural disasters. The cluster coordinates efforts to restore schooling for children and rebuild education systems, helping countries affected by emergencies to return to normal.

The UN [Girls' Education Initiative](#) (UNGEI) actively promotes girls' education and gender equality. It works with civil society and governments in select countries to support key legislative and policy changes that are making education more accessible to girls. In Nepal, for example, the initiative has helped double the number of girls receiving scholarships, while in Uganda it has resulted in a new policy to help get pregnant girls and child mothers into school.

To address the educational and food needs of some of the 66 million children who go to school hungry every day, the [World Bank](#) and the [World Food Programme](#) (WFP) are working with governments to shape school feeding programmes. WFP reaches 22 million children in 60 countries, including Bangladesh, where more than 1 million school children snack on micronutrient-fortified biscuits every day.

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Education Cluster Lead of the [MDG Advocates](#), launched a global initiative to deliver quality primary education to millions of children. The [Educate a Child](#) initiative partners with the world's most expert organizations and individuals, to bring high-quality learning to children with no access to formal schooling. Launched in Doha, Qatar, at the World Innovation Summit for Education in November 2012, the initiative plans to invest \$152.6 million in 17 countries over the next three to seven years.

Sources: [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013](#), *United Nations*; *Bolsa Família*, [Global Out-of-School Children Initiative](#), [Global Partnership for Education](#), [Global Education First Initiative](#), *UNDP (Bangladesh)*, *UNGEI*, *UNESCO (Education for All, Policy Paper 09, June 2013)*, *EFA Global Monitoring Report/UNESCO Institute for Statistics*, [Funds-In-Trust](#), *UNICEF (State of the World's Children 2013, FGM/C press release)*, [UN Women](#), [World Bank/WFP](#).



For more information, please contact mediainfo@un.org.

Issued by the UN Department of Public Information, September 2013

facebook.com/wecanendpoverty | twitter: @wecanendpoverty

www.un.org/millenniumgoals