



## GOAL 2 Achieve Universal Primary Education

FACT SHEET

### TARGET

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

### Quick Facts

- \* Enrolment in primary education in developing regions reached 89 per cent in 2008, up from 83 per cent in 2000.
- \* The current pace of progress is insufficient to meet the target by 2015.
- \* About 69 million school-age children are not in school. Almost half of them (31 million) are in sub-Saharan Africa, and more than a quarter (18 million) are in Southern Asia.

### WHERE DO WE STAND?

**Despite great strides in many countries, the target is unlikely to be met.** Enrolment in primary education has continued to rise, reaching 89 per cent in the developing world in 2008. Between 1999 and 2008, enrolment increased by 18 percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa, and by 11 and 8 percentage points in Southern Asia and Northern Africa, respectively.

But the pace of progress is insufficient to ensure that, by 2015, all girls and boys complete a full course of primary schooling. To achieve the goal by the target date, all children at official entry age for primary schooling would have had to be attending classes by 2009. Instead, in half of the sub-Saharan African countries with available data, at least one in four children of enrolment age was not attending school in 2008.

About 69 million school-age children were not going to school in 2008, down from 106 million children in 1999. Almost three-quarters of children out of school are in sub-Saharan Africa (31 million) or Southern Asia (18 million).

**Drop-out rates in sub-Saharan Africa remain high.** Achieving universal primary education requires more than full enrolment. It also means ensuring that children continue to attend classes. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 30 per cent of primary school students drop out before reaching a final grade.

Moreover, providing enough teachers and classrooms is vital in order to meet demand, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that double the current number of teachers would be needed in sub-Saharan Africa in order to meet the primary education target by 2015.

### WHAT HAS WORKED?

- **Abolishing school fees in Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Nepal and Tanzania:** The abolition of school fees at primary school level has led to a surge in enrolment in a number of countries. In Tanzania, the enrolment ratio had doubled to 99.6 per cent by 2008, compared to 1999 rates. In Ethiopia, net enrolment was 79 per cent in 2008, an increase of 95 per cent since 2000. But the surge in enrolment in developing regions has brought a new set of challenges in providing enough teachers and classrooms.
- **Investing in teaching infrastructure and resources in Ghana, Nepal and Tanzania:** Ghana has recruited retirees and volunteers to meet teacher demand. Additional funds have also been allocated for the provision of temporary classrooms and teaching materials. In Nepal, investment has ensured that more than 90 per cent of students live within 30 minutes of their local school. And Tanzania has embarked on an ambitious programme of education reform, building 54,000 classrooms between 2002 and 2006, as well as hiring 18,000 additional teachers.

- **Promoting education for girls in Botswana, Egypt and Malawi:** Egypt's Girls' Education Initiative and Food-for-Education (FFE) programme encourage girls to attend school by providing free education and by constructing and promoting 'girl-friendly schools'. By 2008, more than 1,000 schools were built and almost 28,000 students enrolled. In conjunction the FFE programme provides school meals to 84,000 children in poor and vulnerable communities. Botswana has reduced female drop-out rates by half by implementing readmission policies. Malawi has been promoting girls' education in grades 1-4 by providing learning materials.
- **Expanding access to remote and rural areas in Bolivia and Mongolia:** Mongolia has introduced mobile schools ('tent schools') to reach children who would otherwise not have regular access to primary education. One hundred mobile schools have been providing educational services across 21 provinces. In Bolivia, a bilingual education programme has been introduced for three of the most widely used indigenous languages. It covered 11 per cent of primary schools in 2002, expanding access to education for indigenous children in remote areas.

**school.** To encourage families to let the girls complete schooling, girls receive a female sheep upon completing the programme. In Malawi, UNFPA is working with Youth Councils to repeal a law allowing girls as young as 16 to be married and to support campaigns to keep girls in school.

- The World Food Programme (WFP) provides **school meals**, which act as a strong incentive for parents to send their children to school and help to build the nutritional foundation that is essential for a child's future intellectual development and physical well-being. The programme also encourages parents to send more girls to attend classes.
- The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) partnered with UNESCO to address problems affecting **education in politically unstable environments**. ESCWA was responsible for infrastructure, while UNESCO took care of training and e-learning. The initiative facilitated capacity building sessions on education strategy, instructor training and the creation of courses for teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speaking Iraqi schoolchildren.

## WHAT IS THE UN DOING?

- The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supports countries in building quality primary education systems that reach all children, for instance through the **Basic Education in Africa Programme**, advocating for countries to adopt legal frameworks guaranteeing 8-10 years of uninterrupted basic education.
- In Ethiopia, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) supports a programme called "Berhane Hewan" which advocates putting an end to child marriages and **keeping girls in**

**Sources:** *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, United Nations; UN MDG Database ([mdgs.un.org](http://mdgs.un.org)); MDG Monitor Website ([www.mdgmonitor.org](http://www.mdgmonitor.org)); *What Will It Take to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals? - An International Assessment 2010*, UN Development Programme (UNDP); UN Girls' Education Initiative, UNICEF ([www.ungei.org](http://www.ungei.org)); UN Population Fund (UNFPA); UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); World Food Programme (WFP); UN Regional Commissions, New York Office.

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