



## FACT SHEET

### GOAL 2: Achieve universal primary education

#### QUICK FACTS

- » Globally, 570 million children are enrolled in school. The number of children of primary school age who were out of school fell from 103 million in 1999 to 73 million in 2006. In that year, primary school enrolment in developing countries reached 88 per cent on average, up from 83 per cent in 2000.
- » In sub-Saharan Africa, the net primary school enrolment ratio has only recently reached 71 per cent, even after a significant jump in enrolment that began in 2000. Around 38 million children of primary school age in this region are still out of school.
- » In Southern Asia, the enrolment ratio has climbed above 90 per cent, yet more than 18 million children of primary school age are not enrolled.

skills and complete primary school on time. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, substantially more children of secondary school age attend primary rather than secondary school.

For children to reach their full potential and countries to develop, the gains made in universal primary education must be replicated at the secondary level. At present, less than 55 per cent of children of the appropriate age in developing countries attend secondary school. In Oceania, for instance, almost two thirds of children of secondary school age are out of school. In sub-Saharan Africa, only a quarter of children of secondary school age are in secondary school

Although aid directed to basic education for low-income countries increased from \$1.6 billion in 1999 to \$5 billion in 2006, it is still well below the estimated \$11 billion in aid required annually to reach universal primary education by 2015.

#### WHAT HAS WORKED

1. **Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda** have abolished school fees, which has led to a surge in enrolment: in **Ghana**, public school enrolment in the most deprived districts and nationwide soared from 4.2 million to 5.4 million between 2004 and 2005. In Kenya, enrolment of primary school children increased dramatically, with 1.2 million additional pupils in 2003 alone; by 2004, the number had climbed to 7.2 million, of which 84 per cent were of primary school age. But the surge in enrolment after abolition of fees has brought huge challenges in providing sufficient school buildings and teachers.
2. In **Haiti**, collaboration between the Government, UN agencies and NGOs has changed the lives of 4,300 of the country's poorest children, thanks to an education project that provided school materials and supplies to 33 schools. Most of the children lived in the crowded slum Cité Soleil, an area where violence and insecurity are a daily reality. This project promoted the right to education, in particular by encouraging and supporting school attendance and teacher training. It was funded by a donation of \$70,000 from soccer stars Ronaldo and Zidane, both Goodwill Ambassadors for the UN Development Programme.

#### WHERE DO WE STAND?

In all regions, inequalities in access to education continue to pose major barriers to fully attaining the MDG 2 target of ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, can complete a full course of primary schooling. (See also fact sheet on Goal 3 for more information on girls' schooling.)

Projections suggest that without further acceleration, 58 out of the 86 countries that have not yet reached universal primary education will not achieve it by 2015. In all regions, inequalities in access to education are a major barrier to reaching Goal 2. The children most likely to drop out of school or to not attend at all are often girls and those from poorer households or living in rural areas. For example, recent estimations show that 25 per cent of children of primary school age in rural areas of the developing world are out of school, compared with 16 per cent of children in the same age group living in cities.

Achieving universal primary education means more than full enrolment. It also encompasses quality education, meaning that all children who attend school regularly learn basic literacy and numeracy

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- » Ensure sustainable education systems, delivering quality services and retaining professional staff.
- » Ensure universal coverage in primary education, including for poor and underserved populations in rural areas and urban slums.
- » Raise domestic spending on education to 15 to 20 per cent of national budgets, while giving priority to basic education.
- » Provide \$11 billion in aid needed annually to achieve universal primary education by 2015.
- » Integrate education as a key part of humanitarian responses to post-conflict and emergency situations.
- » Eliminate school fees, particularly for low-income families.
- » Provide cash transfers to poor families conditional on their children's, especially girls', enrolment or attendance in school.
- » Provide children with transportation to and from school when needed.
- » Offer free meals and basic health services at school to improve children's health, nutrition and cognitive development.

- » Expand pre-primary school educational programmes.
- » Train more teachers and effectively retrain and motivate those in the profession.
- » Ensure adequate teaching materials and distribute textbooks free of charge.
- » Improve aid effectiveness for education by strengthening the capacity of national education systems to improve access to quality education for all.

Sources: *Committing to action: Achieving the MDGs*, Background note by the Secretary-General for the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations, New York, 25 September 2008; *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*, United Nations; MDG Monitor Website <http://www.mdgmonitor.org>, UNDP.

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