

## Education for All: Investing Wisely in our Future

We live in a time of immense challenges. A major economic downturn is taking hold, threatening to reverse many fragile development gains made during the early part of the 21st century. Poor countries face an economic contraction of between \$270-\$700 billion as commodity prices decline, global trade collapses, trade finance and private capital flows dry up, and remittances drop. Combined with the effect of high food and fuel prices during 2008, these factors will force an additional 200 million people into poverty.

Of 43 countries listed by the World Bank at risk of 'high exposure' to the crisis, 29 are already facing serious challenges in achieving the Education for All goals.

Today, 75 million children, more than half of them girls, are out of primary school, and 776 million adults are illiterate. Additionally, 226 million adolescents will never attend secondary school.

There remains a dramatic global divide not only in access to education, but also in learning achievement. International learning assessments reveal a major divide between richer and poorer countries. Two-thirds of all children arrive at primary school under-nourished or with a disability that will likely impair their education achievement throughout their lives. Unless urgent action is taken, tentative progress made in the field of education over the last 8 years will be undermined and another generation of children will not have the tools they need to participate fully in the global society.

### Population of Young People Out-of-School by Region



There are many barriers that affect children's right to education. Some of the most common barriers are school fees, child labor, discrimination, conflict, distance to schools, poor school quality, lack of teachers, school-related violence, and health crises such as HIV/AIDS.

## **Education saves lives.**

Education provides one of the smartest, most cost-effective, and most equitable ways forward out of this crisis.

- A child born to an educated mother is more than twice as likely to survive to the age of five.
- Educated people are healthier people. HIV/AIDS infection rates are halved among young people who finish primary school. If every girl and boy received a complete primary education, at least 7 million new cases of HIV could be prevented in a decade.
- Education combats hunger. Gains in women's education made the most significant difference in reducing malnutrition, out-performing a simple increase in the availability of food. A 63-country study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) found that more productive farming as a result of female education accounted for 43 per cent of the decline in malnutrition achieved between 1970 and 1995.

## **The economic case for education.**

Good quality education equips people with the knowledge and skills they need to gain employment and increase their incomes, which can have a real impact on overall poverty and growth at a national level. Studies have consistently shown that more schooling is associated with improved economic performance at both an individual and societal level. A person's earnings increase by 10% for each year of schooling they receive, translating to a 1% annual increase in GDP if good quality education is offered to the entire population. Not only that, it can lead to a more equitable development for societies striving to ensure that benefits accrue to everyone. Failing to offer girls the same educational opportunity as boys costs developing countries almost \$100 billion each year. That's \$1 trillion per decade in forgone earnings and unnecessary costs. All of this builds the compelling case that education is one of the soundest investments any country can make.

## **Aid to education.**

- The estimated financing gap to achieve Education for All, according to the UK's Department for International Development, is \$16 billion annually—which would ensure that countries can provide universal basic education, early childhood development and literacy programming.
- While the US has most recently provided \$700 million in Fiscal Year 2009 in aid to education; the US estimated "fair share" is \$3.5-\$5 billion.
- The two richest countries in the world, the United States and Japan, provide less than 10% of their relative share of funding for achieving universal primary education.
- Currently, for every dollar of national income, rich countries give only about one-quarter of a cent in aid. Basic education gets about 3% of this amount.
- The UNESCO Global Monitoring Report's most recent analysis of data from 2007 shows that total aid to education is stagnating—but aid for basic education suffered quite a substantial decline.

The United States has an unprecedented opportunity to expand and improve aid to education by contributing \$2 billion to a multilateral Global Fund for Education—and work closely with international partners, other donors and international civil society to achieve Education for All.

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