



2. Achieve universal primary education

A child who is educated is more empowered to escape from poverty. The achievement of MDG 2 depends on national investments in education that are used wisely and efficiently. This includes the provision of skilled and motivated teachers, adequate teaching materials and school infrastructure, as advocated in the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All (EFA) [44]. The right to compulsory schooling up to the minimum age for employment, as reinforced by ILO Convention No. 138 [8] on child labour, is essential.

Education through decent work

Through the Decent Work Agenda, the ILO contributes to the achievement of MDG 2 by promoting universally accessible, free and compulsory education; supporting rights of teachers and conditions that are conducive to the provision of quality education; working to eliminate child labour; promoting decent employment and training for people of working age; and encouraging child benefits and other social security measures for poor families. A gender mainstreaming approach focuses on the girl child.

Wanted: Skilled and motivated teachers

One of the most important investments for the realisation of MDG 2 is in **skilled and motivated teachers**. The extent to which teachers' voices are heard often determines the success or failure of education reforms. Teacher to pupil ratios and teachers' skill levels, motivation and sense of professional responsibility are among the major factors influencing repetition rates, student performance and other quality indicators. Yet there is a decline in teachers' working conditions and salaries and a consequent global shortage of teachers.

The ILO [23 and 45] contributes to EFA by –

- promoting the **ILO/UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers**, which contains guidelines on educational policy, curricula, teacher training, employment and working conditions and teachers' participation in decision-making [46];
- developing skills training for teachers;
- upholding the rights of teachers to organize and bargain collectively [47];
- researching, promoting and sharing information on standards and best practices.

Eliminating child labour

A second key factor contributing to MDG 2 is the **elimination of child labour**, a major impediment to universal primary and other education. Children who work full time cannot attend school. The educational achievement of children who combine work and school often suffers, and they often tend to drop out of school to take up full-time work.

The ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) [31] is promoting EFA in a decent work context through country-based programmes, technical cooperation and policy dialogue by –

- raising general awareness of child labour and education among communities, parents and policymakers;
- removing the cost of and physical barriers to schooling;
- promoting institutional arrangements in the formal school system to enrol working children and children at risk;
- promoting reintegration into formal schools and vocational training for children removed from hazardous work;
- training teachers on child labour issues in cooperation with the two major international teachers' organizations – Education International (EI) and the World Confederation of Teachers (WCT);
- advocating increased investment in basic education, harmonized legislation on child labour and education, and political commitment.

Target 3

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

Indicators

6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education
7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 [primary completion rate]
8. Literacy rate of 15-24-year-olds

Education for All (EFA) [44] –

World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990:

Delegates from 155 countries agreed to universalize primary education and reduce illiteracy by 2000.

World Education Forum, Senegal, 2000:

delegates from 164 countries reaffirmed their commitment to EFA by adopting the **Dakar Framework for Action** – a practical strategy for achieving EFA.

In developing countries, one child in three does not complete five years of schooling. When they do so, the quality of their education often remains low. According to UNESCO, there were **104 million children of primary-school age not enrolled in school in 2000; the majority were girls.**



Child labour and education: A clear link

The term “child labour” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity – work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children. It can deprive them of the opportunity to attend school, oblige them to leave school prematurely, or detrimentally combine school attendance with work. History has shown how instrumental education has been in eradicating child labour, building a skilled workforce and promoting development. MDG 2 cannot be achieved without the progressive elimination of child labour.

The ILO works with partners to secure broad support for EFA and the progressive elimination of child labour, such as through the Global Campaign for Education [49] and the UN Girl’s Education Initiative [51].

Working children often belong to groups discriminated against in terms of ethnicity and culture: the ILO addresses exclusion mechanisms affecting the education of indigenous and tribal peoples [32]. The fight against trafficking in children also contributes to MDG 2.

Education, decent work and increased family income

Family income and the availability of decent work for adults are determining factors in parents’ decision to send their child to school. **Creating decent work for parents** is the third key factor in the ILO’s contribution to the achievement of MDG 2: the lower their level of adult educational attainment, the smaller their chance of a decent income and sending their children to school.

The ILO supports policy development that promotes –

- access to literacy for vulnerable and socially excluded parents;
- skills development, such as technical and vocational training and basic business skills training, in combination with literacy [38];
- enterprise development and enhanced access to credit;
- the extension of social security and social protection measures as part of poverty reduction strategies. Examples are the ILO Global Campaign on Social Security and Coverage for All [26] and the ILO/UNCTAD Minimum Income for School Attendance (MISA) Initiative [52].

Relevant international labour standards [8]

- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138): minimum age for admission to employment or work shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years (or, where specified, 14 years).
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182): calls for immediate action for the effective elimination of the worst forms of child labour, taking into account the importance of free basic education.
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169): includes provisions on development, including education, and protection of rights.
- Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102).

ILO publications relevant to MDG 2

- *Combating child labour through education*. ILO, 2004.
- *Child labour, school attendance and academic performance: A review*. ILO, 2003.
- *Indigenous and tribal children: assessing child labour and education challenges*. ILO, 2003.
- *Cost and benefits of education to replace child labour*. ILO, 2003.
- *A Future without child labour*. ILO, 2002.
- *Good practices: Gender mainstreaming in actions against child labour*. ILO, 2002.
- *An evaluation methodology for minimum income programmes in Brazil*. ILO, 2002.
- “How IPEC works with teachers”, *Fact Sheet*, ILO, 2001.
- *Minimum Income for School Attendance (MISA) Initiative*, ILO/UNCTAD, Advisory Group. 2001.
- *Assessing local minimum income programmes in Brazil*. ILO, 2001.
- *The appeal of minimum income programmes in Latin America*, ILO, 1999.

A future without child labour (ILO, 2002) estimates that there are nearly **246 million child labourers worldwide**. Almost 180 million of these are involved in the worst forms of child labour.

One in four adults (879 million) in developing countries was illiterate in 1998. Of these 64 per cent were women.

All ILO member States have an obligation to respect, promote and realize the principles of freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, and the effective abolition of child labour, Forced labour and discrimination – [ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#) (1998).

Blue text and numbers in brackets [..] are linked to websites. See attached list of reference materials.
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