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Target 2.A

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

Indicators

2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education

2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary education

2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men

Work must be intensified to get all children into school, especially in rural communities, to keep them there and eliminate inequalities in education based on gender and ethnicity, and among linguistic and religious minorities. The target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 has already been missed.

– MDG report 2009 and 2010.

2. Achieve universal primary education

A child who is educated is more able to escape from poverty. The achievement of MDG 2 depends on increased national investments in education that are used wisely and efficiently. This includes the provision of skilled and motivated teachers, and adequate teaching materials and school infrastructure, as advocated in the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All (EFA). Compulsory schooling up to the minimum age for employment, as stipulated in the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), is essential.

For the goal of universal primary education to be reached by 2015, governments will need not only to accelerate efforts to achieve EFA, but also to step up efforts to eliminate child labour, as the two are inextricably linked. Education is a key element in the prevention of child labour, while child labour is one of the main obstacles to EFA: children who are working full time cannot go to school.

Education through decent work

The ILO is promoting EFA in the context of its decent work campaign. It contributes to the achievement of MDG 2 by promoting universally accessible, free and compulsory education and combating child labour. The ILO promotes the status of teachers, supporting efforts to uphold their individual rights and their important professional responsibilities, the rights of their organizations as part of social dialogue in education and the development of conditions that are conducive to the provision of quality education. Poverty is the root cause of both child labour and education deficits. The Decent Work Agenda supports pro-poor growth by promoting decent employment and training for people of working age; and encouraging child benefits and other social security measures for poor families. A focus on the girl child is necessary to combat gender inequality.

Progress towards MDG 2

The 2010 Education for all Global Monitoring Report warns that without renewed commitment, MDG 2 may not be reached by 2015.

- Since 1999 the number of children out of school has dropped by 33 million worldwide and the gender gap in primary education is narrowing in many countries
- In 2010 some 72 million children are still out of school, of which around 54 per cent are girls, and provision for early childhood education, lower secondary school, vocational education and skills training remains poor and uneven in many developing countries
- If current trends continue, there will still be 56 million children out of school by 2015
- There is a worldwide shortage of teachers: some 1.9 million new teacher posts are required to ensure universal primary education by 2015 in the poorest countries alone.

Failure to achieve MDG2 would have serious effects for individuals, who as a result fail to reach their full potential, and for their societies, which cannot then benefit from a skilled and educated workforce. The impact of the financial and economic crisis underscores the need to maintain and upscale investment in education in order to protect the hard-won gains made since 2000.

Achieving universal primary education will help achieve other MDGs. Education increases the probability of obtaining decent employment (MDG 1) and has a positive effect on HIV prevention (MDG 6). An increase in the proportion of mothers with primary or secondary education is associated with a reduction in the child mortality rate (MDG 4), and educated parents tend to have better nourished children (MDG 1). Parental literacy also plays a role in whether children attend school.

Education For All (EFA)

World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990:
Delegates from 155 countries agreed to universalize primary education and reduce illiteracy by 2000.

World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000: delegates from 164 countries affirmed their commitment to the Dakar Framework for Action – a practical strategy for achieving EFA.

The 2005 World Summit affirmed its “commitment to support developing country efforts to ensure that all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality, to eliminate gender inequality and imbalance and to renew efforts to improve girls’ education”.

What the ILO does

■ **Wanted: Skilled and motivated teachers**

To achieve MDG 2 it is essential to invest 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 contributes to EFA by:

- researching, sharing information, monitoring and promoting international labour standards and the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers, which contains guidelines on educational policy, curricula, teacher training, employment and working conditions, and participation in decision-making
- promoting good practices in teacher education, professional development, careers, remuneration and teaching/learning environments through an ILO human resource toolkit of good practice for the teaching profession
- upholding the rights of teachers to organize and bargain collectively
- working to promote the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, 1997, which influences teacher preparation and education quality.

■ **Eliminating child labour**

A second key factor contributing to MDG 2 is the elimination of child labour, as most, if not all, of the more than 100 million children worldwide missing out on primary education are child labourers. The educational achievement of children who combine work and school often suffers, and they often drop out of school for full-time work.

The ILO works to secure broad support for EFA and the progressive elimination of child labour through the Global Campaign for Education and the UN Girls’ Education Initiative. The fight against trafficking in children also contributes to MDG 2.

The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) promotes EFA in a decent work context through country programmes, technical cooperation and policy dialogue by:

- raising awareness of child labour and education among communities, parents and policy makers and removing the cost of schooling and obstacles to access
- promoting institutional arrangements to enrol or reintegrate working children and children at risk in the formal school system
- training teachers on child labour issues in cooperation with the major international teachers’ organization – Education International (EI)
- advocating increased investment in basic education, harmonized legislation on child labour and education, and political commitment.

■ **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 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: literacy, technical, vocational and basic business skills training
- enterprise development and enhanced access to credit
- extension of social security and social protection as part of poverty reduction strategies.

Highlights

■ International labour standards

- The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) includes the elimination of child labour as one of the four fundamental principles that ILO Member States must support by virtue of their membership of the ILO
- 155 countries, including 53 since 2000, have ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and 171 countries have ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) which calls for immediate action for the effective elimination of the worst forms of child labour, taking into account the importance of free basic education
- 20 countries have ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which includes provisions on education and the protection of rights
- 46 countries have ratified the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) which provides for social protection across the life cycle.

■ Eliminating child labour

The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is active in almost 90 countries worldwide and is the largest programme of its kind globally. It works at the policy level, supporting the development of legislative and policy frameworks to tackle child labour, and through programmes aimed at preventing and withdrawing children from child labour. It has developed a Global Action Plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labour – including hazardous work, commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking and all forms of slavery – by 2016.

■ Global Jobs Pact

The Global Jobs Pact adopted by the ILO in 2009 outlines strategies to guide recovery from the economic and jobs crisis and stresses the need for vigilance against an increase in forced labour, child labour and discrimination at work. The Pact directly addresses the importance of increasing equal access and opportunities for skills development, quality training and education to prepare for recovery.

■ Partnerships and social dialogue

The ILO is coordinating the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All, which brings together UN agencies, teachers, and civil society representatives to strengthen measures to help child labourers.

The Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (CEART), formed in 1968, is the leading international body set up to monitor and promote the status of teachers.

The ILO is a leading member of an international task force on teachers for EFA, a consortium of partners set up in 2009 to assist countries to eliminate qualified teacher shortages as part of EFA objectives, which works with UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and Education International (EI) to advocate for qualified teachers in the annual World Teachers' Day Message on 5 October. The ILO is supporting efforts to encourage the education of girls through the work of the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI).

In May 2010 the Government of the Netherlands, in cooperation with the ILO, organized a major international conference to assess international progress in tackling child labour. The conference defined concrete steps to achieve the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) has made significant contributions to efforts to combat child labour. In 1996 it adopted a resolution on child labour and a framework for action. In 2000, an updated Handbook for Employers on Child Labour was published. In June 2005 an IOE Approach to the Challenges in Addressing Child Labour was adopted by the General Council. The IOE has published a toolkit providing employers with guidance on child labour within their workplaces and supply chains.

The ILO has supported a large number of trade union initiatives against child labour in recent years worldwide in such areas as analysis, capacity building, campaigning for policy change and collective bargaining, as well as direct support to working children, withdrawing them from work, improving their working conditions and providing education. The International Trade Union Confederation has published an Action Guide on Child Labour.



ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

2003-2012 is the United Nations Literacy Decade.

2005-2014 is the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

The financing gap to meet the EFA goals in low-income countries is currently estimated at US\$16 billion annually.

In 2007 total aid commitments to education amounted to US\$12.1 billion, which was below its 2006 level (US\$12.3 billion) in real terms and only slightly above the 2004 level (US\$12.0 billion).

“We must work for every child's right to education so no child has to work for survival. The goal is quality education for children and decent work for adults.”

*Juan Somavia, ILO
Director-General*

Priorities

Without education, children are prevented from acquiring the skills they need for a better future. Child labour and the resultant loss of education perpetuates poverty and affects national economies through losses in competitiveness, productivity and potential income. Providing children with education, withdrawing them from child labour, and assisting their families with training and employment opportunities contributes directly to creating decent work for adults and promotes MDG 2.

The benefits of providing education for all and eliminating child labour far outweigh the costs. A study commissioned by the ILO in 2004, entitled *Investing in Every Child*, looked at the estimated costs and benefits of eliminating child labour and replacing it with education. It concluded that child labour could be eliminated and replaced by universal primary education by 2015 (MDG 2) and universal lower secondary education by 2020 at an estimated total cost of US\$760 billion. The benefits of eliminating child labour would be US\$5.1 trillion in the developing and transitional economies where most child labourers are found, nearly seven times greater than the costs. The following are also key to improving progress on MDG 2:

Employment creation

- Develop employment creation and income generation strategies for parents, while highlighting the benefit of education for girls for the whole family
- Increase the mother's income: this has been shown to have greater impact on getting children into school than increasing the father's income
- Encourage girls to study subjects and skills that are in high demand and would command better pay in the labour market
- Provide adolescent girls and boys with quality formal and non-formal educational programmes, including vocational training, that would lead to their empowerment and to more opportunities for decent work in their adulthood
- Ensure the quality training and subsequent employment and suitable working conditions of adequate numbers of male and female teachers.

Social protection

- Work towards free primary education for all
- Spread investments in primary education more evenly, focusing more on children at risk and excluded groups
- Recognize the barriers to girls' education through properly considered and adequately resourced education policies and plans
- Extend and improve social protection by widening eligibility conditions and increasing the benefits of existing social security schemes
- Improve the availability of affordable, quality childcare for young children to ease the pressure on parents to take their children to work or assign the childcare to older siblings. Childcare also reduces the demand for child domestic workers
- Provide cash transfers or other mechanisms to offset the indirect and opportunity cost of education for poor families, such as uniforms and textbooks.

Rights

- Ratify and effectively implement the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)
- Implement the standards of the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, 1966 and the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, 1997
- Ensure that national action to combat child labour and its worst forms also includes girls
- Address gender stereotyping in education to combat unchallenged views on occupational segregation and women's unpaid work, through gender analysis and reform of the education curricula
- Promote equal pay for jobs of equal value, contributing to gender equality in future employment.

Dialogue

- Uphold the right of teachers to organize and bargain collectively
- Encourage governments to work with employers' and workers' organizations in tackling child labour
- Build capacities of all relevant government line ministries and education authorities, the social partners, and civil society, to work towards the reduction of child labour through education
- Use dialogue and participatory methods to ensure that educational policies and programmes are responsive to the needs of children at risk
- Strengthen the knowledge base on child labour
- Share good practices on strategies to enrol and retain girls and boys in school.



MDG 2

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Published by the International Labour Office (ILO) with financial assistance from the European Union under the ILO/EC project "Implementing the UN CEB Toolkit within the Decent Work campaign".