

Education for All 2000-2015: Only a third of countries reached global education goals

Paris/New Delhi, 9th April 2015 00.01 GMT- Just one third of countries have achieved all of the measurable Education for All (EFA) goals set in 2000. Only half of all countries have achieved the most watched goal of universal primary enrolment. An extra \$22 billion a year is needed on top of already ambitious government contributions in order to ensure we achieve the new education targets now being set for the year 2030.

These are the key findings of the 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) *“Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges”*, produced by UNESCO which has tracked progress on these goals for the past 15 years.

“The world has made tremendous progress towards Education for All,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. *“Despite not meeting the 2015 deadline, millions more children are in school than would have been had the trends of the 1990s persisted. However, the agenda is far from finished. We need to see specific, well-funded strategies that prioritize the poorest – especially girls – , improve the quality of learning and reduce the literacy gap so that education becomes meaningful and universal.”*

Released today, one month before the World Education Forum in Incheon (Republic of Korea), the Report reveals the following findings:

Goal 1. Expand early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable children.

Forty seven percent of countries reached the goal and another eight percent were close. Twenty percent were very far from the goal. Yet, in 2012, nearly two-thirds more children were enrolled in early childhood education than in 1999.

Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education, particularly for girls, ethnic minorities and marginalized children.

Fifty-two percent of countries achieved this goal; ten percent are close and the remaining thirty-eight percent are far or very far from achieving it. This leaves almost 100 million children not completing primary education in 2015. A lack of focus on the marginalized has left the poorest five times less likely to complete a full cycle of primary education than the richest and over a third of out of school children living in conflict affected zones.

There have been important successes: Around 50 million more children are enrolled in school now than were in 1999. Education is still not free in many places, but cash transfer and school feeding programmes have had a positive impact on school enrolment for the poor.

Goal 3. Ensure equal access to learning and life skills for youth and adults.

Forty-six percent of countries reached universal lower secondary enrolment. Globally, numbers in lower secondary education increased by 27% and more than doubled in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, one third of adolescents in low income countries will not complete lower secondary school in 2015.

Goal 4. Achieving a 50 per cent reduction in levels of adult illiteracy by 2015.

Only 25% of countries reached this goal; 32% remain very far from it. While globally the percentage of illiterate adults fell from 18% in 2000 to 14% in 2015, this progress is almost entirely attributed to more educated young people reaching adulthood. Women continue to make up almost two-thirds of the illiterate adult population. Half of sub-Saharan African women do not have basic literacy skills.

Goal 5. Achieve gender parity and equality

Gender parity will be achieved at the primary level in 69% of countries by 2015. At secondary level, only 48% of countries will reach the goal. Child marriage and early pregnancy continue to hinder girls' progress in education as does the need for teacher training in gender sensitive approaches and curriculum reform.

Goal 6. Improve the quality of education and ensure measurable learning outcomes for all

The numbers of pupils per teacher decreased in 121 of 146 countries between 1990 and 2012 at the primary level, but 4 million more teachers are still needed to get all children into school. Trained teachers remain in short supply in one third of countries; in several sub-Saharan African countries, less than 50 percent are trained. However, education quality has received increased attention since 2000; the number of countries carrying out national learning assessments has doubled.

Funding and political will

Since 2000 many governments significantly increased their spending on education: 38 countries increased their commitment to education by one percentage point or more of GNP. However funding remains a major obstacle at all levels.

“Unless concerted action is taken and education receives the attention that it failed to get during the past 15 years, millions of children will continue to miss out and the transformative vision of the new Sustainable Development agenda will be jeopardized,” said GMR Director, Aaron Benavot. *“Governments must find ways to mobilize new resources for education. International partners must ensure that aid is distributed to those most in need.”*

The GMR makes the following recommendations:

Complete the EFA agenda: Governments should make at least one year of pre-primary education compulsory. Education must be free for all children: fees for tuition, textbooks, school uniforms and transport must be abolished. Policy makers should identify and prioritize skills to be acquired by the end of each stage of schooling. Literacy policies should link up with the needs of communities. Teacher training should be improved to include gender-focused strategies. Teaching styles should better reflect student needs and the diversity of classroom contexts.

Equity: Governments, donors and civil society must develop programmes and target funding to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged so no child is left behind. Governments should close critical data gaps in order to be able to direct resources to those most in need.

Post-2015: Future education targets for education must be specific, relevant and realistic. At current rates, only half of all children in low-income countries are expected to complete lower secondary education by 2030. In many countries even the core goal of achieving universal primary education will remain out of reach without concerted efforts.

Close the finance gap: The international community, in partnership with countries, must find the means to bridge the US\$22 billion annual finance gap for quality pre-primary and basic education for all by 2030. Clear education finance targets must be established within the Sustainable Development Goals where none currently exist.

ENDS

For interviews, photos, b-roll, infographics, videos, including a video message by the United Nations Secretary General, or for more information, please contact:

- Kate Redman: k.redman@unesco.org 0033 602049345
- Sue Williams: s.williams@unesco.org 0033 1 45 68 17 06 or 0033 6 15 92 93 62

To directly access country-level statistics, please click [here](#)

Notes to Editors:

Developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report is an authoritative reference that aims to inform, influence and sustain genuine commitment towards Education for All.

- To download the full Report please click [here](#), using the password **Report_EFA2015**
- To directly access country-level statistics, please click [here](#)

Twitter: [@EFAReport](#) | [#EduVerdict](#)

Web: <http://www.efareport.unesco.org>

World Education Blog: <http://efareport.wordpress.com>