

# An introduction to education

## GOAL 04 ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

### Target 4.1

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

#### ► Why does education matter?

Education is a human right.

Education leads to healthier, more stable populations, brings people out of poverty and drives economic growth. A good quality education is a ticket to a more prosperous future and no child, no matter where he or she is born, should be denied this right.

#### ► What is the problem?

The Millennium Development Goals era saw great progress in the fight to achieve universal education. The number of children who are out of school has fallen by almost 50% since 2000. Huge strides have been made towards achieving gender parity, net enrolment rates have improved significantly and there have been definite improvements in the quality of education.

However, despite progress, over 120 million children worldwide remain out of school; 59 million children of primary school age and almost 65 million young adolescents are still being denied their right to an education.

While primary enrolment rates have improved, student dropouts remain a serious concern. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, one fifth of children enrolled in school will fail to reach their last grade. Globally, this translates in to one in six children from low and middle income countries not completing primary school. These out-of-school children are overwhelmingly from the poorest and most marginalised households, often forced in to work at a young age to support their families. Children with disabilities, children who belong to ethnic minority groups and children who live in rural areas are the most likely to be left out of school.

While the Global Goals have brought with them a new emphasis on quality education, the quality and availability of teacher training, the scarcity of textbooks and resources, and large class sizes continue to pose serious challenges to achieving Global Goal 4. UNESCO, in their 2015 Global Monitoring Report, found that in one-third of the 91 countries with data for 2012, less than 75% of primary school teachers were trained according to national standards.

#### ► Where is the problem?

As is being demonstrated by the crisis in Syria, which has left over 200,000 Syrian children out of school in Lebanon alone, conflict is a huge barrier to education. Nowadays, of the 120 million children worldwide being denied an education, half live in conflict-affected countries, and this proportion is increasing.

Geographically, though almost a third of the world's out-of-school primary aged children live in Central and West Africa. In Nigeria, for example, despite impressive increases in its GNP per capita since the turn of the millennium, improvements in almost all

### The truth about education

**120<sub>m</sub>**

There are 120 million children out-of-school globally

**250<sub>m</sub>**

There are 250 million children worldwide who cannot read or do basic mathematics

**4<sub>x</sub>**

The world's poorest children are four times more likely not to go to school than the world's richest, and they are five times more likely not to complete primary school

**100<sub>yrs</sub>**

At current spending levels it will be around 100 years until universal education for sub-Saharan Africa at primary and secondary levels is achieved

**4<sub>m</sub>**

There are 4 million Syrian children out of school as a result of the ongoing crisis in the country

education indicators have not been realised. In Eastern and Southern Africa, eleven million school aged children remain out of the classroom, as do a further 10 million in South Asia.

## ► Why is it a problem?

**Finance** – One major obstacle standing in the way of achieving Global Goal 4 is finance. Education remains woefully underfunded and is still not prioritised in many national budgets. As a percentage of government spending, education budgets have changed little since 1999, standing at 13.7% in 2012, significantly below the recommended 15-20% target. In addition, donor countries have failed to deliver sufficient funding for education. Between 2010-13 official development aid increased by 8.5% globally; donor aid to basic education, however, fell by almost 8%. Given that some developing countries do not possess the financial and technical means to deliver a free, equitable and quality education to every child, stronger financial commitments must be made if we are to deliver on this new set of ambitious goals.

**Data** – For the effective planning and monitoring of education investment, it is crucial to know how much is being spent, where it is being spent, on who it is being spent, and how those resources are being used. Over the period 2005-13, less than one-half of countries were consistently able to provide data for total government spending. Overcoming chronic shortages such as these in education data is another must if we are to be the generation that delivers education for all.

**Exclusive education** – Of the 120 million children out of school globally, most are either from rural areas, belong to an ethnic minority, have a disability, or live in a poor and vulnerable household where they are expected to work to support their family.

## ► What can be done?

**Increased funding** In order to achieve the key education targets in the Global Goals, not only will government spending on education in developing countries have to increase by 50% as a percentage of GDP, but an additional \$39 billion is estimated to be needed annually from global donors. Without long-term commitments to education finance we will not deliver on our promise of delivering a quality education to all.

**Data revolution** As the Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, has said, “a data revolution is as fundamental as anything to achieving the Global Goals”. Supporting initiatives that drive better education data collection will be crucial for developing effective policies.

**Inclusive education** Promoting inclusive education that targets the world’s most vulnerable and marginalised is vital. To reach disabled students, governments must work harder to make schools accessible. They must also increase funding for teacher training, one-to-one support, equipment and aids. To reach the increasing number of out-of-school children in conflict zones there needs to be more emphasis on education in the global humanitarian system, both in terms of finance and strategic planning.

## EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ZAMBIA

Despite hard economic times throughout the first decade of the new millennium, the Government of Zambia prioritised increasing access to a quality education, especially for girls and marginalised groups.

In 2002, the Ministry of Education implemented the Free Basic Education policy, which mobilised substantial domestic resources for education. By increasing education funding as a share of GDP by almost 20% between 2006-10, the country saw dramatic improvements in school infrastructure, teacher numbers and school enrolment. From 2.5 million students in 2005, enrolment grew to 3.3 million in just four years, with impressive increases in girls’ enrolment and a Gender Parity Index (GPI) increase from 0.95% to 0.99%.

The policy also led to burgeoning numbers of community-led schools,



increasing access to education for traditionally marginalised rural children. Monica Hangwinto, an 11-year-old from the village of Shimballa, since the enactment of the policy, has been able to attend school just a short 20-minute walk from her home. Prior to the Free Basic Education policy, the closest school

was two hours away, simply too far for her to travel alone at her age.

For millions of children like Monica across Zambia, policies such as Free Basic Education have offered hope for a better, more prosperous future, not only for them and their families, but also for Zambia as a country.