



# EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPING WORLD

## WHY IS EDUCATION ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT?

People agree that all children have the right to an education. But investing in education is also the smart thing to do. Why? Because education gives people the skills they need to help themselves out of poverty and into prosperity.

- **Improved Health:** With education, people are better prepared to prevent disease and to use health services effectively. For example, young people who have completed primary education are less than half as likely to contract HIV as those with little or no schooling. Educated mothers have healthier children.
- **Higher wages and economic growth:** In many poor countries, with each additional year of schooling, people earn 10% higher wages. These earnings, in turn, contribute to national economic growth. No country has ever achieved continuous and rapid growth without reaching an adult literacy rate of at least 40%.

- **Democracy and political stability:** Education supports the growth of civil society, democracy, and political stability, allowing people to learn about their rights and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to exercise them.

## BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES: THE POWER OF EDUCATING GIRLS

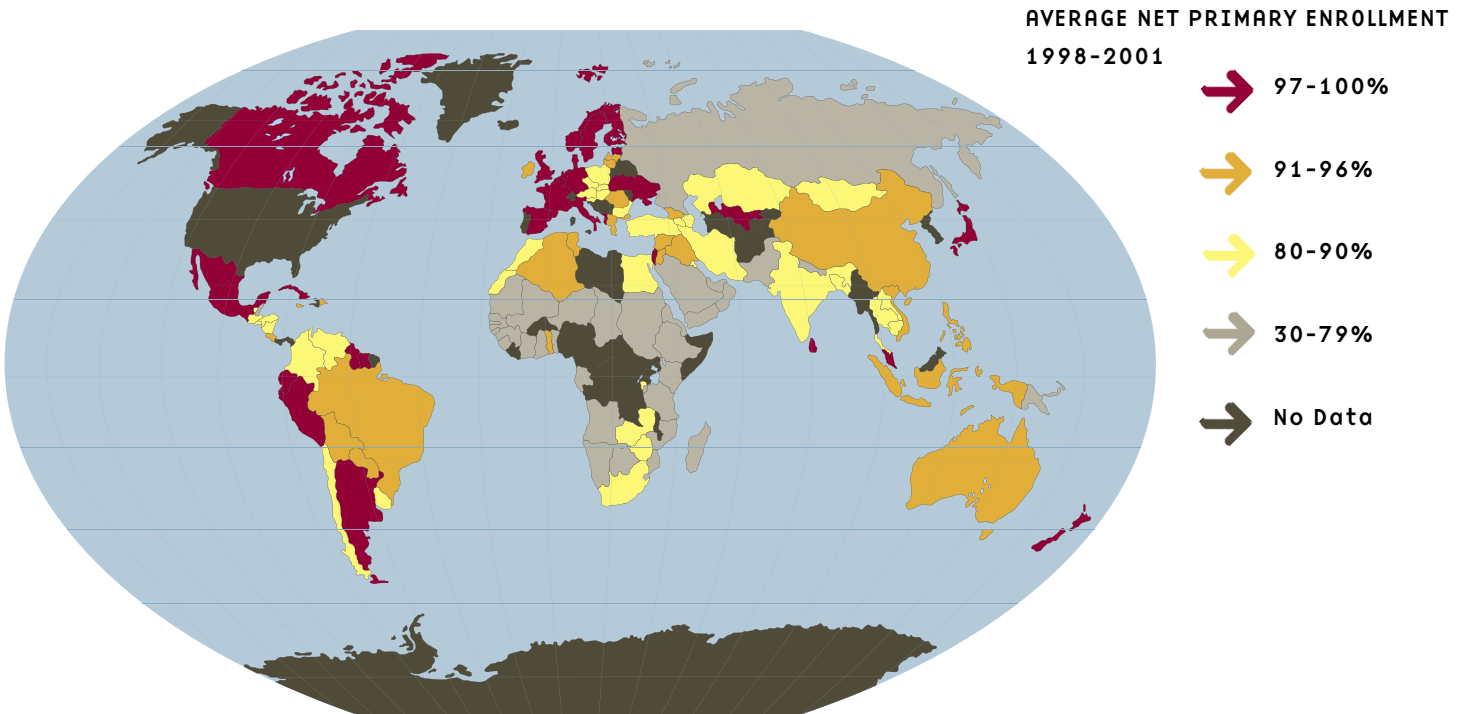
The education of girls, which is restricted in some countries, yields benefits that extend beyond themselves to their communities and to the society at large.

- A woman with six or more years of education is more likely to seek prenatal care, assisted childbirth, and postnatal care, reducing the risk of maternal and child mortality and illness.
- Educated mothers are 50% more likely to immunize their children than mothers with no schooling.

FIGURE 1.

WHERE ARE THE KIDS?  
OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD

The countries and regions with the highest rates of out-of-school children are some of the poorest in the world.



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2003.

- The majority of farmers in the developing world are women. Greater female education leads to more productive farming and accounts for over 40% of the decline in malnutrition achieved since 1970.
- Today, the U.S. invests in its future by spending about \$6,800 a year per primary student on public education. In Iran the figure is \$156 per student per year, in India \$64, in Laos \$30, and in Rwanda \$19.

INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION:  
A PAGE FROM U.S. HISTORY

The U.S. has come a long way in its own education practices.

- At the time of American independence in 1776, less than half of white children and almost no black children went to school. Today almost every American child finishes primary school (grades 1-6) and almost all go on to secondary school (grades 7-12). Even today, many countries lag behind where the United States was in 1776—in Ethiopia 31% of children attend primary school, in the Sudan 53%, and in Niger 30%.
- The U.S. did not achieve universal primary education—that is, all children finishing 6th grade—until around 1900. At that time, the average American earned about \$4,500 a year in today's dollars, which is six times as rich as the average person in Indonesia today, and 15 times as rich in Uganda.

WHAT AMERICANS THINK

- 91% of Americans think improving basic education is an effective way of helping nations overcome poverty.
- 84% of Americans agree that increasing foreign assistance to countries that invest in better health care and better schools is a good idea.
- Of all the reasons to give development assistance, Americans rank child survival programs (including prenatal care, immunizations, and nutrition), education and training for people in poor countries, and programs that focus on helping women and girls as three of the top four most compelling reasons.

Sources: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, March 2002, on behalf of CARE International; Program on International Policy Attitudes, Americans on Foreign Aid and World Hunger: A Study of U.S. Public Attitudes, February 2001.

## A LOOK AROUND THE WORLD

Many children and families around the world cannot take access to primary schooling for granted, as most in the U.S. do.

- More than 115 million 6- to 12-year-olds are not in school in the developing world; three-fifths of them are girls.
- More than 150 million children in the developing world start school but do not complete four years; in Sub-Saharan Africa, only one in three who attend school complete a primary education.
- The situation is particularly poor in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, where proportionately more children are out of school than in other regions (see Figure 1).

## THE GOOD NEWS: SUCCESS IS POSSIBLE

Thanks to greater attention from the global community and concerted efforts on the part of individual countries, the world has seen success in increasing access to basic education, raising completion rates, and improving the quality of education. What does it take?

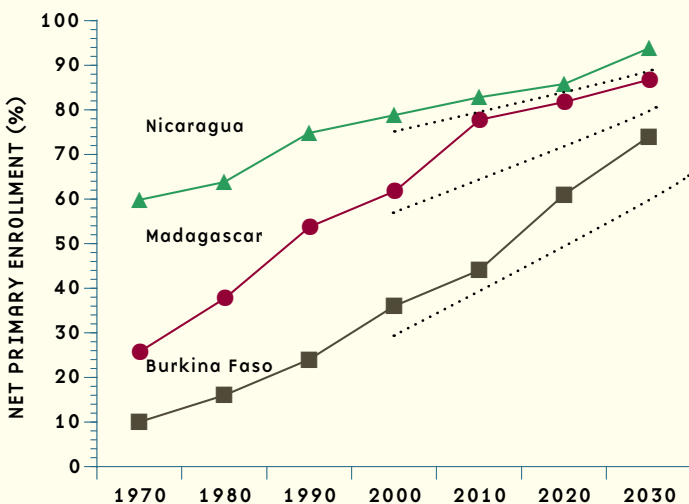
## CREATIVE WAYS TO PROMOTE GIRLS' EDUCATION

- In some of the world's poorest countries, such as Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and Nicaragua, schooling rates are rising faster than they ever did in the West (see Figure 2). Countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, South Africa, Botswana, Peru, and Jamaica are on the cusp of reaching universal primary education.
- In postwar Korea in the 1950s, when the average annual income was only \$890, Korean families and the government, with help from the U.S., tripled spending on education. Investments in teachers and basic schools contributed to a more productive labor force, which became one of the country's engines of growth. Today Korea boasts almost 100% primary school enrollment and an average income of \$17,000 a year.
- Uganda now publishes school funding allocations in national newspapers, allowing parents to monitor public spending in their locality. Combined with other reforms, this practice has translated into increases of 30% to 50% in girls' enrollment.
- In 2004, the Angolan government launched a countrywide Back to School program, setting aside \$40 million to train 29,000 teachers and increase enrollments in grades 1–4 to 90%.
- Oportunidades, a Mexican government program that provides economic support to poor households on the condition that children attend school regularly, has significantly improved primary completion rates and produced a 20% increase in secondary school enrollment for girls and a 10% increase for boys.

FIGURE 2.

### BLAZING TRAILS: RAPID RATES OF IMPROVEMENT IN THE POOREST COUNTRIES

Several very poor countries—such as Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and Nicaragua as well as Mali, Guinea, and Mauritania—are increasing their primary school enrollment rates faster than today's rich countries did during their own 19th century development.



Source: Michael A. Clemens, "The Long Walk to School: International Education Goals in Historical Perspective." Working Paper 37, Center for Global Development, March 2004.

## INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

Many poor countries have taken the positive step of making education a priority. What is the international community doing to help?

- Bilateral assistance: The U.S. and other countries allocate direct financial assistance for activities such as building schools, training teachers, and providing school supplies. On average, between 2002 and 2004 the U.S. dedicated \$256 million per year to basic education in poor countries. During the same period, France, with an economy just over one-tenth the size of the U.S. economy, spent \$856 million per year.

#### MULTILATERAL EFFORTS:

- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** In 2000, the member countries of the United Nations set out eight global development goals to be met by 2015, one of which is to achieve universal primary education.
- **Fast Track Initiative (FTI):** In 2002, the world community established the FTI to help the poorest countries progress toward the education MDG through both financial and technical support. In 2003, the Netherlands, whose economy is 1/20 the size of the U.S. economy, took the lead among developed countries and contributed \$220 million to an initial fund dedicated to the FTI. Norway, Italy, and Belgium have also contributed to the fund.
- **Private sector:** The World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development promote private-public partnerships to contribute knowledge, skills, and materials to global education. Companies such as BP and DaimlerChrysler support education programs in many countries through partnerships with local communities that extend beyond financial contributions.

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT GLOBAL EDUCATION

If you think global education or educating the world's poor is important for the U.S., talk about it with your friends, neighbors, civic leaders, elected officials, and candidates. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. What would you do to translate American commitment to education at home into a commitment to supporting education abroad?
2. Do you believe education plays a significant role in preventing disease, hunger, and political instability, factors that prompt large emergency expenditures by the U.S.? If so, how should the U.S. support education in poor countries?
3. What is the right mix of public and private participation in education? What are good incentives for public and private investment in global education?

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