

Education for All Overview

This provides a brief overview of the issue that is education for all. To find out more, download the critical thinking activities, workshops and presentations, and look at the action guide to see what more you can do to help.

TAGS

Education

Introduction

In 2000 an estimated 110 million children around the world were missing out on school. World leaders met and promised that, by the end of 2015, all boys and girls would complete a full course of primary education. This promise formed the second of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG 2).

The early focus of MDG 2 was on enrolling children into school, and a lot of progress was made when several countries stopped charging school fees and many children went to school for the first time. But more recently progress towards universal primary education has stalled. In 2015 there were still 58 million children out of school. Many were girls, disabled children and children living in crisis affected countries. The target set by Millennium Development Goal 2 was missed.



*A year 5 maths lesson in Mandanpur Khadar, Delhi.
Credit: David Levene/GCE UK*

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The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015 world leaders turned their attention to the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which replaced the Millennium Development Goals. The new SDG 4 promises to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

Attention is now turning from enrolling children in school, to thinking about the quality of education that children receive. For example issues like the number of qualified teachers, class size, and school infrastructure have become more important.

In addition the focus on lifelong learning aims to overcome high levels of adult illiteracy and school dropout at the end of primary school. In 2016 as many as 263 million children and youth were missing out on both primary and secondary school.

Ensuring education for all is a daunting challenge. Many of the barriers, such as poverty, gender inequalities and disability, are persistent. Other barriers have emerged more recently. These include the challenges posed by conflicts and violence, natural disasters and health epidemics, such as the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa in 2014.

These challenges have implications for funding, as greater investment in education is required to achieve SDG 4. However rich countries are not delivering all of the aid they have promised, and some countries with many children out of school are not spending enough money on education, even when they can afford to do so.