





## **EDUCATION FIRST**

The United Nations Secretary-General's  
initiative to ensure quality, relevant and transformative  
education for everyone.



*Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon with students at Cassait School, in the Liquica District of Timor-Leste. UNICEF constructed buildings at the school, trained teachers and parents in the child rights-led approach to education, and provided learning materials. Children are taught both about child rights and about the responsibilities that come with those rights.*

# Introduction

Education has shaped my life and the history of my country. I grew up in a society ravaged by war and mired in poverty. Schools had been destroyed. My classes were held in the open under a tree. We had no desks, chairs or other basic necessities. The Republic of Korea was on its knees, but education enabled the country to stand tall again. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other international partners provided books and school supplies to help pave the road to recovery. I will never forget the hope that these basic tools gave us.

Even in the worst circumstances, education helps to give children confidence to face the future. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I want every child, without exception, to have the same opportunity that I had. The power of education to transform lives is universal. When you ask parents what they want for their children—even in war zones and disaster areas—they seek the same thing first: education. Parents want their children in school.



Children have a fundamental right to free primary schooling of good quality. Governments have pledged to uphold this right. I am deeply concerned that education is slipping down the international priority list. Education First stems from my resolve to answer the call of parents everywhere for the schooling their children deserve—from the earliest years to adulthood. We must place education at the heart of our social, political and development agendas.

This is not a matter of choosing education over other issues of great importance. Our internationally agreed development goals are a complex tapestry, and education is the indispensable thread. Educated mothers are more likely to have healthy children who survive. Educated families are less vulnerable to extreme poverty and hunger. And educated nations are more likely to enjoy vibrant economies, political stability and a respect for human rights.

Education is not simply a moral imperative—it is the smart choice. Every dollar invested generates US\$ 10 to US\$ 15 in returns. Yet worldwide, some 61 million children are still not in school. Our shared ideals are simple. We want all children to attend primary school and to progress to secondary school and relevant higher education. We want them to acquire the literacy, numeracy and critical-thinking skills that will help them to succeed in life and live as engaged and productive global citizens.

This is a pivotal moment for collective action. The 2015 deadline for achieving the internationally agreed goals for education is approaching fast. The achievements of the past decade have shown what it takes to succeed: political will at the highest levels, sound policies, and resources to scale up proven methods. But to achieve a breakthrough, we will need an unprecedented mobilization of all traditional and new partners. Education First aims to rally a broad spectrum of actors to spur a global movement to achieve quality, relevant and transformative education.

We must not deny the promise of quality education to any child. The stakes are too high. When we put education first, we can end wasted potential—and look forward to stronger and better societies for all.

BAN Ki-moon  
United Nations Secretary-General  
New York, September 2012



**Tweetable**

When we put  
#EducationFirst, we can  
reduce poverty & hunger,  
end wasted potential, &  
look forward to stronger  
& better societies for all.

# The central role of education

## The basic building block

Education is the basic building block of every society. It is a fundamental human right, not a privilege of the few. It is no coincidence that parents around the world demand education for their children as their first priority. Children themselves yearn for the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. Just ask them what they wish to be when they grow up. They want to be nurses, teachers, musicians, mathematicians, painters and farmers. Education is the gateway to learning the skills and values necessary to fulfill those aspirations.

In our knowledge-based world, education is the single best investment countries can make towards building prosperous, healthy and equitable societies. It unleashes the optimal potential in people, improving individual livelihoods and those of future generations. If all students in low-income countries acquired basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty, equivalent to a 12% cut in world poverty.



Yet a good education is more than an entry point into the job market. Education has the power to transform people and bring shared values to life. People around the world are connected as never before. In the face of global pandemics, conflict, climate change and economic turmoil, it is clear we sink or swim together. We must forge a new way of relating to each other—as individuals, communities, and countries. Education can cultivate in us a vision that sees beyond one's immediate interests to the world at large. It can give us a profound understanding that we are tied together as citizens of the global community, and that our challenges are interconnected.

By expanding educational opportunities, we can open the door to more equitable, dynamic and resilient patterns of globalization. It will be difficult to achieve sustainable development or lasting peace without the knowledge, skills and values cultivated through education. Indeed, education is the critical thread tying together all our hopes for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

# The promise

## Universal right to basic education

Twelve years ago, the dawn of the century renewed optimism that nations could unite to address pressing global challenges. The eight Millennium Development Goals—which range from halving extreme poverty and ensuring gender equality to halting the spread of HIV by the target date of 2015—formed a blueprint to meet the needs of the world’s poorest.

World leaders recognized education as a critical component in that equation, agreeing that countries should guarantee primary education as a universal minimum for children everywhere. This promise is also enshrined in the “Education for All” goals, which aim to fulfill the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

The promise stands on the conviction that a decent education is the birthright of every child in every country. Gender, ethnicity, and geography should not determine whether a child attends school. Nor should a family’s poverty deprive any child of a decent education.

Youth and adults also have the right to a quality education. To further economic development, a country must have a well-functioning and wide-reaching secondary education system, with both formal and non-formal learning opportunities. It must also give the millions of out of school youth a second chance to gain the skills needed to earn a decent living and contribute to their societies.

A nation’s human capital—the skills, knowledge and values that education makes possible—is the truest source of its wealth. More than at any time in history, the destiny of nations and the well-being of their people, now depend on their ability to expand this human capital.



### Tweetable

Education is the basic building block of every society. It is a fundamental human right, not a privilege of the few. #EducationFirst



# The education crisis



## Tweetable

If we do not act swiftly, educational disparities will become greater sources of division both within & between countries. #EducationFirst



We stand on the verge of breaking the promise we made to children in 2000. It is true that we have enrolled more children in primary school than ever before. At the end of the 1990s, there were 108 million children of primary school age not enrolled. That number has fallen to 61 million. We have also reduced gender disparities. This is due in large part to national and international resolve to act on shared goals for education. Yet this global expansion has stalled, and some regions are now losing ground. If current trends continue, we could have more children out of school in 2015 than today.

Getting children into school is a first step. Some drop out before receiving the four years of schooling recommended for one to become fully literate and numerate. Many more stay in school but learn very little year after year. We have a learning deficit that poses huge challenges for development. The failure to invest simultaneously in access and quality of education has created a world in which at least an estimated 250 million children are not able to read, write or count well even for those who have spent at least four years in school. The poorest and the most marginalized are worst affected. When we fail to convey those skills, we fail a generation of children whose prospects in life will depend on them.

Inequality is at the heart of the global education emergency. If we do not act swiftly, educational disparities will become an even greater source of division—both within and between countries. In at least 63 countries around the world, female youth from poor households are significantly less educated than other sectors of society. And just as gender limits opportunities, so does disability, ethnicity, language, displacement and rural residence. The inequality is magnified for vulnerable children. Children in conflict-affected poor countries account for 42% of those out of school. The deep and persistent disparities in access to school are mirrored in learning achievement while at school. Children orphaned by AIDS and other causes need focused care and protection, as do those subjected to child labour and exploitation. We must not let them fall through the cracks.

Continued neglect of education has disastrous human, social, economic and political consequences. It is consigning millions of people to lives of poverty and diminished opportunity. It is undermining our efforts to end poverty and hunger, empower women, save children and mothers from unnecessary deaths and our ability to live in harmony with the environment.

The crisis in education is also undermining a shared sense of global citizenship. It is eroding the hopes and confidence of a whole generation. Yet, education can still give wings to the aspirations, creativity and potential of this generation.



# Do girls or boys have a better chance of graduating from primary school?

**91 countries**



Girls and boys have an equal chance to graduate

**24 countries**



Girls more likely to graduate

**47 countries**



Girls less likely to graduate

Data available from 162 countries, end 2009  
Source: Global Education Digest 2011, UNESCO

# The state of education at a glance

**1.8 billion**

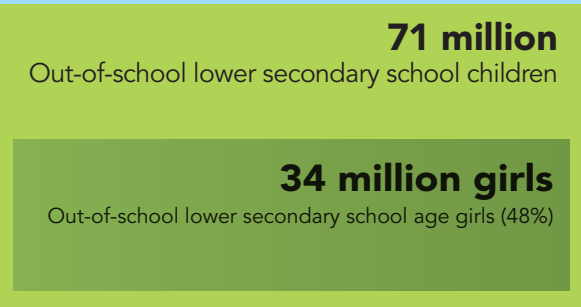
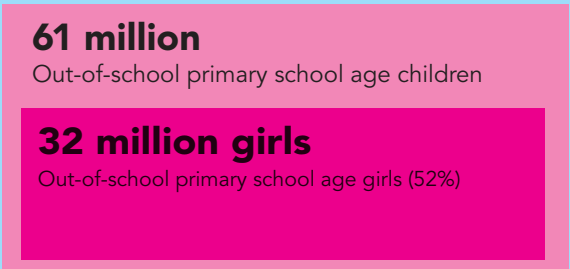
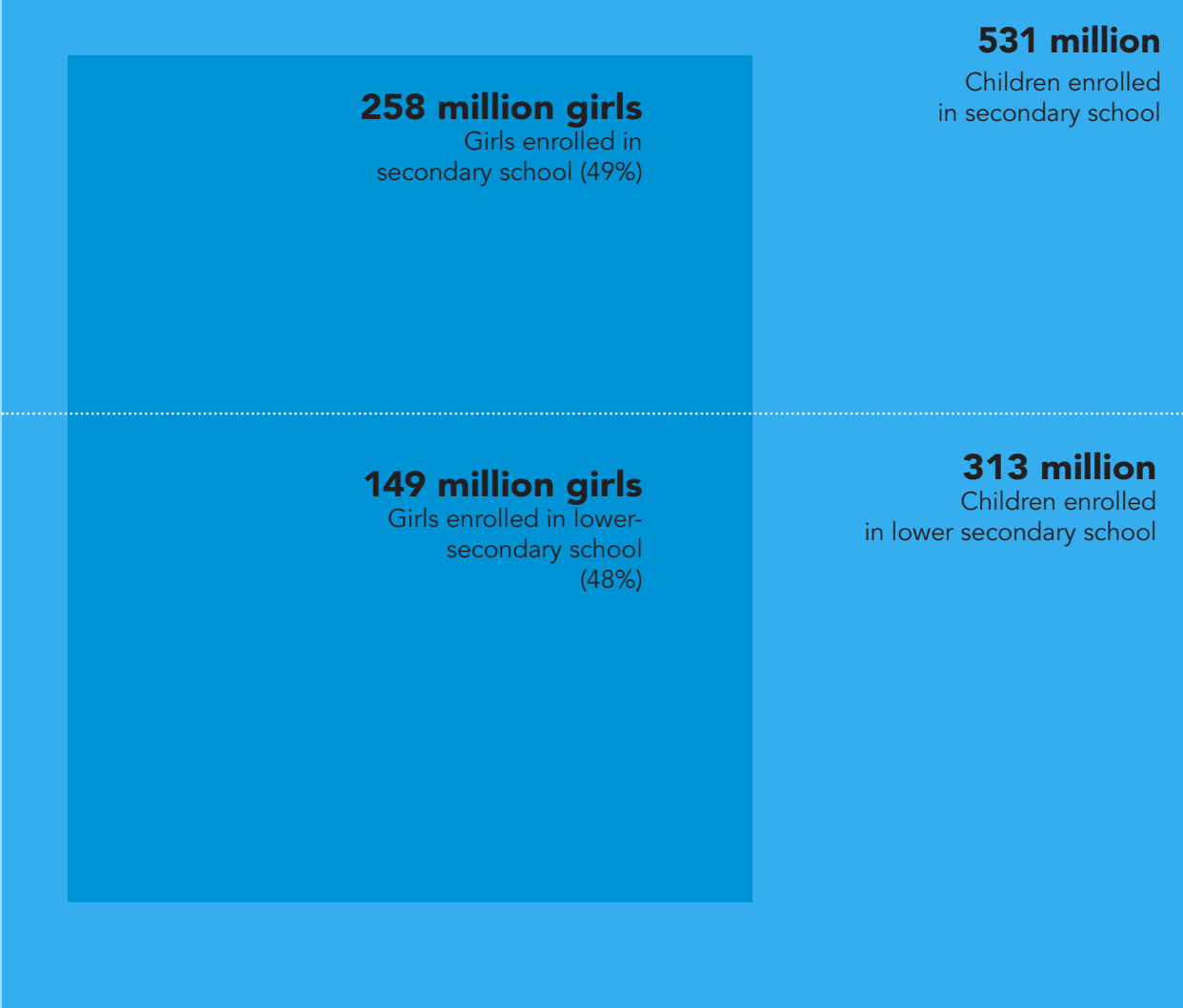
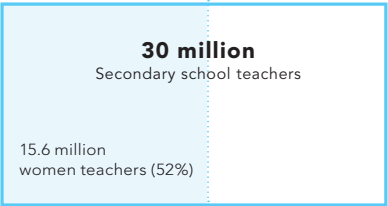
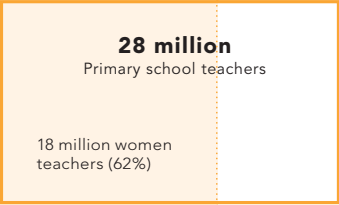
Number of children and young people between ages 5-19

**691 million**

Children enrolled in primary school

**329 million girls**

Girls enrolled in primary school (48%)



Source: UNESCO, UN Population Division

# What Education First will do



Education First seeks to unleash human potential by nurturing the unique gifts that every child brings to the world. People everywhere embrace that vision, but public action has been fragmented and inadequate. We must re-energize the global community to deliver on the promise of universal education and create opportunities for ordinary citizens to make a difference.

The convening power of the United Nations Secretary-General provides a crucial link that could set us on track to 2015. Education First will rally a broad spectrum of actors for the final push. In addition, Education First will lay the groundwork for a bold vision for education post-2015. It also provides a platform to generate open discussion on the purpose of education in today's context; we must put in place the foundation needed to prepare children for life.

To provide the desperately needed “breakthrough in education”, Education First will:

- 1 Rally together a broad spectrum of actors for the final push to 2015 and ensure we deliver on the promise of universal access to primary education;
- 2 Spur a global movement to put **quality, relevant** and **transformative** education right at the heart of the social, political and development agendas; and
- 3 Generate additional and sufficient funding for education through sustained global advocacy efforts.

# The smart choice

Education is the single best investment nations can make to build prosperous, healthy and equitable societies. Education unleashes potential in the individual and society to solve the problems of today, address the challenges of tomorrow and live in a world free of poverty.

## Education = Gender equality

### Education empowers women

One additional school year can increase a woman's earnings by 10% to 20%.

### No education for girls = economic loss

Some countries lose more than US\$ 1 billion a year by failing to educate girls to the same level as boys.

### Education increases awareness of rights

Educated women are more likely to have decent working conditions, delay childbearing, resist violence, denounce injustice and participate in political processes.

## Education = Health

### Saves children's lives

Over the past four decades, the global increase in women's education has prevented more than 4 million child deaths. In sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 1.8 million children's lives could have been saved in 2008 if all their mothers had at least secondary education.

### Social vaccine against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria

Women with secondary education are more likely to know how to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, an infection that contributed to 230,000 fatalities in 2011 alone.

## Education = Economic opportunity

### Lifts people out of poverty

Some 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty—reducing the global rate by 12%—if all students in low-income countries acquired basic reading skills.

### Boosts economic growth

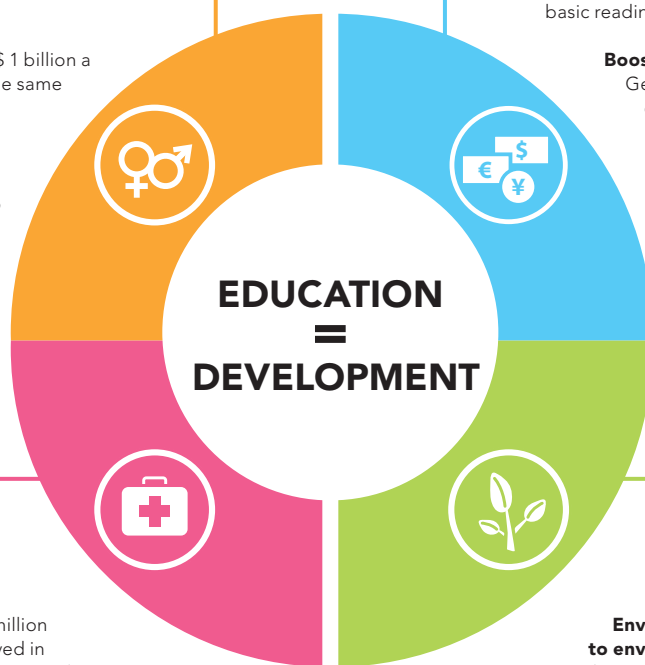
Getting all children into basic education, while raising learning standards, could boost growth by 2% annually in low-income countries.

## Education = Environmental sustainability

**Improves long term environmental sustainability,** by promoting concern, awareness and new attitudes.

### Environmental skills education leads to environmental sustainability

Understanding local environments, designing greener technologies, changing consumption and production patterns and coping better with the impacts of economic and natural shocks are all skills essential to environmental sustainability.



# Three priority areas

The initiative's basic priorities are to expand access to education, improve the quality of learning and foster global citizenship.



**Put every child  
In school**



**Improve the  
quality of learning**



**Foster global  
citizenship**



**Tweetable**

#EducationFirst:  
everyone goes to school,  
everyone learns,  
& everyone contributes  
to society.

# Priority area one

## PUT EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL

Education is a great driver of social, economic and political progress. As people learn to read, count and reason critically, their prospects for health and prosperity expand exponentially. But our advances in education have not benefited everyone equally—and primary school enrollment rates tell only part of the regrettable story. Millions of children who start primary school are unable to finish and still more miss out on secondary school. Today, some 71 million adolescents—in low-income countries—are receiving no post-primary education. We can no longer afford the cost of excluding them.

### Barriers to school enrollment and completion

**Unaffordable costs.** Poverty is the greatest barrier to high-quality education. Even when primary school is technically free, additional charges for uniforms, textbooks, teacher salaries and school maintenance create financial barriers for many families. In surveys from countries with “free education”, parents consistently say these indirect costs keep them from sending their children to school. While some governments have withdrawn formal fees for basic education, few have dropped fees for secondary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, children from the richest 20% of households reach ninth grade at 11 times the rate of those from the poorest 40% of households.

**A shortage of classrooms.** The poorest countries need almost 4 million new classrooms by 2015, largely in rural and marginalized areas, to accommodate those who are not in school. More classrooms will alleviate overcrowding, cut class sizes and reduce the long travel distances. Children in rural areas sometimes walk two to three hours to attend school. Dilapidated classrooms also need refurbishing or upgrading to acceptable minimum standards for learning.

**Humanitarian emergencies, especially conflict.** The need to fulfill the right to education is greatest in humanitarian crises. More than 40% of out-of-school children live in conflict-affected poor countries, and millions are forced out of school by natural disasters each year. In emergency situations, education can save and sustain lives. A safe school environment can give children a sense of normalcy during a crisis. Schools can also aid in post-conflict reconstruction. Yet only 2% of all humanitarian aid goes into education. Schools should be a higher priority during humanitarian crises, and national education plans should include contingencies for emergencies.





**Gender discrimination.** Girls face a unique set of barriers to education, such as child marriage, early pregnancy, and expectations related to domestic labour, not to mention unsafe travel and a lack of sanitary facilities. Many countries under-value girls' education, with the result that fewer girls enroll and those who do are more likely to drop out. Some 34 million adolescent girls are out of school around the world, and women make up nearly two-thirds (almost 500 million) of the world's illiterate adults. The gender gap has significantly narrowed in primary education but there has been limited progress at the secondary level.

**Child labour.** Poverty and vulnerability are pushing far too many young children out of school and into the world of work. Some children remain in school, but are disadvantaged doubling up studies with work. For households living in poverty, children may be pulled out of school and into work in the face of external shocks such as natural disasters, rising costs, or a parent's sickness or unemployment. By leaving school to enter the labour market prematurely, children miss a chance to lift themselves, their families, and their communities out of a cycle of poverty. Sometimes children are exposed to the worst forms of labour that is damaging to their physical, mental and emotional well-being.



### Tweetable

Today, some 71 mln adolescents in low-income countries, are receiving no post-primary education.

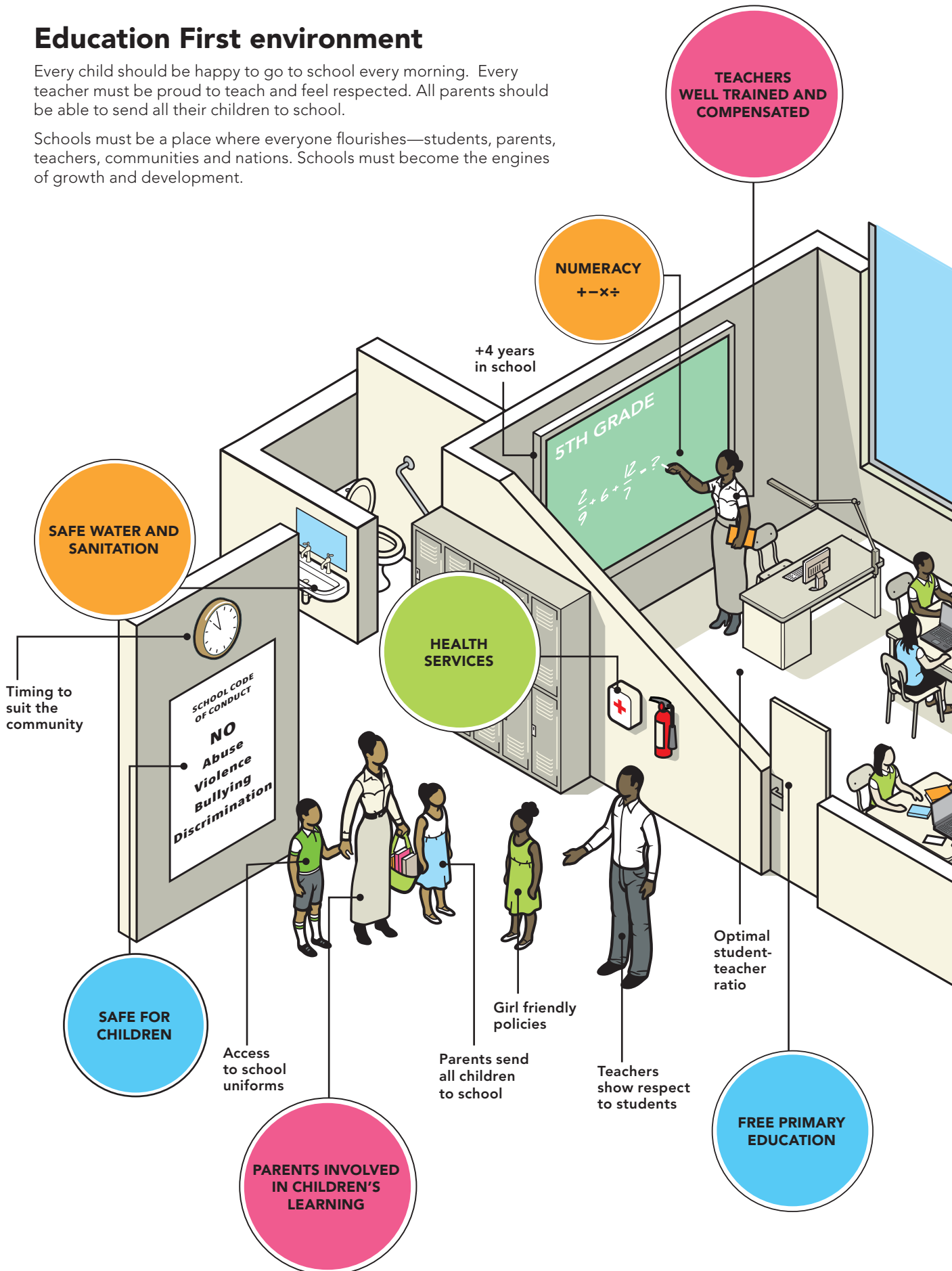
#EducationFirst



# Education First environment

Every child should be happy to go to school every morning. Every teacher must be proud to teach and feel respected. All parents should be able to send all their children to school.

Schools must be a place where everyone flourishes—students, parents, teachers, communities and nations. Schools must become the engines of growth and development.



**NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

Second chance learning

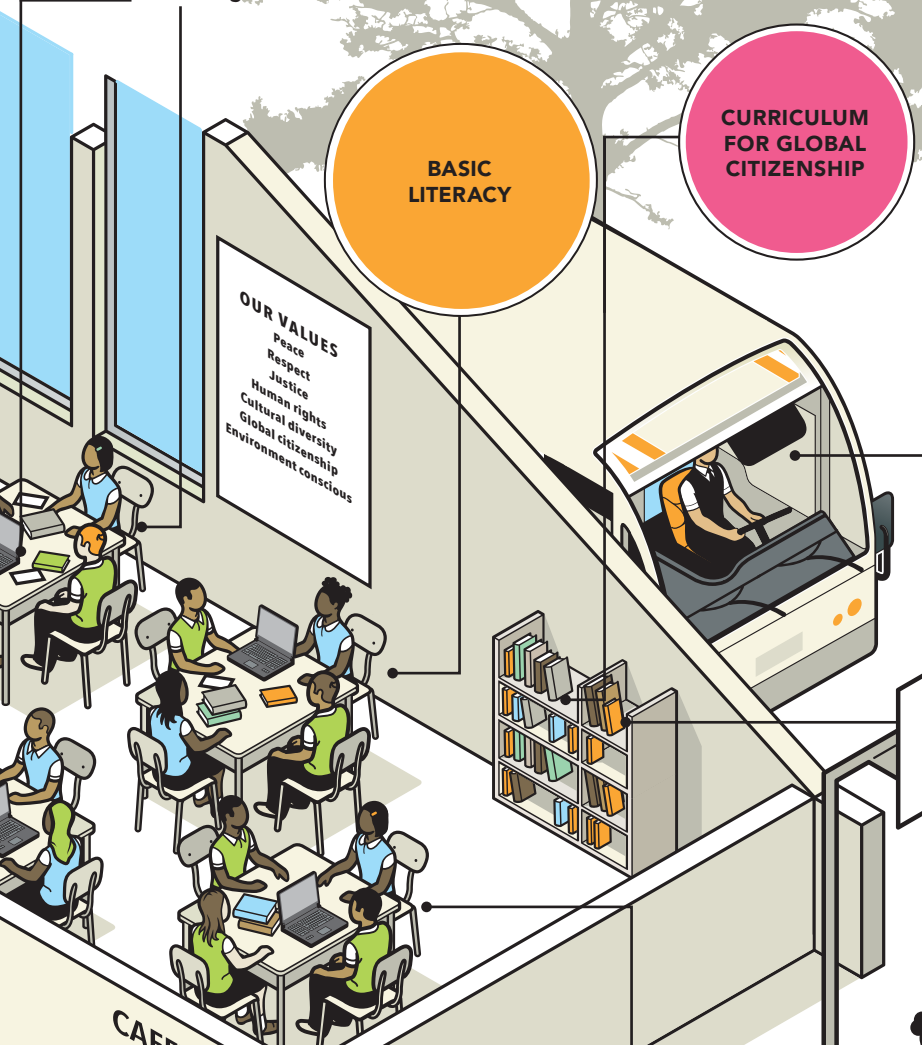
**BASIC LITERACY**

**CURRICULUM FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP**

**OUR VALUES**  
Peace  
Respect  
Justice  
Human rights  
Cultural diversity  
Global citizenship  
Environment conscious

Easy access to schools

**BOOKS AND LEARNING MATERIALS**



**CAFETERIA**

Support for disadvantaged children

**GOOD NUTRITION**

**ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY**



Support children with disabilities



Opportunities for play and sport

# Priority area two

## IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

School attendance should open pathways of learning and discovery, but too often it does not. Millions of children go through school and come out without basic literacy and numeracy skills. Education is ultimately judged by what people learn. Many students around the world are banking their futures on poorly trained, weakly motivated teachers without enough books and other basics to facilitate their learning. This is a grave disservice not only to the students themselves but also to the parents who sacrifice to support them and the countries whose futures depend on them. While we strive to boost school attendance, we must ensure that our schools are engines of opportunity.

### Barriers to quality learning

**Shortage of qualified teachers.** Education systems are complex and are influenced by numerous actors. But no education system is better than its teachers. Globally, we need an additional 2 million teachers to achieve universal primary education by 2015. The shortage of teachers, combined with absenteeism and the lack of qualifications, is a major barrier to learning. We need a strong cohort of both female and male teachers who are paid well and respected in their communities. This is not always the case. Teachers should also have opportunities for continued professional development and growth.

**Lack of learning materials.** Outdated and worn-out textbooks are often shared by six or more students in many parts of the developing world. Workbooks, exercise sheets, readers and other core materials to help students learn their lessons are in short supply. Teachers also need materials to help prepare their lessons, share with their students, and guide their lessons. The persistent digital divide and uneven access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) have severe implications for education. ICTs can transform not only instruction but also the learning process. They empower both teachers and learners.

**Weak foundation for early learning.** A significant proportion of young children never benefit from early childhood education programs, compromising their cognitive development and their preparedness for school. Those who do not learn to read or write in their first few grades carry a handicap as they try to progress to higher levels, where literacy and numeracy become tools for learning rather than ends in themselves. They struggle in school for many years and some simply quit. Around the world, primary schools give more attention to later grades, in large part to prepare students for high-stakes examinations. It would be more effective to deploy the most qualified teachers in the first four years of school when students establish the foundation for success in later years.





**Challenging family environments.** Challenging living circumstances affect a child's learning in many ways. When families lack electricity at home, particularly in rural areas, children have fewer hours available to study and learn. When their homes lack books and other reading material, they practice less and forget more during school breaks. And when parents themselves lack literacy and numeracy skills, they are less able to reinforce what children are learning in school. Other factors, such as a stressful or violent home environment, can also highly impede a child's learning.

**Mismatch of skills and today's livelihoods.** With more than 1.2 billion young people in the world today, our youth have the potential to alter our course in history. Yet, in many countries, education systems have not caught up to the 21st century knowledge-based economy. Teaching by rote curtails creative or divergent thinking. It is rigid and is not tailored to individual needs or talents. This form of learning is widespread. There is a mismatch between the competencies needed in today's world and those acquired through the current education system. Too often technical and vocational education is specific and narrow thus limiting job opportunities as skills become quickly obsolete in a dynamic and rapidly changing world.

**Language barriers.** The language of instruction strongly influences the ability of children to comprehend and learn. Yet an estimated 221 million children are being taught in a language other than their mother tongue. Many of them drop out or repeat grades—an experience that can damage self-esteem and raise the cost that parents must shoulder. Studies suggest that children fare better if they can acquire basic skills in their home language before trying to master a second one.

**Hunger and poor nutrition.** The impact of hunger on education systems is gravely underreported. Evidence from Latin America finds that being stunted at age 6 was equivalent to losing four grades of schooling. Far too many children are reaching school damaged by malnutrition. Around 171 million children in developing countries are stunted by hunger by the time they reach age 5. When children are hungry during lessons, they have trouble concentrating. Providing school meals and social protection programs focusing on the needs of children can insure that no child is hungry at school.

**Ineffective systems to evaluate the performance of students.** We cannot readily improve students' progress without measuring it. Education systems need to closely monitor how well students are learning in order to offer the correct support before it is too late. Additionally, testing is too often inappropriately used to influence major financing decisions such as closing schools or firing teachers or eliminating students who cannot progress to the next level rather than as a means to identify ways to help students improve their learning. We must have better ways to take stock of whether children are learning and use the information to direct support and resources for effective solutions.



**Tweetable**

While we strive to boost school attendance, we must ensure that schools are engines of opportunity.  
#EducationFirst



# Priority area three

## FOSTER GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The world faces global challenges, which require global solutions. These interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings. It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it. Education must also be relevant in answering the big questions of the day. Technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development. It requires transforming the way people think and act. Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Barriers to global citizenship

**Legacy of the current education system.** Schools have traditionally prepared people to pass exams, proceed to the next level and graduate into the workplace. We now face the much greater challenge of raising global citizens. Promoting respect and responsibility across cultures, countries and regions has not been at the centre of education. Global citizenship is just taking root and changing traditional ways of doing things always brings about resistance. This entails changing the way education is organized—making content more relevant to contemporary life and global challenges, introducing innovative and participatory teaching and learning styles. We must rethink the purpose of education and prepare students for life, not exams alone.

**Outmoded curricula and learning materials.** Reviews from around the world find that today's curricula and textbooks often reinforce stereotypes, exacerbate social divisions, and foster fear and resentment of other groups or nationalities. Rarely are curricula developed through a participatory process that embraces excluded and marginalized groups. But change is possible when educators adopt a vision of ethical global citizenship. Lessons from India and Ghana, for example, show that explicitly teaching good citizenship as a subject can have powerful results with more empowered and ethical students emerging. Deeply entrenched beliefs take time to change. But young people are open to new perspectives, and schools are ideally positioned to convey them.





**Lack of teacher capacity.** Broad teacher development reforms are needed to ensure the uptake of new citizenship skills. If we want to transform the way students learn, we must also help teachers expand their own skills and outlooks. Are they comfortable with a curriculum that dwells explicitly on global citizenship? Can they teach traditional subjects in ways that exemplify non-discrimination and positive support to the disadvantaged? Many teachers lack the training, confidence and classroom resources to meet these challenges without support and instruction. We owe it to them, and our children, to provide it.

Teachers must both be comfortable with the content of what they are teaching but also model it in their teaching practice. This means on-going teacher development and participatory learning techniques are important to ensure teachers feel comfortable teaching about global citizenship explicitly. Teachers can help build ideas and habits of non-discrimination and positive support to the disadvantaged through the way they conduct their teaching of literacy, numeracy and other subjects.

**Inadequate focus on values.** The values of peace, human rights, respect, cultural diversity and justice are often not embodied in the ethos of schools. Instead of empowering students to learn and thrive, schools often replicate social inequalities and reinforce social pathologies by tolerating bullying and gender-based violence and subjecting children to physical and psychological punishment. Young people learn much from schools, but what they learn is not only in their lessons. Teachers and administrators must learn to model the skills we want students to develop, such as good environmental practices, participatory decision-making, and the control and prevention of violence through reporting policies and clear codes of conduct.

**Lack of leadership on global citizenship.** To create a generation that values the common good, we must understand how young people see the world today—and our schools must find ways to foster a broader vision. Goals and targets should be set around 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and regularly assessed to measure progress.

Open discussion of tolerance and human rights can be politically sensitive, but it is critical if we want to overcome divisions and expand the prospects for peace and prosperity. Success will require support from a wide range of stakeholders, including the highest levels of government.



### Tweetable

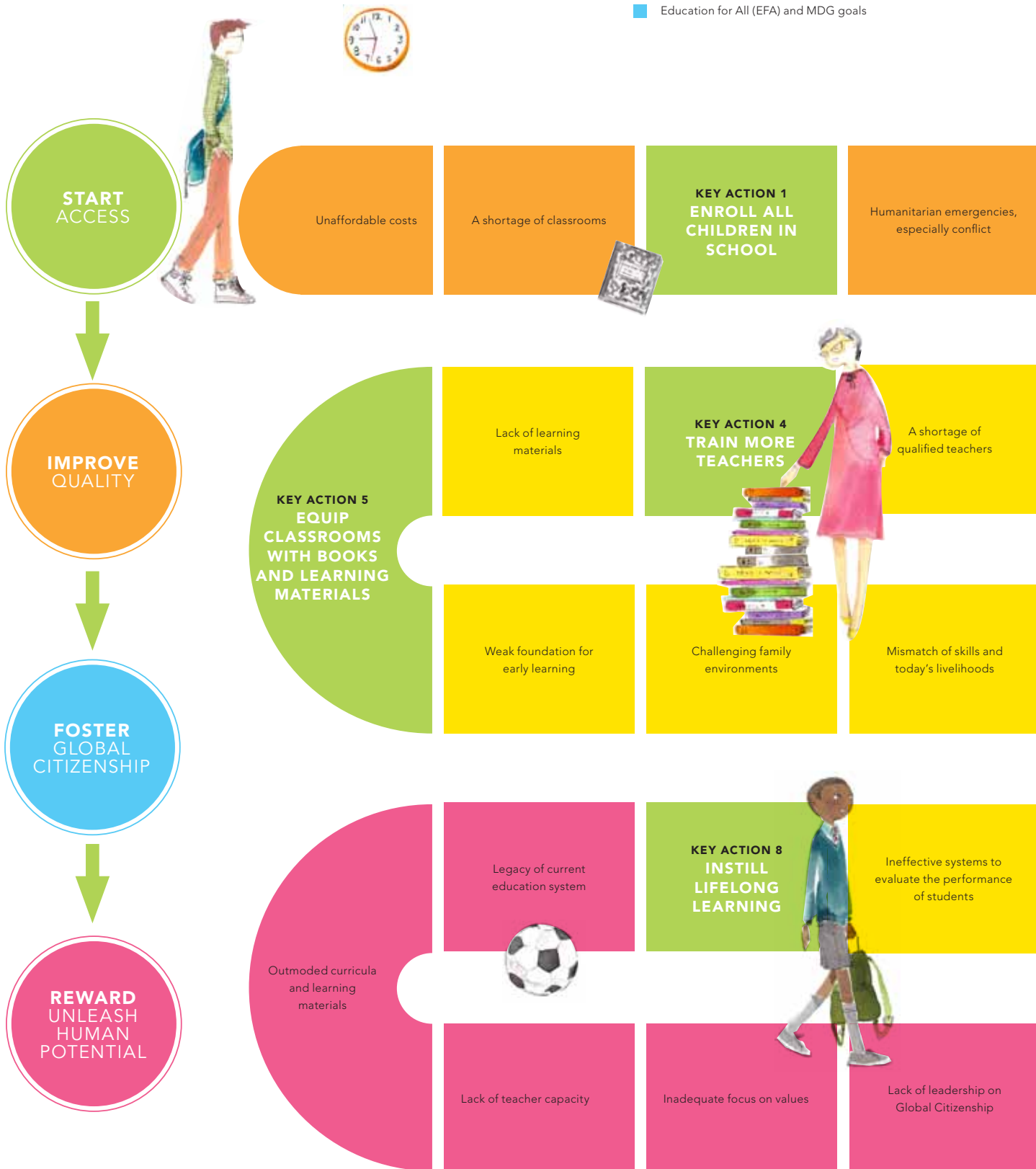
It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write & count. Education must be transformative.

#EducationFirst

# We all win!

Start the journey to ensure that everyone goes to school, everyone learns and everyone contributes to society.

- Barriers To School Enrollment and Completion
- Barriers To Quality Learning
- Barriers To Global Citizenship
- Key Actions
- Education for All (EFA) and MDG goals





**KEY ACTION 2  
SUSTAIN  
EDUCATION IN  
HUMANITARIAN  
CRISES, ESPECIALLY  
CONFLICT**



Gender discrimination

**EFA GOAL 1**

Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

**EFA GOAL 2**

Ensure all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.



**KEY ACTION 3  
ENSURE ALL  
CHILDREN ARE  
LITERATE AND  
NUMERATE**

Child labour

**EFA GOAL 3**

Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.



Language barriers

**KEY ACTION 6  
PREPARE  
STUDENTS FOR  
LIVELIHOODS**

**EFA GOAL 4**

Achieve a 50% improvement in adult literacy, especially among women. Secure equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

**EFA GOAL 5**

Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to basic education of good quality.

**KEY ACTION 7  
IMPROVE CHILD  
NUTRITION**

Hunger and poor nutrition

**EFA GOAL 6**

Improve the quality of education so that measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.



**KEY ACTION 9  
FOSTER GLOBAL  
CITIZENSHIP**

**KEY ACTION 10  
CLOSE THE  
FINANCING GAP**

**MDG 3: PROMOTE  
GENDER EQUALITY AND  
EMPOWER WOMEN**

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

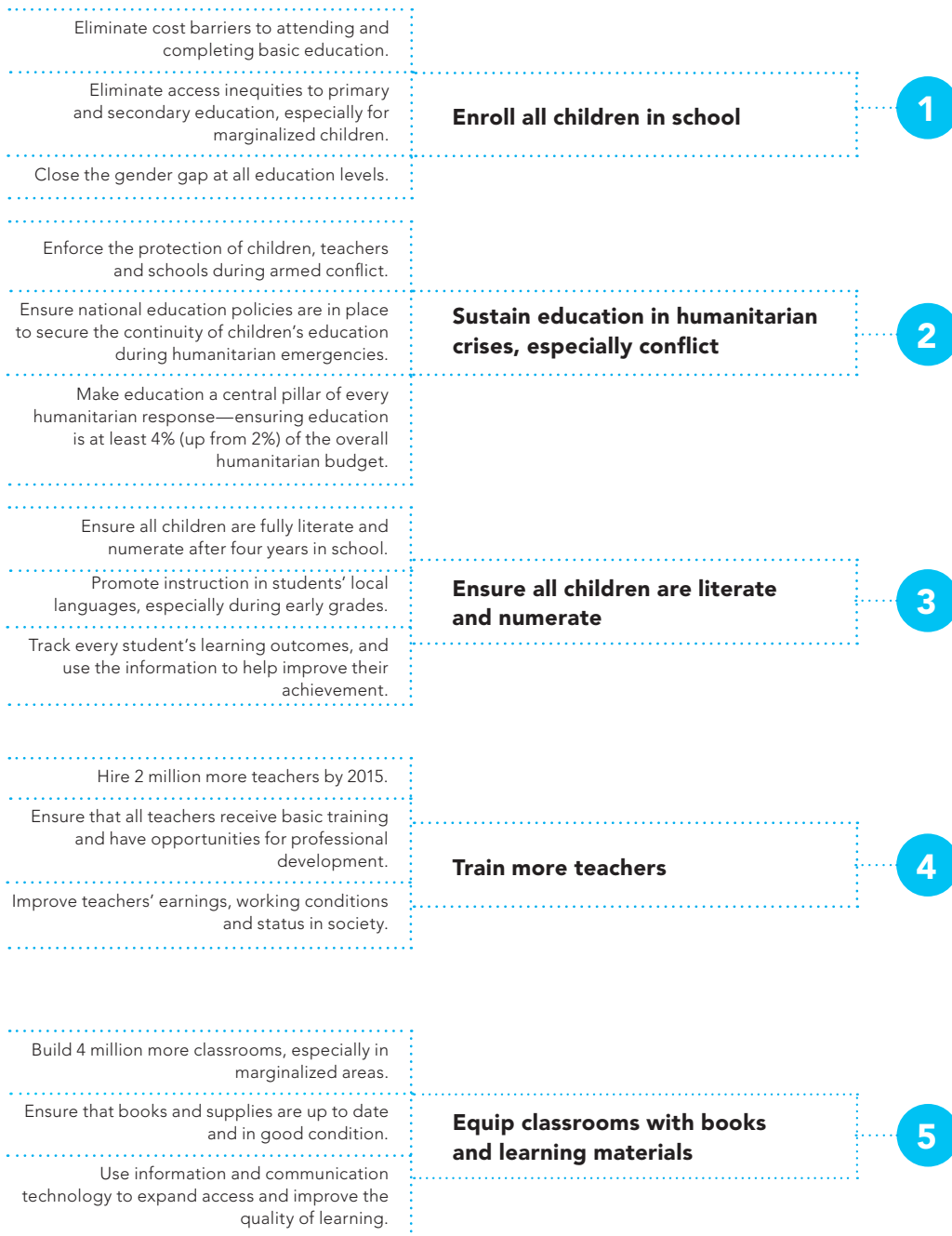
**MDG 2: ACHIEVE  
UNIVERSAL  
PRIMARY EDUCATION**

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



# Ten Key Actions

Despite the gains of the past dozen years, tens of millions of young people still miss out on the benefits of basic education. Millions more attend schools that lack the staff, facilities and resources to impart needed knowledge and skills—let alone nurture global citizenship. There are no automatic blueprints for successful reform but Education First identifies 10 actions that can help the nations of the world meet these challenges. This guide shows briefly what each action entails and how it supports a broader global priority.



6	<b>Prepare students for livelihoods</b>	<p>Expand access to secondary school, halving the number of adolescents out of lower secondary school.</p> <p>Ensure education is relevant for local economies and livelihoods.</p> <p>Prepare young people with critical thinking and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.</p>
7	<b>Improve child nutrition</b>	<p>Halve the number of children under five who suffer from stunted growth (now at 171 million).</p> <p>Provide food and health services through school for poor children.</p> <p>Develop systems to identify and help children who need nutritional and social support.</p>
8	<b>Instill lifelong learning</b>	<p>Increase (from 15 to 45%) participation in quality early childhood development programs for marginalized children in low-income countries.</p> <p>Provide alternative learning opportunities, including life skills, to all young people who have missed out on formal schooling.</p> <p>Halve the number of illiterate adults by 2015, especially women.</p>
9	<b>Foster global citizenship</b>	<p>Develop the values, knowledge and skills necessary for peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity.</p> <p>Cultivate a sense of community and active participation in giving back to society.</p> <p>Ensure schools are free of all forms of discrimination, including gender inequality, bullying, violence, xenophobia, and exploitation.</p>
10	<b>Close the financing gap</b>	<p>Invest at least 5% to 6% of national GDPs in education.</p> <p>Increase global investment in poor countries' school systems by an additional US\$ 24 billion per year to fill the financing gap for primary and lower secondary education.</p> <p>Ensure effective and accountable use of resources aligned with national education plans.</p>

# Raise your hand for Education First

Meeting the urgent needs of our children and communities will take more than good intentions. To fulfill the promise of Education First, the United Nations Secretary-General will lend his convening power, supported by his Special Envoy for Global Education and all the education-related UN agencies, to leverage the expertise and experience of existing stakeholders, as well as find innovative ways to engage new networks. Everyone has a critical role to play. When we act with unity of purpose and rise above self interest, miracles will happen.



## Tweetable

An additional  
US\$ 24 billion  
needed annually to  
fill financing gap for  
primary and lower  
secondary education.  
# EducationFirst



# 01

## Governments

There is no substitute for national political leadership, policy and resources. Governments must remove the barriers that keep disadvantaged children out of school or prevent them from learning well when in school. All nations should accelerate the rate of progress towards universal basic education and identify ways for the international community to support them. Countries should train, support and keep their teachers motivated. They should also establish targets for reaching marginalized children and closing all equity gaps.



# 02

## Donors

Donor nations must uphold their commitment to ensure that, “no country seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources”. Donors must increase their multilateral and bilateral aid to protect the education gains of the last decade. Education should be central to the G8, G20, BRICS and other global agendas. Donors should also improve the effectiveness of their funding and target resources to countries most in need. Where possible, they should pool resources to advance shared action plans. Foundations and individual philanthropists should devote more resources to global education, with a focus on reaching the most marginalized. By coordinating their investments with public authorities and other partners, they can leverage resources and advance best practices.



# 03

## Teachers

Teachers must serve as role models for good citizenship, promoting gender equality and supporting the disadvantaged. They must live up to their important role by attending school regularly, not using corporal punishment, and reporting any exploitation or abuse they encounter. They have a unique opportunity to create a supportive environment for children to thrive. School administrators must commit themselves to provide good quality pre-service training systems for new and incoming teachers.



# 04

## Families

Families must share responsibility with the school for their children's learning and success. Home environments affect how prepared and ready children are to learn in school. Parents should create a supportive environment. They should commit to supporting their children in school and must not pressure children to marry or work when it will jeopardize their long-term educational prospects. Parents should be involved and engaged at the classroom and school level. They must also know and claim their children's rights to education.



# 05

## Students

Students should actively demand their right to education. Together with their families, teachers and communities, they should amplify the call for equal access to quality education. Students must hold their end of the deal by taking full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. By studying hard, students have a unique opportunity to fulfill the promise of education and go on to be productive and thoughtful citizens that can give back to their society.



## 06

### Civil society

Non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and community organizations must play an important role as advocates for education, including mounting media campaigns, mobilizing networks and members and engaging governments, donors and multilaterals. Where they are involved in service delivery, they should work, when feasible, in collaboration with local authorities and in support of local plans. They should also focus on taking successful innovations to national scale, monitoring progress and holding governments and education stakeholders to account. The faith-based community should also work to generate support among the communities where they practice and among inter-faith networks.



## 07

### Multi-lateral organizations

Agencies of the United Nations, the Global Partnership for Education, regional intergovernmental bodies and development banks must affirm the high priority of basic education, especially for the poorest, in their development strategies. They should pursue the Millennium Development Goals and the specific targets of Education for All and Education First. They should also help develop more fit for purpose support mechanisms for reaching out of school children, especially those in humanitarian contexts. Such a mechanism should also support innovative financing arrangements to facilitate broader support for the three priorities of Education First.



# 08

## The business community

The private sector must engage in education. It should use its technology, resources and expertise to support national and international efforts in the ‘big push’ to education. In addition to corporate philanthropy, the business community should examine how its core business assets can accelerate progress to 2015 and beyond. There is genuine value for businesses to invest in education in the countries where they operate. Businesses have potential for leadership and advocacy in collaboration with other key stakeholders. Within their own companies, executives can promote education by adopting pro-learning policies and by combating child labour in supply chains.



# 09

## Academia

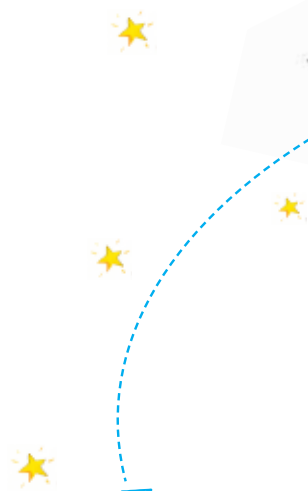
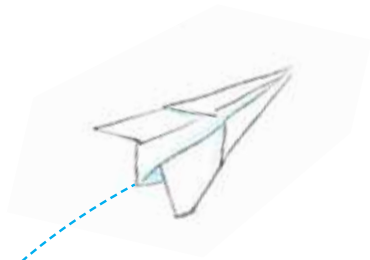
Academic institutions must prioritize their colleges of education, supporting the highest quality intellectual leadership and evidence base to drive sound policy reforms in education. Academic institutions should redouble investments in teacher training programs to create the next generation of teachers and provide ongoing professional development. They should demonstrate leadership on the development of curricula which integrate the values of global citizenship. The academic community could scale up research on what works in this budding area, while working to devise strategies to achieve high-quality education for everyone.



# 10

## The media

The media has a pivotal platform for monitoring and explaining the crisis in education while harnessing the power of technology to make education a global priority. Media outlets should track governments’ progress, highlight effective initiatives, share stories that inspire commitment and follow policy debates. With the help of communities, media can also make excluded voices more audible. Media can help bring all partners to account by making visible areas in which they are falling short.



More prosperous and peaceful societies

More equity

More economic growth

Better skills

More education

More economic growth

More jobs

More investment in secondary and higher education

More girls in school

More teachers in school

More

Better health outcomes as adults

More investment in primary education





# Conclusion

**IT IS TIME FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO FACE THE FACT THAT WE HAVE A CRISIS IN EDUCATION. WE MUST BE CLEAR THAT IF CHILDREN ARE FORCED OUT OF SCHOOL, THEIR GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITIES ARE ALSO FAILING. AS WE APPROACH 2015, WE MUST HAVE UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR ACHIEVING AND EXCEEDING THE GLOBAL EDUCATION GOALS WE HAVE SET FOR OURSELVES.**

**IT WILL TAKE RELENTLESS AND UNCOMPROMISING FOCUS ON THE MOST MARGINALIZED CHILDREN AND COUNTRIES LAGGING FURTHEST BEHIND TO FINISH THE JOB. BUT WE CANNOT STOP UNTIL EVERY CHILD, YOUTH AND ADULT HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO TO SCHOOL, LEARN AND CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY. WHEN WE PUT EDUCATION FIRST, WE SEE AN END TO WASTED POTENTIAL--- WE UNLEASH THE HUMAN SPIRIT.**

## **Millennium Development Goal 2**

### **ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION**

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

## **Millennium Development Goal 3**

### **PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN**

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

## **Education for All goals by 2015**

### **GOAL 1**

Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

### **GOAL 2**

Ensure all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

### **GOAL 3**

Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

### **GOAL 4**

Achieve a 50% improvement in adult literacy, especially among women. Secure equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

### **GOAL 5**

Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to basic education of good quality.

### **GOAL 6**

Improve the quality of education so that measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.



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