

Role of Education in Achieving Millennium Development Goals

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ABSTRACT: Education is a key factor in achieving Millennium Development Goals. Education can help lift people out of poverty. Education equips people with the knowledge and skills they need to increase income and expand employment opportunities. Equal schooling for both boys and girls is the foundation for development. No other policy intervention is likely to have a more positive multiplier effect on progress across all the MDGs than the education of women and girls. Education saves young lives. Evidence shows a strong correlation between educating women and girls and higher maternal and child life expectancy as well as improvements in child and family health and nutrition. Girls and women who are educated are far more likely to immunize their children. Their children are less likely to be malnourished. Fewer mothers would die if they had education. Maternal education is one of the strongest antidotes to childbearing-related risks. Educating girls and women empowers them to make better health-related decisions. Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death and disability among women of childbearing age, claiming over 500,000 lives a year. Girls who are educated are more likely to seek antenatal care. Education is the best vaccine against HIV and AIDS. Education is an agent for sustainable development. A global partnership is needed to fill the financial gap for education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration¹ in 2000 by 189 States Members of the United Nations, 147 of which were represented by their Head of State, was a defining moment for global cooperation in the twenty-first century. The Declaration captured previously agreed goals on international development, and gave birth to a set of concrete and measurable development objectives known as the Millennium Development Goals. Spurred by the Declaration, leaders from both developed and developing countries committed to achieve these interwoven goals by 2015.

The Millennium Development Goals are the highest profile articulation of the internationally agreed development goals associated with the United Nations development agenda, representing the culmination of numerous important United Nations summits held during the previous decade, including summits on sustainable development, education, children, food, women, population and social development. They are the world's quantified, time-bound targets for addressing extreme poverty, hunger and disease, and for promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. They are also an expression of basic human rights: the rights of everyone to good health, education and shelter. The eighth Goal, to build a global partnership for development, includes commitments in the areas of development assistance, debt relief, trade and access to technologies. With the 2015 deadline for meeting the MDGs approaching rapidly, the international community is increasing efforts for the final three years. Although several targets have been met ahead of schedule – including on poverty reduction, water access, slum improvement and gender parity in primary education -- enormous challenges remain.

Education is a key factor in achieving Millennium Development Goals. Education can help lift people out of poverty. Education equips people with the knowledge and skills they need to increase income and expand employment opportunities. Equal schooling for both boys and girls is the foundation for development. No other policy intervention is likely to have a more positive multiplier effect on progress across all the MDGs than the education of women and girls. Education saves young lives. Evidence shows a strong correlation between educating women and girls and higher maternal and child life expectancy as well as improvements in child and family health and nutrition. Girls and women who are educated are far more likely to immunize their children. Their children are less likely to be malnourished. Fewer mothers would die if they had education. Maternal education is one of the strongest antidotes to childbearing-related risks. Educating girls and women empowers them to make better health-related decisions. Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death and disability among women of childbearing age, claiming over 500,000 lives a year. Girls who are

educated are more likely to seek antenatal care. Education is the best vaccine against HIV and AIDS. Education is an agent for sustainable development. A global partnership is needed to fill the financial gap for education.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

More than one billion people are still living in extreme poverty, and approximately 61 million children of primary school age are out of school. Progress has been uneven within countries and regions and severe inequalities persist. According to the World Bank's much cited "dollar-a-day" international poverty line, revised in 2008 to \$1.25 a day in 2005 prices, there were still 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty in 2005, down from 1.8 billion in 1990.⁴ However, as China has accounted for most of this decrease, without China, progress does not look very encouraging; in fact, the number of people living in extreme poverty actually went up between 1990 and 2005 by about 36 million. In sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, poverty and hunger remain stubbornly high. The number of "\$1 a day poor" went up by 92 million in sub-Saharan Africa and by 8 million in West Asia during the period 1990 to 2005.⁵ The poverty situation is more serious when other dimensions of poverty, acknowledged at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, such as deprivation, social exclusion and lack of participation, are also considered.

Despite earlier progress, the number of hungry has been rising since 1995 and the proportion of hungry people in the global population has been rising since 2004- 2006. There are still over a billion hungry people, and more than 2 billion people are deficient in micronutrients; 129 million children were underweight and 195 million under age 5 were stunted. The number of hungry people worldwide rose from 842 million in 1990-1992 to 873 million in 2004-2006 and to 1.02 billion people during 2009, the highest level ever. This was largely a result of reduced access to food because of high food prices and the global financial and economic crisis, which has led to lower incomes and higher unemployment.

An education opens doors to jobs and credit. One year of schooling can increase a person's earnings by 10%; each additional year of schooling can lift average annual GDP by 0.37%. Greater equity in education can help fuel a virtuous cycle of increased growth and accelerated poverty reduction, with benefits for the poor and for society as a whole. Education equips people with the knowledge and skills they need to increase income and expand employment opportunities. When education is broadly shared and reaches the poor, women and marginalized groups, it holds out the prospect that economic growth will be broadly shared. On the other hand, poverty pushes children out of school and into work because parents cannot afford to educate their children.

The Secretary General of UN , on the occasion of International Day for Eradication of Poverty said, "We mark this year's International Day for the Eradication of Poverty at a time of economic austerity in many countries. As governments struggle to balance budgets, funding for anti-poverty measures is under threat. But this is precisely the time to provide the poor with access to social services, income security, decent work and social protection. Only then can we build stronger and more prosperous societies – not by balancing budgets at the expense of the poor. The Millennium Development Goals have galvanized global action that generated great progress. We have cut extreme poverty by half and corrected the gender imbalance in early education, with as many girls now attending primary school as boys. Many more communities have access to clean drinking water. Millions of lives have been saved thanks to investments in health..... At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June of this year, leaders from around the world declared that poverty eradication is "the greatest global challenge facing the world today. We are now developing the UN development framework for the period after 2015, building on the MDGs while confronting persistent inequalities and new challenges facing people and the planet. Our aim is to produce a bold and ambitious framework that can foster transformational change benefiting people now and for generations to come. Rampant poverty, which has festered for far too long, is linked to social unrest and threats to peace and security. On this International Day, let us make an investment in our common future by helping to lift people out of poverty so that they, in turn, can help to transform our world."

The global Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement is doing good work for improving the nutrition for all. SUN is a global push for action to improve the nutrition of all—especially women and children. With the recent additions of Burundi and Kenya, SUN now includes 30 countries that are dedicating their efforts to strengthening nutrition. These countries are home to 56 million children suffering from stunted growth due to chronic malnutrition, representing more than one-quarter of the world's stunted children. Supporters of the SUN Movement focus on implementing solutions that directly improve nutrition— such as support for breastfeeding or ensuring access to essential vitamins and minerals—as well as efforts that have a broader influence on nutrition, such as empowering women or improving farming practices to increase accessibility of nutrient-rich crops. To secure better nutrition for all who are at risk, the movement seeks to intensify action within countries so that all people benefit from well-run programmes. It encourages increased, integrated and responsible support from a broad range of partners. While 30 national governments have established the foundation for long-term commitments, local and international groups are also aligning their support. More than 100 organizations representing development agencies, the UN, civil society, the private sector and research institutions have endorsed the SUN road map, with additional countries and organizations expected to join in the near future.

The Scaling Up Nutrition Movement is closely aligned with the ‘Zero Hunger Challenge’ launched by the Secretary-General in June of this year. The Challenge invites everyone to be boldly ambitious as we work for a future where everyone enjoys their right to food and all food systems are resilient. The Challenge has five elements: to end malnutrition in pregnancy and early childhood; to achieve 100 per cent access to adequate food all year round; to make all food systems sustainable; to double the productivity and income of smallholders, particularly women; and to achieve a zero waste or loss of food. As countries demonstrate success with Scaling up Nutrition, they are also contributing to the goals of the UN Secretary-General’s initiative to improve women’s and children’s health as part of the ‘Every Woman Every Child’ effort.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Every child has the right to go to school, but millions are still being left behind. Inequalities continue to pose major barriers to attaining universal primary education. Children from the poorest 20 per cent of households account for over 40 per cent of all out-of-school children in many developing countries. In most developing countries, children from the wealthiest 20 per cent of households have already achieved universal primary education, while those from the poorest quintile have a long way to go. Income-based disparities intersect with wider inequalities: children from rural areas, slums and areas affected by or emerging from conflict, children with disabilities and other disadvantaged children face major obstacles in accessing good quality education.

Universal primary education involves entering school at an appropriate age, progressing through the system and completing a full cycle. Today, there are over 30 million more children in school than in the beginning of the decade. There have been some remarkable success stories. Primary school enrolments have increased dramatically in sub-Saharan Africa as well as in South and West Asia. In Ethiopia there are three million more children in school than in 2000, thanks to an ambitious rural school construction programme and the abolition of primary school fees - a widespread obstacle to universal primary education. However, there are 72 million children still out of school. Nearly half of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa. On current trends, 56 million children could still be out of school by 2015.

Of those students enrolled in school, millions drop out or leave school without having gained the most basic literacy and numeracy skills. Additionally, pupil/teacher ratios in many countries are in excess of 40:1 and a severe teacher shortage exists. Many governments are neglecting the “education poor” – those on the fringes of society, ranging from indigenous populations to street children, from the disabled to linguistic and cultural minorities. New approaches must be tailor-made for such groups – simply increasing opportunities for standard schooling is not enough. Unless we reach the children who are being left behind, the goal of education for all children will not be reached. United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon secured over US\$1.5 billion in commitments for a new initiative to make education a top global priority and boost progress towards the Millennium Development Goal on education. He said, “I am encouraged and grateful for all the generous commitments made, which gives Education First a boost towards achieving its goals. Our shared goals are simple. We want children to attend primary school and to progress toward higher education that will Education First seeks to make a breakthrough to mobilize all partners –both traditional and new – to achieve universal primary education ahead of the 2015 target date for the MDGs. An additional \$24 billion is needed annually to cover the shortfall for children out of primary and lower secondary school.”

Western Union Foundation and the MasterCard Foundation were among the first to solidify their support for the initiative. Western Union has pledged to directly move over US\$1 billion for education globally, providing US\$10,000 per day in grants for 1 million days of school. Under MasterCard’s ‘Scholars Program’, the US\$500 million education initiative will allow 15,000 talented, yet economically disadvantaged students, particularly from the African region, to access and complete their secondary and university education. At the end of the 1990s, 108 million children of primary school age were not enrolled in schools. That number has fallen to 61 million today, according to UNESCO’s forthcoming Global Monitoring Report.

The gap between boy and girl enrolment has also been greatly reduced. These are significant achievements, largely due to national and international resolve to act on shared goals for education.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Redressing gender inequality remains one of the most difficult goals almost everywhere, with implications that cut across many other issues. The root causes of gender disadvantage and oppression lie in societal attitudes and norms and power structures. The share of national parliamentary seats held by women has increased only slowly. Still, at the present rate it will take another 40 years for developing countries to reach between 40 and 60 per cent share of parliamentary seats for women. The gender gap in primary school enrolment has narrowed in the past decade, albeit at a slow pace. In developing countries in 2007, over 95 girls of primary school age were in school for every 100 boys, compared with 91 in 1999. Progress in secondary schooling has been slower, and in some regions, gaps are widening. In sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of

enrolment of girls compared with boys in secondary education fell from 82 per cent in 1999 to 79 per cent in 2007. Only 53 of the 171 countries with available data had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education, 14 more than in 1999. While participation of women in the labour force has increased, there are still significant gender gaps in participation rates, occupational levels and wages. Paid employment for women has expanded slowly and women continue to assume the largest share of unpaid work. Close to two thirds of all employed women in developing countries work as contributing family workers or as workers on their own account, typically in forms of employment that are extremely vulnerable and lack job security and benefits. Women's share of waged non-agricultural employment has increased in the last decade but only marginally, and women have generally failed to get decent jobs. In the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, for example, the share of females in total employment is below 30 per cent. Violence against women remains a major blight on humanity everywhere. While there have been increased initiatives to address violence against women, such efforts are often not comprehensive, consistent, sustained or well-coordinated.

Equal schooling for both boys and girls is the foundation for development. No other policy intervention is likely to have a more positive multiplier effect on progress across all the MDGs than the education of women and girls. Evidence shows a strong correlation between educating women and girls and an increase in women's earnings, improved child and family health and nutrition, an increase in school enrolment, protection against HIV infection, higher maternal and child life expectancy, reduced fertility rates and delayed marriage.

Several million more girls are now in school compared with 2000 and girls' access to education has markedly improved in some countries, such as Bangladesh, Benin and Nepal. India is approaching gender parity in terms of enrolment. Nevertheless, there are still more boys than girls attending school in many countries. Some 54 per cent of the world's out-of-school children are girls. Twenty-eight countries have less than 90 girls in school per 100 boys. In many countries, girls are faced with barriers to education ranging from negative attitudes to the burden of household work and distance to school. Special efforts – from recruiting female teachers to supporting poor families to making schools more girl-friendly – are needed to redress the balance. Of the 759 million adults who cannot read or write, around two-thirds are women. This proportion has remained unchanged since 2000.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Education saves young lives. Educating a girl greatly reduces the chance that her child will die before the age of five. In many countries, having a mother with secondary or higher education more than halves the risk of child mortality compared to having a mother with no education. Having a mother with primary education reduces child death rates by almost half in the Philippines and around one third in Bolivia. Evidence shows a strong correlation between educating women and girls and higher maternal and child life expectancy as well as improvements in child and family health and nutrition. Girls and women who are educated are far more likely to immunize their children. Their children are less likely to be malnourished. In Niger, the child of a woman with secondary education is over four times less likely to be malnourished than the child of a woman with no education. Having a mother who had completed primary education reduces the risk of stunting by 22 per cent in Bangladesh and 26 per cent in Indonesia.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Fewer mothers would die if they had education. Although greater progress is still needed in significantly reducing maternal deaths, the number of women dying of pregnancy and childbirth related complications has almost halved in 20 years according to a report published by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank.

The report "Trends in maternal mortality: 1990 to 2010", shows that from 1990 to 2010, the annual number of maternal deaths dropped from more than 543,000 to 287,000 – a decline of 47 per cent. While substantial progress has been achieved in almost all regions, many countries particularly in sub-Saharan Africa will fail to reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of reducing maternal death by 75 per cent from 1990 to 2015.

Every two minutes, a woman dies of pregnancy-related complications, the four most common causes being: severe bleeding after childbirth, infections, high blood pressure during pregnancy, and unsafe abortion. Ninety-nine per cent of maternal deaths occur in developing countries; most could have been prevented with proven interventions.

"We know exactly what to do to prevent maternal deaths: improve access to voluntary family planning, invest in health workers with midwifery skills, and ensure access to emergency obstetric care when complications arise. These interventions have proven to save lives and accelerate progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal 5," said Dr. Osotimehin.

Disparity exists within and across countries and regions. One third of all maternal deaths occur in just two countries – in 2010, almost 20 per cent of deaths (56,000) were in India and 14 per cent (40,000) were in Nigeria. Of the 40 countries with the world's highest rates of maternal death, 36 are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Maternal education is one of the strongest antidotes to childbearing-related risks. Educating girls and women empowers them to make better health-related decisions. Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death and disability among women of childbearing age, claiming over 500,000 lives a year. Girls who are educated are more likely to seek antenatal care.

The world's most dangerous place to give birth is Niger, where women face a 1 in 7 chance of fatality. The odds in rich countries average 1 in 8000. risks are greatest. Deliveries attended by skilled health workers in developing regions have increased since 1990, from 53 per cent in 1990 to 61 per cent in 2007, but there has been little progress in reducing maternal deaths; maternal mortality declined only marginally, from 480 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 450 in 2005. At this rate, the target of 120 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015 cannot be achieved. As part of broader investment in public health programmes, adequate financing for maternal health, especially dedicated to ensure safe deliveries, is critical. Unsafe abortions continued to account for one out of eight maternal deaths in 2005, despite increased contraceptive use among married women and women in unions. Nevertheless, 11 per cent of women in developing countries (including 24 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa) who want to delay or stop childbearing are not using contraception.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Indian icon and former Miss World winner Aishwarya Rai Bachchan was appointed as UNAIDS International Goodwill Ambassador, to focus helping the Organization's efforts in combating the spread of HIV infections in children. Education is the best vaccine against HIV and AIDS. With an estimated 6,800 people newly infected with HIV every day, education must be at the forefront of any response to HIV and AIDS. Education can impart knowledge and skills and encourage positive attitudes and behaviour that will reduce a person's chance of getting HIV. Educational institutions take a central role in HIV prevention efforts because they are the best way to reach large numbers of young people. Similarly, school health, awareness and hygiene programmes help to combat malaria and other diseases

Progress is being made, but national education sectors need to reinforce their pivotal role. One study, covering thirty-two countries, found that women with post-primary education were five times more likely than illiterate women to know about HIV/AIDS. Education has been recognised by UNAIDS to be a key element of effective HIV prevention. Even in the absence of HIV-specific interventions, education offers an important measure of protection against HIV. The Global Campaign for Education has estimated that universal primary education would prevent 700,000 new HIV infections each year. Education reduces the vulnerability of girls, and each year of schooling offers greater protective benefits. Recent survey data from 64 countries indicate that only 40% of males and 38% of females aged 15-24 have comprehensive and correct knowledge about HIV and how to avoid transmission. These levels are far short of the target established at the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) of 95% by 2010. School-based HIV education offers a very cost-effective approach to prevention as schools provide a practical means to reach large numbers of young people from diverse social backgrounds

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Some progress has been achieved towards the target of halving the proportion of people without access to clean water, but the proportion without improved sanitation decreased by only 8 percentage points between 1990 and 2006. The goal of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers has proved to be much less ambitious than necessary to reverse the trend of increasing numbers of slum dwellers.

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer has resulted in the production and use of over 98 per cent of all controlled ozone depleting substances being successfully phased out. In contrast, the rate of growth of carbon dioxide emissions was much higher during the 1995-2004 period than during the 1970-1994 period, and that trend has not changed. While net deforestation rates have decreased, some 13 million hectares of the world's forests are still lost each year, including six million hectares of primary forest.¹⁴ This loss has been only partially compensated for by afforestation. As a result, worldwide, around 7 million hectares of forest cover is lost every year. The target to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 has not been met. In the latest reports submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, many Governments admit that the target will be missed at the national level. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has reported that nearly 17,000 plant and animal species are known to be threatened with extinction. Major threats and drivers of biodiversity loss, such as over-consumption, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution and climate change are not yet being effectively tackled. Education helps individuals to make decisions that meet the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) addresses key issues such as poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, climate change, gender equality, corporate social responsibility and protection of indigenous cultures. ESD can help us

to live sustainably. It aims to change the way we think, behave, look at the world, interact with nature and address social, economic and environmental problems. Governments are realizing this: according to a recent survey, 79 countries now have a national ESD coordination body.

Goal 8: Develop global partnerships for development

A global partnership is needed to fill the financial gap for education. Aid for basic education in the world's poorest countries came to only US\$2.7 billion in 2007, a far cry from the \$US16 billion needed annually to reach education-related development goals. Developing countries can also do more – by making education a priority. If low-income countries spent 0.7% of their GDP on education, it could make about US\$7 billion available per year for basic education.

II. CONCLUSION

There are many ways in which education could help to increase the impact on the MDGs, particularly in the areas of public health and environmental sustainability. Fighting child mortality and improving girls' empowerment may be assisted by curricula on cleanliness, basic sanitation, and measures to minimize contagious diseases. Positive behaviours can be learned and enforced in school. The same is true for environmental sustainability - educational programmes can be used, for instance, to stress the need to conserve and not waste water and trees. School feeding programmes, such as those introduced in many countries, can directly improve nutritional status. Schools can provide the space for promoting gender equality and empowerment broadly across society. This can be done both through subject teaching and the design of gender-sensitive learning materials and through behaviour which is encouraged during lesson-time and outside of it. Increasing the number of female head teachers will provide important role models. So the expansion of basic education leads to improvements in the other MDGs across the population in general.

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