

The State of the World's Children 1999



Education



THE STATE
OF THE WORLD'S
CHILDREN
1999

Carol Bellamy, Executive Director,
United Nations Children's Fund

Contents

Foreword by Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations 4

Chapter I

Education For All: Making the right a reality

The State of the World's Children 1999 reports on the efforts of the international community to ensure that all its children enjoy their human right to a high-quality education — efforts that are resulting in an 'education revolution'. The goal of this worldwide movement: Education For All. 5

Towards that end, the work of governments, non-governmental organizations, educators, communities, parents and children is informed by a definition of education that includes, but goes far beyond, schooling. Within this definition, education is an essential human right, a force for social change — and the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth. Education is a path towards international peace and security.

This chapter includes examples of initiatives that meet the child's right to education at the international, regional, national and local levels. It is divided into three sections.

The right to education: This section explores the historical context in which children's right to education has been repeatedly affirmed, for example, in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 World Summit for Children and the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand). 7

The education revolution: As the world's commitment to the principle of Education For All is put into practice at the local level, certain elements have emerged as necessary for its success: Schooling should provide the foundation for learning for life; it needs to be accessible, of high quality and flexible; it must be gender sensitive and emphasize girls' education; the State needs to be a key partner; and it should begin with care for the young child 21

Investing in human rights: Despite the progress of the last decade, the education revolution seems in danger of being cut short by an apparent dearth of resources and growing indebtedness in the developing world. This section argues that, despite these obstacles, education is one of the best investments a country can make in order to prosper. It calls for the political will necessary to make the vision of Education For All a global reality. 79

Chapter II

Statistical tables 91

Education is a multilinked variable in a country's statistical profile — connected not only to the obvious measure of literacy but also to a range of other indices including mortality, fertility and life expectancy rates, population growth, nutritional status and economic progress. The eight tables in this report profile 193 countries listed alphabetically. The countries are measured by basic indicators, nutritional status, health status, educational levels, demographics, economic indicators, the status of women and the rate of progress on major indicators since 1960. Countries are shown on page 93 in descending order of their estimated 1997 under-five mortality rates, which is also the first basic indicator in all tables.

Panels

- 1 EDUCATION IN FREE FALL: A REGION IN THE MIDST OF TRANSITION 16
- 2 WHAT CHILDREN UNDERSTAND: THE MONITORING LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT 24
- 3 BEYOND THE RULER: COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING IN TUNISIA 26
- 4 SECOND-HAND COMPUTER, FIRST-CLASS VISION: THAILAND'S CHILD PROJECT 28

5	A TANZANIAN SCHOOL WELCOMES THE DISABLED	32
6	THE FLOATING CLASSROOM: SCHOOL CLUSTERS IN CAMBODIA	36
7	JOYFUL LEARNING: EMPOWERING INDIA'S TEACHERS	42
8	WHICH LANGUAGE FOR EDUCATION?	44
9	A NEW BEGINNING: EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES	46
10	IN INDIA: HELPING THE POOR CHOOSE SCHOOL	48
11	EGYPT'S COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: A MODEL FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS	50
12	THE MACHO PROBLEM: WHERE BOYS ARE UNDERACHIEVING	58
13	WOMEN EDUCATORS PUSH THE LIMITS FOR GIRLS IN AFRICA	60
14	PARENT EDUCATION: SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHERS	76

Spotlights

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	10
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	10
SOUTH ASIA	14
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC	14
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	15
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES, AND THE BALTIC STATES	18
INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES	19

Text figures

FIG. 1	CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL	8
FIG. 2	NET PRIMARY ENROLMENT, BY REGION (AROUND 1995)	9
FIG. 3	REACHING GRADE FIVE, BY REGION (AROUND 1995)	9
FIG. 4	INTERNATIONAL MILESTONES FOR EDUCATION	12
FIG. 5	NET PRIMARY ENROLMENT, BY REGION (1960-2000)	13
FIG. 6	AIDS ORPHANS: A LOOMING EDUCATION CRISIS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	34
FIG. 7	PRIMARY ENROLMENT: WHERE THE BOYS AND GIRLS ARE	52
FIG. 8	EDUCATION'S IMPACT ON CHILD MORTALITY	53
FIG. 9	AT A GLANCE: THE GENDER GAP IN PRIMARY EDUCATION AND RELATED INDICATORS	54
FIG. 10	GENERATIONAL IMPACT OF EDUCATING GIRLS	57
FIG. 11	WHO BENEFITS FROM PUBLIC SPENDING ON EDUCATION?	63
FIG. 12	SCHOOL MAPPING	67
FIG. 13	MEENA: AN ANIMATED ADVOCATE FOR GIRLS' RIGHTS	76
FIG. 14	COST OF EDUCATION FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2010	85

<i>References</i>	87
-------------------	----

<i>Index</i>	128
--------------	-----

<i>Glossary</i>	131
-----------------	-----

Foreword

Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.

Yet, as *The State of the World's Children 1999* report points out, 130 million children in the developing world are denied this right — almost two thirds of them girls. Nearly 1 billion people, or a sixth of the world's population, are illiterate — the majority of them women. This is a violation of rights and a loss of potential and productivity that the world can no longer tolerate.

Half a century ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights spelled out a global vision for peace and prosperity that included the right to education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child — the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history — enshrines the right of all children to a primary education that will give them the skills they need to continue learning throughout life.

This report demonstrates that the right to education is guiding classroom practice, shaping curricula and finding practical expression in schools around the world. It is establishing schools as oases of respect and encouragement for children. It is giving us classrooms where the principles of democracy are upheld and embraced. It is contributing to enhanced retention rates and reduced drop-out rates.

Motivated students leave school more prepared to take up the reins of the future; they are better empowered to improve their own lives and, later, the lives of their children.

When the right to education is assured, the whole world gains. There is no instant solution to the violations of that right, but it begins with a simple proposition: that on the eve of the 21st century, there is no higher priority, no mission more important, than that of Education For All.



Kofi A. Annan
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Chapter I

Education For All: Making the right a reality



UNICEF/92-0052/Lemoyne

A primary school student in China.



The right to education

Nearly a billion people will enter the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names — much less operate a computer or understand a simple application form. And they will live, as now, in more desperate poverty and poorer health than most of those who can. They are the world's functional illiterates — and their numbers are growing.¹

The consequences of illiteracy are profound, even potentially life-threatening. They flow from the denial of a fundamental human right: the right to education, proclaimed in agreements ranging from the 50-year-old Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the world's most universally embraced human rights instrument.

Yet despite these ringing affirmations over the past half-century, an estimated 855 million people — nearly one sixth of humanity — will be functionally illiterate on the eve of the millennium.² At the same time, over 130 million children of school age in the developing world are growing up without access to basic education,³ while millions of others languish

in sub-standard learning situations where little learning takes place (Figs. 1-3). Girls crowd these ranks disproportionately, representing nearly two of every three children in the developing world who do not receive a primary education (approximately 73 million of the 130 million out-of-school children.)⁴

Ensuring the right of education is a matter of morality, justice and economic sense. There is an unmistakable correlation between education and mortality rates, especially child mortality. The implications for girls' education are particularly critical.

A 10 percentage point increase in girls' primary enrolment can be expected to decrease infant mortality by 4.1 deaths per 1,000, and a similar rise in girls' secondary enrolment by another 5.6 deaths per 1,000.⁵

This would mean concretely, in Pakistan, for example, that an extra year of schooling for an additional 1,000 girls would ultimately prevent roughly 60 infant deaths.⁶

The implications of the lack of schooling, however, go further.

Each extra year of school for girls can also translate into a reduction in fertility rates, as well as a decrease in maternal deaths in childbirth. In Brazil, illiterate women have an average of 6.5 children, whereas those with secondary education have 2.5 children.

Article 28

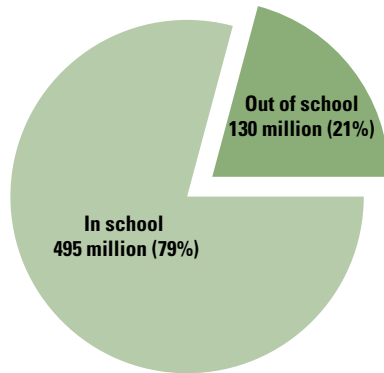
1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
 - (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
 - (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
 - (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
 - (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
 - (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.
3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international co-operation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

— from the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Photo: Learning to write, as these girls are doing in Bogotá, is an opportunity denied more than 130 million children without access to basic education. Nearly two thirds of them are girls.

Fig. 1 Children out of school

There are about 130 million primary school age children in developing countries who do not attend school, out of a total of about 625 million children of this age group in these countries.



Source: *Facts & Figures 1998*, UNICEF, New York, 1998; and *World Population Prospects, The 1996 Revision*, United Nations, New York, 1997.

In the southern Indian state of Kerala, where literacy is universal, the infant mortality rate is the lowest in the entire developing world — and the fertility rate is the lowest in India.⁷

The denial of the right to education hurts people's capacity to work productively, to sustain and protect themselves and their families. Those who understand the importance of health, sanitation and nutrition help to lower their families' incidence of preventable illness and death, while increasing their potential for economic productivity and financial and social stability.

On a society-wide scale, the denial of education harms the cause of democracy and social progress — and, by extension, international peace and security. By impairing the full development of children, illiteracy makes it more difficult for them to make their way in society as adults in a spirit of understanding, peace and gender equality among all peoples and groups.

And there is another, harder-to-measure, consequence: For the functionally illiterate, the joys and revelations of the vast world of art and of other cultures — indeed, the love of learning itself — are largely beyond reach.

Illiteracy begins as a sad fact of daily life for millions of children who are, more often than not, girls. The reasons are numerous. For girls, their gender alone may keep them home, locked in subsistence chores — or so isolated in the classroom that they become discouraged and drop out. For tens of millions of children, girls and boys alike, education is beyond reach because they are full-time workers, many toiling in hazardous and exploitative forms of child labour. For others, there may simply be no school for them to attend, or if there is, it fails to ensure their right to education. There may be too few quali-

fied teachers, or a child's family may not be able to afford the fees. The school may be too far from home. Or it may lack books and supplies.

Even those children fortunate enough to be enrolled may find themselves in a cheerless, overcrowded and threatening place, an environment that endangers rather than empowers them and crushes their initiative and curiosity.

Over 150 million children in developing countries start school but do not reach grade five.⁸ They are not emerging with the literacy, numeracy and life skills that are the foundation for learning throughout life.

The question of quality

It is not enough simply to ensure that children attend school. The quality of education is also of paramount concern. *How* knowledge, skills and values are transmitted is as important as *what* is learned.

Children must also be able to participate fully in the educational process. They need to be treated with dignity and allowed to develop from their school experience a level of self-esteem, self-discipline and sheer enjoyment of learning that will stand them in good stead throughout their lives.

This applies particularly to girls, who often find patterns of social discrimination against them repeated in classrooms, where they are not called on in class, and where they are shunted into less challenging areas of study and undervalued by teachers, by male classmates and by the general school culture.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear: Every child has the right to quality education that is relevant to her or his individual development and life. But demands even for access cannot be assured in much of the developing world. In many areas, there is little in the way of resources —

or incentive — for schools to make themselves more relevant and appealing to students.

In many countries, particularly the lowest-income countries, the result is a pervasive grimness in the physical environment and the intellectual atmosphere of learning environments. Sometimes there is not even a chalkboard. Classrooms in rural areas tend to be roughly constructed. With daylight the only illumination, the rooms are dim. Conditions are often only marginally better in poor urban schools.

Overcrowding is common, especially in the early grades and in urban areas. In a number of countries, only two of every five pupils in grade one have a place to sit. A teacher in Bangladesh may have as many as 67 pupils; in Equatorial Guinea there may be as many as 90.⁹ And many still do not have access.

Massed together, children struggle for space, for a modicum of attention from an overtaxed teacher, for a glimpse at a tattered text, often in a language they cannot grasp. Diseases and pests spread easily. With little to engage the students, teachers resort to rigid discipline and corporal punishment. What is taught often has little relevance to children's daily lives.

Teaching materials frequently reinforce stereotypes, compounding the physical problems that affect girls, such as distance from home and the lack of toilet facilities.

The poor quality of education in schools is itself a depressant on the demand for education, even where access exists. Child labour experts have found that some children would rather work than be subject to a school regime that is irrelevant to their needs.

Assane, a 10-year-old shoeshine boy interviewed in the Senegalese city of Ziguinchor, made the case clearly:

I don't need to go to school. What can I learn there? I know children

*who went to school. Their family paid for the fees and the uniforms and now they are educated. But you see them sitting around. Now they are useless to their families. They don't know anything about farming or trading or making money... I know I need to learn to read and write [but]... if anyone tries to put me in school, I will run away.*¹⁰

Nevertheless, basic education remains the most important single factor in protecting children from such hazards as exploitative child labour and sexual exploitation. The case for this can be found both in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the findings of the 1997 International Conference on Child Labour, held in Oslo (Norway). In the developing world, there are estimated to be 250 million children trapped in child labour, and many of them receive no schooling whatever.

Schools in many countries have simply not been good enough to attract or retain children on the scale needed for two principal reasons: they are chronically underfinanced, and they are too expensive for the majority of the population. (These and other problems are addressed in 'Investing in human rights', on page 79.)

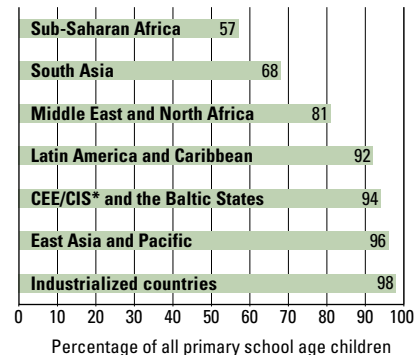
But the delivery of education itself has also been poorly organized, from overall management of school systems to the way lessons are taught in the classroom. The decreasing enrolment rates at both primary and secondary levels in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, where education was once paramount, are dramatic testimony to this.

Education and child rights

The proclamation of the right to education in the Universal Declaration of

Fig. 2 Net primary enrolment, by region (around 1995)

Net primary enrolment — the number of children enrolled in primary school as a percentage of the total number of children in the primary school age group — is a key indicator of progress towards the goal of Education For All. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the regions facing the greatest challenges in enrolling all their children in primary school by the year 2000.

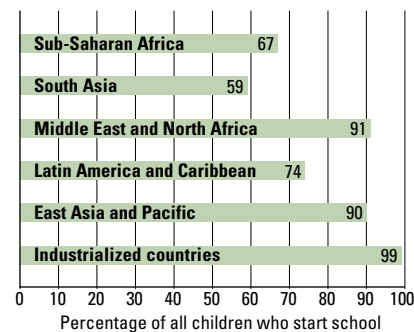


*Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Source: UNESCO and UNICEF, 1998.

Fig. 3 Reaching grade five, by region (around 1995)

In addition to those millions of children who do not attend school, many others start school but do not reach grade five. Completion of grade four is considered one indication of minimal education attainment. Note the difference in pattern when this chart is compared to the one on net primary enrolment (Fig. 2).



Note: Data for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States were not available.

Source: *The State of the World's Children 1999*, UNICEF, New York, 1998 (Table 4).

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Enrolment: From only 25 per cent in 1960, the regional primary enrolment rate climbed to nearly 60 per cent by 1980. After declining in the 1980s, enrolment is again close to 60 per cent. Over 40 million primary school age children are not in school. In nine countries, rural primary enrolment lags significantly behind urban, with the gap ranging from 26 percentage points in the Central African Republic to 49 percentage points in Burkina Faso.

Gender: In 1960, almost twice as many boys as girls in the region attended primary school. The gap has narrowed considerably, with girls' primary attendance rate now 57 per cent and boys' 61 per cent. Benin has the greatest disparity in primary enrolment, with the girls' rate about 30 percentage points less than boys'. Only a third of women in the region were literate in 1980; now, nearly half are literate.

Effectiveness: In the region, one third of children enrolled in primary school drop out before reaching grade five. Chad, Comoros, the Congo and Gabon, with more than one third of primary school students repeating grades, are among countries with high repetition rates.

Constraints: Armed conflicts and economic pressures from debt and structural adjustment policies have taken a severe toll on education. The region includes over 30 heavily indebted countries, and governments spend as much on debt repayment as on health and basic education combined — \$12 billion in 1996, and per capita education spending is less than half that of 1980. Large class sizes, poor teacher education, crumbling buildings and lack of learning materials in a number of countries all reduce the quality of education.

Progress and innovations: Among countries achieving primary enrolment rates of 90 per cent or more are: Botswana, Cape Verde, Malawi, Mauritius, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Malawi made primary education free in 1994, and the attendance rate is now over 80 per cent. When Uganda made primary education free for four children per family in 1997, enrolment doubled from 2.6 million to 5.2 million. The African Girl's Education Initiative works with governments and communities in over 20 countries to boost girls' enrolment.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Enrolment: In 1970, about half of primary school age children were enrolled. Now, about four out of five children are in school. Oman, with no education system prior to 1970, has about 70 per cent of primary school age children in school. In Morocco, only about a third of children of this age group in rural areas are in school, less than half the rate in urban areas, and rural enrolment in Upper Egypt is about 20 percentage points less than in Lower Egypt.

Gender: In 1960, only a third of girls in the region attended primary school, compared with two thirds of boys. Now, about three quarters of primary school age girls are enrolled. The gap between girls' and boys' rates is more than 10 percentage points. Yemen has the greatest gender gap, with the girls' primary attendance rate over 30 percentage points less than boys'. Bahrain, Cyprus, Iran, Jordan, Libya and Tunisia have high primary enrolment rates and parity, or close to it, between boys and girls.

Effectiveness: About 9 out of 10 children who start primary school reach grade five, though high drop-out and repetition rates are a concern in some countries.

Constraints: Conflicts in Algeria, Sudan and the West Bank and Gaza have disrupted education, and sanctions against Iraq have led to school closings, loss of teachers and increased drop-outs. Improved teacher training and curricula are needed to upgrade the quality of education in the region. Though the portion of expenditures by the region's central governments allocated to education have been high, education spending has recently fallen. Nearly half the countries in the region have not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a concern because the denial of women's rights affects girls' education.

Progress and innovations: Iran is promoting education for women and girls in rural areas, with girls' primary attendance now over 90 per cent. Programmes in Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen are bringing education to girls in poor areas through community schools located closer to their homes.

Human Rights was the beginning of a broad effort by the United Nations to promote social, economic and cultural rights in tandem with civil and political rights (Fig. 4).

The indivisibility of these rights is guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a result, what were once seen as the *needs* of children have been elevated to something far harder to ignore: their *rights*.

The Convention became binding international law on 2 September 1990, nine months after its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly; it has now been ratified by 191 countries. No other human rights instrument has ever won such widespread support in so short a time.

Ratified by all but two nations (Somalia and the United States), the Convention's acceptance means that 96 per cent of the world's children live in countries that are legally bound to guarantee the full spectrum of child rights: civil, political, social, cultural and economic.

Article 28 recognizes the right of children to education, requiring States parties, among other things, to provide free, compulsory, basic schooling, and to protect the child's dignity in all disciplinary matters, and to promote international cooperation in educational matters. Article 29 calls on governments to ensure that education leads to the fullest possible development of each child's ability and to respect for the child's parents and cultural identity and for human rights.

Quality education can hinge on something as simple as providing a child with a pencil where there are none. And at the most fundamental level, the fact of access itself is a priceless opportunity for a child deprived of education.

The vision of education enshrined in the Convention and other human rights instruments recognizes the right of education as the underpinning for

the practice of democratic citizenship. The Convention is thus a guide to the kind of education that is essential both to children's development and to social progress.

The Convention's perspective on quality education encompasses not only children's cognitive needs but also their physical, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development. Education so conceived unfolds from the child's perspective and addresses each child's unique capacities and needs.

The vision of educational quality enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child extends to issues of gender equality, equity, health and nutrition, parental and community involvement, and management of the education system itself.

Above all, it demands that schools be zones of safety for children, places where they can expect to find not only safe water and decent sanitation facilities, but also a respectful environment.

Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention are buttressed by four other articles that assert overarching principles of law. All have far-reaching ramifications, particularly in terms of what is needed to mould an education system — or an individual school. These are article 2, on non-discrimination; article 3, on the best interests of the child; article 6, on the child's right to life, survival and development; and article 12, on the views of the child.¹¹

Article 12, for example, which assures children the right to express their own views freely in matters that affect them, requires major policy changes in the many schools that currently deny children the opportunity to question decisions or influence school policy.

But the rewards are vast: Schools that encourage critical thinking and democratic participation contribute to fostering an understanding of the

essence of human rights. And this, in turn, can make education an enabling force not just for individuals, but for society as a whole, bringing to life the entire range of human rights.

The non-discrimination principle as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child has similarly profound ramifications. It is aimed at assuring that all children have access to relevant and meaningful education, regardless of their background, where they live or what language they speak.

The non-discrimination principle is key to combating gender discrimination. Schools must ensure that they are responsive to girls' needs in every possible way, from physical location to classroom curriculum and practice. They must also treat gender inequality not as a matter of tradition but rather as an issue of human rights discrimination that can and must be addressed.

In addition, schools must consciously promote acceptance and understanding of children who are different and give students the intellectual and social tools needed to oppose xenophobia, sexism, racism and other negative attitudes.¹²

Learning from the past

Education topped the national agendas of many newly independent countries of the developing world in the 1960s and 1970s as a core strategy to erase disparities, unify nations and fuel the engine of development.

"Education," said Julius Nyerere, a former schoolteacher who became the first President of the United Republic of Tanzania, "is not a way of escaping the country's poverty. It is a way of fighting it."¹³

UNESCO, the United Nations organization with specific responsibility for education, organized a series of ground-breaking regional conferences in Karachi in 1960, Addis Ababa in

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

— from the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*

Fig. 4 International milestones for education

1948 (Dec.) The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** is adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Education is declared a basic right of all people.

1959 (Nov.) The **Declaration on the Rights of the Child** is adopted by the UN General Assembly. Education is declared the right of every child.

1960-1966 UNESCO holds four **World Regional Conferences on Education** that help establish time-bound regional goals to provide free and compulsory primary education to all children. The meetings are held in Karachi (1960), Addis Ababa (1961), Santiago (1962) and Tripoli (1966).

1969 (Jan.) The **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** enters into force, proclaiming the right of all to education, regardless of race or ethnicity.

1976 (Jan.) The **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** enters into force, guaranteeing the right to education for all.

1979 (Jan.) The **International Year of the Child** is designated to reinvigorate the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child and raise awareness of children's special needs.

1980 **Primary enrolment doubles in Latin America and Asia and triples in Africa**, but the goal of universal primary education by 1980 is unmet. Of all 6- to 11-year-olds, approximately one third in developing countries and about one twelfth in industrialized countries are not in school. The target year of 1980 had been set by the UNESCO World Regional Conferences on Education, held between 1960 and 1966.

1981 (Sept.) The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** enters into force, calling for the elimination of discrimination against women and for equal rights in education.

1982 **Debt crisis begins.** Commercial banks stop lending to developing countries after several countries announce that they will suspend debt service payments. IMF and the World Bank begin to refinance existing loans, requiring structural adjustments. Public-sector services, including education, are severely affected.

1985 (July) The **Third World Conference on Women** (Nairobi). Education is declared the basis for improving the status of women. Participating governments agree to encourage the elimination of discriminatory gender stereotypes from educational material, to redesign textbooks to present a positive image of women and to include women's studies in the curriculum.

1990 (Mar.) The **World Conference on Education for All** (Jomtien). The conference, co-sponsored by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and, later, UNFPA, presented a global consensus on an expanded vision of basic education.

(Sept.) The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** enters into force, codifying the right to education for all children into international law.

(Sept.) The **World Summit for Children** (New York). 159 countries agree on a series of goals for education, including universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school age children by the year 2000.

(Dec.) The **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**, adopted by the UN General Assembly (but not yet in force), declares education as a right of the children of all migrant workers and guest labourers.

1993 (Dec.) The **E-9 Education Summit** (New Delhi). Representatives of the Governments of the nine most populous nations in the developing world (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan) pledge to achieve the goal of universal primary education by the year 2000. Together, these countries account for half of the world's population and 70 per cent of

illiterate adults.

(Dec.) The **United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities**, adopted by the UN General Assembly, declares that States should recognize the principle of equal educational opportunities at all levels for children, youths and adults with disabilities.

1994 (June) The **World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Equality** (Salamanca). Participants declare that all countries should incorporate special needs education into their domestic education strategy.

(Sept.) The **International Conference on Population and Development** (Cairo). Participants call for the provision of universal access to high-quality primary, technical and non-formal education by 2015, with a particular emphasis on girls' education.

1995 (Mar.) The **World Summit for Social Development** (Copenhagen). Participating States commit themselves to promote and attain universal and equitable access to quality education to help eradicate poverty, promote employment and foster social integration, with a particular emphasis on girls' education.

(Sept.) The **Fourth World Conference on Women** (Beijing). The conference calls for the elimination of discrimination in education at all levels, for the creation of gender-sensitive education systems and for equal educational and training opportunities for women. The critical impact of girls' education is emphasized.

1996 (June) **Mid-decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All** (Amman). Meeting assesses progress towards the year 2000 goals set at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All.

1997 (Oct.) The **International Conference on Child Labour** (Oslo). Participating governments declare all work that interferes with the child's education unacceptable and agree to create time-bound programmes for high-quality universal and compulsory basic education, with a particular emphasis on girls' education.

1961, Santiago in 1962 and Tripoli in 1966. Out of these conferences came the first clear statistical portrait of global education levels. It was a dismaying picture.

In 1960, fewer than half the developing world's children aged 6 to 11 were enrolled in primary school, compared with 91 per cent in the industrialized world.¹⁴ In sub-Saharan Africa, where the picture was bleakest, only 1 child in 20 went to secondary school.¹⁵

The UNESCO conferences set clear, bold targets. All eligible children were to be enrolled in primary school by 1980, and by 1970 in Latin America, where existing conditions were better. The result was dramatic. By 1980, primary enrolment had more than doubled in Asia and Latin America; in Africa it had tripled (Fig. 5).

However, populations surged over the same period. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, it was thought that 33 million extra school places would be needed by 1980. In the end, 45 million places were provided, but this heroic effort still left the continent 11 million short of the number needed for all children of primary school age.¹⁶

The rapid onset of the debt crises of the developing world, which earned the 1980s the label of 'the lost decade', brought progress to an abrupt halt. Crippled by debt repayments and plunging prices that carried their export commodities earnings to their lowest levels in 50 years by the middle of 1987,¹⁷ countries began slashing expenditures, including their spending on education.

Between 1980 and 1987 in Latin America and the Caribbean, real spending on education per inhabitant decreased by around 40 per cent. In sub-Saharan Africa, it fell by a catastrophic 65 per cent.¹⁸

As a result, access to education did not increase sufficiently — and educational quality plunged as well. And

teachers in much of Africa and Latin America found themselves earning far less in real terms at the end of the 1980s than they had a decade earlier.¹⁹

Amid these setbacks, a major new United Nations initiative, the World Conference on Education for All, was convened in Jomtien (Thailand) in March 1990, with the crucial goal of reviving the world's commitment to educating all of its citizens.

The Jomtien conference

The World Conference on Education for All, sponsored by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank,* set out to accomplish for education what the International Conference on Primary Health Care (Alma Ata, 1978) had achieved for health. It called for universal quality education, with a particular focus on the world's poorest citizens.

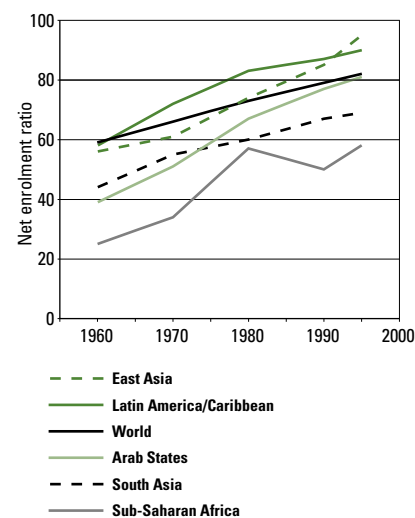
The Jomtien conference marked a significant shift in the world's collective approach to education, broadening the notion of quality 'basic education' along with an understanding of its delivery. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Jomtien marked the emergence of an international consensus that education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth. That consensus is why, in 1996, donor countries committed themselves to the task of helping developing countries ensure universal primary education by the year 2015.²⁰

Previously, education had been assessed in terms of gross enrolment rates at primary, secondary and tertiary

*UNFPA joined as the fifth UN sponsoring agency, after the Conference.

Fig. 5 Net primary enrolment, by region (1960-2000)

The number of children enrolled in primary school continues to increase both globally and for all regions of the developing world. Nevertheless, the goal of Education For All by the year 2000 will remain elusive in most regions. Data for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Baltic States were not available.



Source: UNESCO and UNICEF, 1998.

SOUTH ASIA

Enrolment: Primary enrolment has climbed from under 60 per cent in 1970 to nearly 70 per cent. Over 50 million primary school age children are not in school. There are significant variations in enrolment within some countries. In India, over 80 per cent of children in urban areas are in school, but in rural areas the rate is 20 percentage points lower; in the state of Kerala, 9 out of 10 primary school age children go to school, while in Bihar only half do.

Gender: Nearly two thirds of women in the region are illiterate, compared with about one third of men. The gap between girls' and boys' primary enrolment rates is over 10 percentage points. Discrimination is most severe in war-torn Afghanistan, where Taliban authorities have barred girls from school. In Bangladesh, in contrast, the primary school attendance rate is 75 per cent, with boys' and girls' rates on a par.

Effectiveness: About 40 per cent of children entering primary school drop out before reaching grade five, the highest regional rate.

Constraints: Nearly half the population in the region lives in severe poverty, earning less than \$1 a day. Child labour is a persistent problem, a cause and consequence of low enrolment and high drop-out rates. Pupil-teacher ratios are high in some countries (greater than 60 to 1 in India), particularly in the early grades. Teacher education and training need upgrading, and rural schools are often remote and poor in quality.

Progress and innovations: In Mumbai (formerly Bombay), the Pratham Mumbai Education Initiative, a partnership among educators, community groups, corporate sponsors and government officials, has set up 1,600 pre-schools and helped revamp over 1,200 primary schools. The Northern Areas Education Project in Pakistan, which seeks to improve education quality and accessibility in poor and disadvantaged areas, is training 720 teachers and establishing 10 pilot community schools. In Bangladesh, the Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) educates teachers about children's individual learning patterns and promotes more child-friendly classrooms.

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Enrolment: Net primary enrolment for the region is high, and several countries will either achieve or come close to achieving universal access to primary education by the end of the decade. Disparities in enrolment remain between countries, within countries (both Cambodia and Myanmar, for example, have disparities of 40 per cent or more between provinces) and, in a few cases, between boys and girls.

Gender: The gender gap in initial primary enrolment is virtually closed. But completion is a problem, with gaps of 10 per cent or more in several countries (Cambodia, Indonesia and the Lao PDR with a lower rate for girls, and Mongolia with a lower rate for boys). The economic crisis in many countries is expected to affect girls disproportionately, as preference is given to sons, and daughters are removed from school to help with household work. The gender gap widens for girls in secondary school, and nearly a quarter of the region's women are illiterate, compared with fewer than 10 per cent of men.

Effectiveness: Several countries are on track to reach the goal of 80 per cent of primary school entrants reaching grade five, among them China, Fiji and several other Pacific Island countries, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand. However, Cambodia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam have continuing problems of low completion.

Constraints: Attaining targets is especially difficult for the hard-to-reach — minorities, migrants, indigenous peoples and the disabled. Economic and climatic crises threaten education gains in several countries (Indonesia, Mongolia and Thailand), with poor families unable to pay for their children's education. Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Viet Nam, with legacies of years of conflict, face persistent poverty, as does Myanmar.

Progress and innovations: School cluster projects in several countries group nearby schools to share resources and expertise, improving overall educational quality. Multigrade teaching programmes are also useful in reaching children in remote areas, and initiatives in developing child-friendly schools are meant to lead to higher rates of enrolment, completion and achievement.

levels. At Jomtien, it became clear that as essential as access is, counting the number of children sitting on school benches is only part of the picture.

The expanded vision of education that emerged from Jomtien included emphasis on basic education, early childhood care and development, and learning through adolescence and adulthood.

Other key elements included making girls' education a major priority; the recognition that learning begins at birth; the importance of children's need for care and stimulation in their early years; and the acknowledgement that new partnerships among governments and groups at all levels are necessary to achieve Education For All.

Modelled on some of the principles that had driven the child survival revolution that UNICEF had sparked in the 1980s, the Jomtien conference established six key goals:

- ▶ expansion of early childhood care and development, especially for the poor;
- ▶ universal access to and completion of primary education by the year 2000;
- ▶ improvement in learning achievement based on an agreed-upon percentage of an age group (e.g., 80 per cent of 14-year-olds) attaining a defined level;
- ▶ reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with special emphasis on female literacy;
- ▶ expansion of basic education and training for youth and adults;
- ▶ improved dissemination of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sustainable development.²¹

The conference managed to recapture some ground that had been ceded during the 1980s, and after it ended more than 100 countries set their own

new education goals and developed strategies to achieve them.

Jomtien also helped move education back to the centre of the international development agenda. Each major United Nations summit and conference since Jomtien has recognized that education, particularly of girls and women, spans and links these areas of concern and is pivotal to progress in each.*

Slow progress on key priorities

Progress towards Education For All has, however, been much slower than those at the Jomtien conference had hoped, as a mid-decade review in Amman (Jordan) in June 1996 revealed. The generalized decline and disrepair of the 1980s had been largely reversed, but there was a sense that a central priority of Jomtien — girls' education — and the conference's integrated vision of basic education had been overshadowed by the drive to get all the world's children into primary school by the year 2000.

During the five years following the conference, all evidence points to a girls' enrolment rate that is virtually static. Overall primary enrolment was the brightest sign of progress by mid-decade, with some 50 million more children in developing countries enrolled in primary school than in 1990. Discouragingly, however, this figure only managed to keep pace with the numbers of children entering the 6- to 11-year-old age group over the period.²²

*The summits and conferences are the World Summit for Children (1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995).

Regionally, the rates of progress varied. Both the East Asia and Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions neared the goal of universal primary enrolment, and remarkable gains were recorded in the Middle East and North Africa in recent years. But, in South Asia, 50 million children were not in school,²³ and sub-Saharan Africa still cannot provide sufficient classroom space for its rapidly growing population.

In Central and Eastern Europe and many of the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union, once relatively solid and universal access to education is shrinking in the new era of market economies (Panel 1).

All regions — the industrialized world included — share a concern about the quality of education. The Latin America and Caribbean region, for example, has higher enrolment rates than any other in the developing world at the pre-primary, secondary and tertiary levels — and is not far behind East Asia at the primary level. Girls participate at rates equal to or higher than boys.

But the poor quality of the education provided in most of the region's countries — as well as the social and economic circumstances of many students — has led to high rates of repetition and high drop-out rates. The result is that about half of the students in Latin America do not attain basic literacy — even after six years of schooling.²⁴

Planning for rights-based education

Over the last decade, a consensus has grown concerning why the objectives of Education For All have been so hard to achieve — along with the kinds of changes that will be necessary to improve educational quality.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Enrolment: Primary enrolment has grown rapidly, expanding at an annual rate of 4.4 per cent between 1960 and 1980, with gains continuing despite financial austerity in the 1980s. Access to primary education is virtually universal, with regional enrolment over 90 per cent. Guatemala and Haiti have the lowest primary attendance rates, 58 per cent and 69 per cent respectively.

Gender: Although discrimination against girls and women is a problem in the region, girls' primary enrolment has been on a par with boys' for decades, and girls' secondary enrolment, 51 per cent, tops boys', 47 per cent. In Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Uruguay and Venezuela, the proportion of girls enrolled in secondary school is higher than that of boys by 10 per cent or more. The women's literacy rate is 85 per cent, and over three quarters of primary school teachers are female, both rates far higher than in any other developing region.

Effectiveness: High primary school drop-out and grade repetition rates are a serious problem. One quarter of children entering primary school drop out before reaching grade five. Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti and Nicaragua have the highest drop-out rates — 40 per cent or more. In nearly half of the 21 countries with data, 10 per cent or more of children in primary school are repeating grades. Brazil and Guatemala have the highest repetition rates, both over 15 per cent. However, the region's adult literacy rate is 87 per cent, the highest in the developing world.

Constraints: High drop-out and repetition rates point to problems in educational quality. The region has the greatest economic disparities between rich and poor, and indigenous and impoverished populations face difficulties in getting access to quality education. Teaching approaches tend to be rigid and traditional, which discourages students from staying in school.

Progress and innovations: The primary school enrolment rate has increased from under 60 per cent in 1960 to 90 per cent, and the region has the highest teacher/population ratio in the developing world. Escuela Nueva in Colombia has become a model for flexible, community-based education: Guatemala set up 1,000 community schools in 1997, and Brazil, Paraguay and Peru are launching similar initiatives.

Education in free fall: A region in the midst of transition



UNICEF/98-0122/Hartley

Classes full of bright-eyed children, from industrial Eastern Europe right across Asia to Yakutsk: Of the many propaganda images of the former Soviet Union, this is one of the few that has proved to have real substance in the wake of communism's collapse. Soviet-bloc countries attained remarkable levels of access to free education. Although the quality of the education often left much to be desired — teaching was often rigid and authoritarian, aimed at inculcating facts rather than the capacity for creative thought — basic schooling between the ages of 6 and 14 was virtually universal, and girls and boys had equal access.

From this foundation was laid a solid basis for many countries. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study, a 1995 international survey of 13-year-olds' learning achievement, for example, ranked the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Russian Fed-

eration, Slovakia and Slovenia ahead of most major Western countries.

While many systems, especially in Central Europe, continue to offer good schooling post-transition, reports from other countries of the region paint a picture of decline. Adoption of a new social model could have been an opportunity for these countries to build on the best of the old education system while discarding the worst. Instead, many children today are receiving an education that is inferior to that their parents received.

For some countries, the shock of economic and political change accompanying the transition from communism has been profound. Many nations have had to build or rebuild themselves: The region now comprises 27 countries where only 8 existed at the end of the 1980s. In almost every country of the region, gross domestic product (GDP) is below — and often well below — 1989 levels;

shrinking government revenues and growing inequality between rich and poor in some countries affect state provision of education and families' ability to cover school costs.

For other countries, the transition has been marked by civil war, notably in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan and former Yugoslavia. In these countries the educational heritage has been shattered — in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war, for example, if children were educated at all it was in shifts, by teachers without materials, often in the dark and without heating.

A recent report by the UNICEF International Child Development Centre, in Florence (Italy), gives a graphic picture of educational decline amid the dislocation of the switch to a market economy:

- The costs to families of educating children have gone up, often sharply, at the same time family incomes have fallen. Fees charged for kindergartens have risen, fees have been introduced in some countries for upper secondary schools and they are becoming more common for tertiary education. Frequently there are now charges for textbooks, and clothing and shoes are no longer subsidized.
- The quality of schooling has dropped. Huge reductions have taken place in real public expenditure on education — by almost three quarters, for example, in Bulgaria. Teacher morale has often deteriorated along with pay. Buildings and equipment have suffered disproportionately from spending cuts; many are in a state of disrepair. Heating of schools in winter has become a serious problem in Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia, for example.

- Overall enrolment and attendance have dropped as rising costs and falling quality have depressed demand. For example, in the Caucasus and Central Asia, there have been major falls in enrolment at every level of schooling. The number of places in schools has also decreased: Over 30,000 pre-schools were closed in the 12 countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States between 1991 and 1995.

The portrait is not just one of general decay but of re-emerging inequality, with poor families less able to pay for their children's education, and children in rural areas and from ethnic minorities disproportionately affected. But if the educational gulf between rich and poor within countries has widened alarmingly, so too has the gulf between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and those of the Caucasus and Central Asia. In Central Asia particularly, educational provision is spiralling down towards standards not seen in a generation, and in many other countries there is serious cause for concern.

The social impact of the transition from central planning to a market economy is all too often forgotten, as if the economy is the only thing that matters. The story of education in the 1990s from Slovakia to Siberia, Uzbekistan to Irkutsk, makes it clear that the world forgets the social dimension at its peril.

Photo: Two girls share a book in Yugoslavia.

Educational planning, whether for an entire society or a single school, must start with child rights and be based on the best interests of the child. It must strive to ensure an environment that is free from violence, that fosters democracy and acceptance and that teaches skills which equip students for lives as responsible citizens.

What kind of school would result? Part of the picture emerges from a thoughtful checklist of attributes for child-friendly, rights-based education, compiled by the distinguished human rights authority and former Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Thomas Hammarberg.

A school, for example, that imparts real-life skills and promotes the development of the child in all respects — from the right to nutrition to the right to play — begins to meet the criteria.

In Namibia, for example, where the newly independent Government was determined to root out the disciplinary violence that the former apartheid regime had imposed, the school system adopted a completely non-violent approach called 'Discipline from Within'.²⁵

In different projects now being combined in a model for schools in Thailand, community members are being asked to define what rights they think their children have and how such rights might be reflected in their schools. The community's opinions are compared with the Convention on the Rights of the Child to obtain a local definition of a rights-based, child-friendly school, and a school self-assessment is used to help define what further school improvement is required. In another project, teachers are being trained as 'defenders of children' — a role in which they, with other members of the community, will work to identify and protect children at risk.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES, AND THE BALTIC STATES

Enrolment: Universal access to free basic education was attained by the early 1980s. Most countries have maintained high primary enrolment rates; however, at least one child in every seven of primary school age is out of school in Croatia, Georgia, Latvia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In countries of the former Soviet Union, 32,000 pre-schools closed between 1991 and 1995, with big declines in enrolment in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Gender: There is parity between boys' and girls' primary enrolment and completion rates, and girls' secondary enrolment rate is higher than boys' in a number of countries.

Effectiveness: Though available primary school completion rates are virtually all above 90 per cent, nearly one third of the countries in the region have no completion data.

Constraints: There is concern about the quality of education in a number of countries in the region. Conflicts in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan and former Yugoslavia have taken a toll on education, and the region is beset with social problems arising from political and economic transition. Real public spending on education has fallen in many countries — by one third in the Russian Federation and by three quarters or more in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Teachers' salaries are down in a number of countries, and education costs for families have increased, a constraint for poor and minority families. Many school buildings are in need of repair, and heating is a problem in winter in several countries.

Progress and innovations: Educational reform is on several countries' agenda. Armenia, for example, is improving the quality and relevance of curricula and promoting decentralization and parental involvement. Education initiatives to ease ethnic tensions and promote tolerance are also under way in the region. UNICEF is encouraging early childhood care and development through the Better Parenting Initiative in Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In Colombia, 35 schools are experimenting with a child-rights model to improve education. Among the measures taken are ensuring adequate space, safe water and sanitary facilities; establishing libraries; and maintaining an atmosphere of democracy that guarantees dialogue, participation and the peaceful resolution of differences. Schools ask children, parents and teachers to respond to a series of questionnaires and use the responses to ensure that the school meets and maintains its child-rights requirements. Children are posed such questions as, "Do my teachers know who I am and do they call me by my name? Do my teachers pay attention to what I think?"²⁶

In Belém, in Brazil's impoverished northern region, the City of Emmaus School has taken a different approach aimed at developing the students' capacity to act as independent citizens. The school was created in the early 1980s when the Republic of Small Vendors, an organization that helps children living or working on the streets, decided to build a school on the poorer margins of the city that was both responsive to students' needs and that reflected the rich local culture. After consulting with the community — mainly rural migrants of Amazonian Indian origin — school planners designed a physical plant whose buildings are based on a circular Amazonian Indian design, with ample open space inside and outside.²⁷

The school's teachers, who are formally employed by the Government, are retrained from the beginning in a whole new approach to teaching.

"We had to get them to review their social role and understand that, unless they changed their approach, they would be contributing to the very processes that deny the poorer layers of society their basic rights," said Graça Trapasso, former school co-

ordinator. "The thrust here is to awaken children to their rights and responsibilities."

The quality of the relationship between children and teacher is paramount: Teachers are considered to be facilitators and guides. Learning begins with the child's own frame of reference and develops with the child's active participation.

Such undertakings mark the stirring of an education revolution guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has five key elements, most of which interweave with and reinforce each other:

Learning for life. This is the basis of a series of new approaches to teaching and learning that are designed to make the classroom experience more fulfilling and relevant.²⁸ Using these approaches, teachers are becoming facilitators and guides rather than dictators of facts, and education systems are devising more accurate methods of measuring actual learning. What will be required are more fundamental changes in education policies and processes to instil and stimulate a lifelong love of learning. This will enable people to supplement or even replace the skills they learned in childhood to respond to new needs over the course of their lives.

Access, quality and flexibility. Schools are reaching out to the children left on the margins of the education system (girls, ethnic minorities, child labourers, the disabled). They are being built nearer the communities they serve and are more flexible in scheduling and in learning modes.

Gender sensitivity and girls' education. The education of girls has become a top priority. The cultural and political obstacles to gender equality are being addressed and education systems at every level are being made more sensitive and attentive to gender issues.

The State as key partner. Education For All cannot be achieved without the full commitment of national governments, which are obligated by the Convention to ensure that the child's right to education is met. Their role, however, is changing as they delegate some authority to district and local levels. While retaining their normative role, governments are also playing greater mobilizing and coordinating roles with educators, parents, entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as partners.

Care for the young child. Learning begins at birth and is enhanced by a holistic approach that helps ensure stimulation and socialization, good health care and nutrition, especially in the crucial early years of a child's life. Such a holistic approach is increasingly being achieved through low-cost community alternatives and parental education, as well as through formal pre-school programmes.

These initiatives, taken together, represent the new concept of education, shaped by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Summit for Children and the World Declaration on Education for All.

People must be educated. Education is not solely a means to an end, a tool of development or a route to a good job. It is the foundation of a free and fulfilled life. It is the right of all children and the obligation of all governments.

To advance into the 21st century with a quarter of the world's children denied this right is shameful. But those dedicated to Education For All — educators, development workers, parents and others — have cause to be both optimistic and proud. Spurred by deeply involved families and committed people in thousands of communities around the world, exciting innovations are taking shape. These efforts are part of an education revolution that is promising profound change — and is already well under way.

INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES

Enrolment: Primary enrolment in the industrialized countries stands at close to 100 per cent. Secondary enrolment in Western Europe increased from 90 per cent in 1985, the lowest rate among industrialized areas, to universal enrolment in 1995.

Gender: There is parity in boys' and girls' enrolment rates at the primary and secondary levels. At the tertiary level, girls' enrolment rates are more than 90 per cent in North America, while the rate for boys is 75 per cent. While adult literacy is almost universal, women account for over 60 per cent of those adults who are not literate.

Effectiveness: In the 1960s, just over half of young people in the industrialized countries completed upper secondary school. By the 1980s, the proportion had risen to two thirds and has continued to increase. These gains do not assure effective education, however: In mathematics and science tests of 13-year-olds, students from some East Asian and Eastern European countries scored higher than those from a number of industrialized countries. Also, an average of more than 15 per cent of adults in 12 industrialized countries are functionally illiterate; in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States, the rates are over 20 per cent.

Constraints: Not surprisingly, poverty appears to lead to lower academic achievement and higher drop-out rates. In seven industrialized countries, 10 per cent or more of children live in poverty, and in the United States the rate is over 20 per cent. Children of minority groups and those in one-parent families also face heightened risks.

Progress and innovations: Over three quarters of young children in Western Europe are in pre-primary education programmes, the highest rate among industrialized areas. In several countries, large-scale pre-school programmes target children at risk, including Head Start in the United States (begun in the 1960s) and Priority Education Zones in France and Better Beginnings, Better Futures in Ontario (Canada) (both started in the 1980s). School systems are also increasingly adapting curricula to reflect children's diverse cultural backgrounds.