

A GOOD EDUCATION



ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

By 2015, ensure that all children - boys and girls alike - complete primary school.

Enrolment in primary education has reached 89 percent, up from 83 percent in 2000. In Africa there was an 18 percent increase and in South Asia an 11 percent increase. It means that millions of children have stepped into the classroom for the first time.

But, in 2008, 10 percent of primary-aged children didn't go to school. This leaves 69 million growing up vulnerable to extreme poverty, hunger and disease.

Nearly half of children who remain out of school have never had any formal contact with education – they're unlikely to enroll unless new policies and incentives are created. The world is edging towards universal primary education, but too slowly to meet the 2015 target.



Caritas in action: Schools for Australia's Aborigines

Photos:

Photos: (top) School in the community of Falukani on Bolivia's altiplano. David Stephenson/Trócaire, (above) Education programme in Australia. May Haviland/Caritas

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Caritas in action: Schools for Australia's Aborigines

"I'd like to travel from one end of the earth to another to achieve peace". The aspiration of Teneille Aiken, a nine year old Aboriginal girl from the remote outback town of Derby in Western Australia. Maybe it's Teneille's dream because she's grown up seeing not only violence in her community but also its many other problems – alcohol and drug addiction and deep poverty. Indigenous Australians have long been distrustful of what they call "whitefella" education and many children skip school and never gain the skills to break the cycle of deprivation. In Derby at least 10 percent of Aboriginal children are truanting each day and rates of school completion are low.

Two years ago, Teneille herself was a regular truant, falling behind and lacking the self-confidence to mix with other children. But now she loves school – thanks to the Jalaris Kids Future Club, a project supported financially by Caritas Australia. Her mum Jasmine says, "Teneille has a lot more confidence, and with the other kids learns how to use paints, to spell

and count, and work on the computer."

Teneille goes to the Kids Future Club three afternoons a week – after school. The Club takes a holistic approach to increasing school attendance, allowing Aboriginal children and their parents to become familiar with structured education in a way which is culturally relevant.

Parents of truanting children are also identified and approached through traditional extended family and kinship networks. They're "bumped into" in the street, told about the Club, offered a meal there for their children, and then left to think about it without pressure – the traditional and more productive way of getting indigenous people to participate. Caritas Australia strongly supports this approach.

Teneille has been on bush hunting, fishing and gathering trips with elders with the Jalaris Kids Future Club and says she's really enjoyed them. And what else has she learned? "To enjoy school and that there is another way of living."

What can we do?

Provide more financial assistance to promote universal primary schooling – especially in rural areas - and then carry it through to more children staying on for secondary and tertiary education.

Encourage the development of social benefits so that the first response to a family crisis is not to take a child – often a girl - out of school. Abolish fees for primary schooling.

Create more teachers. In sub-Saharan Africa, 3.8 million extra teachers need to be recruited, trained and paid by 2015 to achieve the universal primary schooling goal.

Educate parents and carers to fully understand the wider benefits of schooling for girls. Girls in the poorest 20 percent of households have the least chance of getting an education – they are 3.5 times more likely to be out of school in the richest households.

Focus more on ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities around the world, as they have far fewer educational opportunities than the overall population.

Link universal primary education to the other Millennium Development Goals. Educated parents mean less poverty and hunger, an educated mother means less infant mortality. Education is vital to the battle against AIDS and other pandemics.

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