

Education: The Way Forward

With just over five years remaining until the deadline for reaching the 2015 UN Millennium Development Goals, the state of education in the world is at a turning point. While millions more children are in school today than when the goals were set in 2000, access to education—and learning that will make a difference in their lives—is still out of reach for too many young people. Now is a critical time to sustain progress in education—one of the smartest economic and human development investments that any country can make. That's why support for education, and primary education in particular, has been one of major priorities over the past decade for the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's fund for the world's poorest countries.

IDA is one of the largest sources of education assistance for low-income countries, providing over US\$10.2 billion in support to 112 countries since 2000. About half of IDA education funds support primary education—and therefore the Millennium Development Goals of helping countries achieve universal primary completion and eliminate gender disparities in education by 2015.

Progress on Education MDGs

Significant progress has been made toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals:

- Since 2000, IDA countries have seen one of the largest schooling expansions in history. Today, an additional 91 million children have gotten a chance to enroll in primary school.
- Many of these newly enrolled children are girls, with the ratio of girls' gross primary enrollment rising from 76 percent in 2000, to 95 percent in 2007.

Low-income countries have achieved clear results in primary education over the past decade, and IDA has played an important role in this success. But much remains to be done.

As the world charts turbulent economic times, IDA is leading the way in helping low-income countries expand education access and improve learning outcomes. IDA countries are also asking for support to increase investments in secondary and tertiary education, and to strengthen the school-to-work transition. The global financial crisis has highlighted the undeniable importance and value of education in building long-term stability, creating jobs and promoting economic growth. At the same time, the crisis threatens to roll back the gains made in primary education enrollment over the past decade and puts at risk access to post-basic schooling, an area of education that often requires financing by families. By enabling continued progress in education, IDA is helping to ensure that developing countries can educate the next generation of workers, innovators and leaders, toward a brighter future for all.

THE STATE OF EDUCATION TODAY

The good news is that the pace of primary school enrollment and completion in IDA countries has accelerated dramatically, especially over the past 5 years. The World Bank has worked with IDA countries to directly support country commitments to education goals and improved education policies.

Progress on getting children into school—and making sure they complete primary school—has been notable in many IDA countries.

Table 1 shows the top 10 IDA performing countries in terms of recent increases in school enrollment. For example, between 2000 and 2007, 25.5 million additional primary school children were able to access education in India. Progress toward getting more children into school has, in most cases, also meant significant progress toward achieving gender parity in education.

With support from IDA, many low-income countries have also achieved increases in primary completion that exceed anything achieved in OECD countries at comparable points of industrialization. These results are evidence of the impressive extent to which IDA countries have made education a national priority and of the technical and financial support which IDA and other donors have provided. They also reflect the need for continued support from IDA, especially during a time of economic crisis.

Table 1. Primary School Enrollments ('000s)

	Country	2000	2007	Increase
1	India	113,613	139,170	25,557
2	Ethiopia	5,847	12,175	6,328
3	Pakistan	13,987	17,979	3,992
4	Afghanistan	749	4,718	3,969
5	Tanzania	4,382	8,317	3,935
6	Nigeria	19,151	22,267	3,116
7	Mozambique	2,544	4,564	2,020
8	Kenya	5,035	6,688	1,653
9	Madagascar	2,208	3,837	1,629
10	Sudan	2,567	3,959	1,392

Source: EdStats.

Economics of Education

It takes time to lay the groundwork for education results. Sustained IDA support over the past decade has focused on laying a foundation through training teachers, updating curricula, building schools, delivering textbooks and improving education governance and school management. Much of the accelerated progress in education in recent years is in part attributed to these fundamental investments.

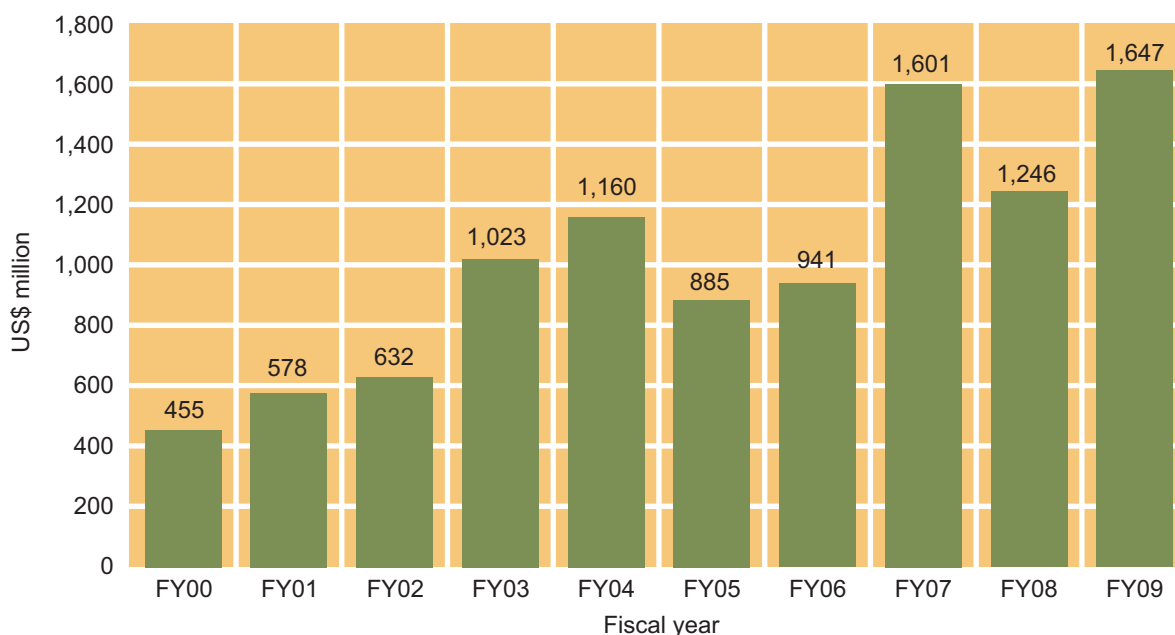
IDA support for education rose to a record high of \$1.65 billion for the 12 months ending in June 30, 2009.

IDA is committed to providing the sustained, long-term funding that enables steady progress (see Figure 1). In fiscal year 2009, education assistance to IDA-eligible countries rose to \$1.65 billion.

This record high volume in IDA education loans was boosted by support for two of Pakistan's provinces, which amounted to US\$650 million or 39 percent of total IDA support for education. Priorities supported by IDA in 2009 included education quality and curriculum reform (in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Vietnam), post-primary education (Bangladesh, Nigeria and Uganda), girls' participation (Pakistan), and emergency school reconstruction (Haiti). Support for strengthening ministries of education and other education institutions was also a priority. Education in IDA countries was also supported through non-education IDA loans with education activities, such as cash transfers to poor families conditioned on keeping their children in school.

In fiscal year 2009, IDA support catalyzed significant co-financing by other development agencies. The largest co-financing volume came from the Education For All Fast Track Initiative, amounting to \$607 million for 11 operations.

Figure 1. IDA for Education—Steady Increase in US\$ million



IDA EDUCATION PRIORITIES TACKLE KEY CHALLENGES

IDA is dedicated to helping developing countries tackle their most pressing education challenges. Since 1995, IDA funding for education has averaged US\$922 million yearly.

The primary goals of IDA education lending and assistance are to integrate education into national economic strategies and work with countries to develop balanced education systems that focus on learning outcomes.

IDA's Priorities for Education include:

- Quality learning for all
- Skills and knowledge that contribute to economic growth and competitiveness
- Education systems that attain measurable results

Over half of IDA lending in the education sector has supported primary education, while another 24 percent has been for the reforms of the whole education sector (see Box 1).

Support for post-basic education to IDA countries is also on the rise. Lending to the Africa and South Asia, the regions with the greatest education challenges, have each represented about 40 percent of IDA education funding since 1995—for a total of about US\$5.5 billion each.

Primary Education: Achieving Universal Education for All Children

Today, 91 million more primary school children have access to school than in 2000, and the share of children completing primary school has risen to 73 percent in 2007 from 62 percent in 2000. These achievements in

Box 1. Education and the Financial Crisis

The recent global economic downturn threatens progress in education in low-income countries by reducing the ability of both households and governments to invest in basic education. Secondary and tertiary education also suffer as private spending on both decreases.

Allowing enrollments and learning levels to deteriorate during this crisis will deprive developing countries of the ability to get a head start on competitiveness as the global economy recovers. School enrollments and learning levels are at risk in countries affected by the crisis. The greatest impact is likely to be felt by poorer countries and households because they will suffer the effects as basic services are cut back, and job losses mount. Countries such as Sri Lanka are already facing reduced public spending on education this year. School feeding programs in Lao PDR are also at risk.

To sustain educational progress despite the crisis, donor countries need to sustain aid levels and work with developing countries to increase aid effectiveness. Identifying the nature and magnitude of the impact of the crisis on education is an important first step to developing an appropriate response.

Evidence from past crises point to programs that can blunt the worst effects of the crisis in education. The World Bank is working with IDA countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo to include education in efforts to increase social services during the crisis, and also make education programs more cost-effective. Despite the risks it poses to educational progress, the crisis may offer some longer-term opportunities and lessons for the sector.

Box 2. IDA Helps Provide Pakistan's Children Quality Basic Education

With US\$650 million in new commitments to Pakistan's education sector this fiscal year, IDA is working to ensure that children in the country's Punjab and Sindh provinces receive access to quality schooling and the essential resources they need to learn. Elementary students in Punjab recently received over 28 million much-needed textbooks free of charge, thanks to IDA funded support to the region. These funds help put Pakistani children and teachers in classrooms with the materials and support they need to succeed.

The size and scope of these new projects reflect an increasing demand for equitable, quality education in Pakistan, following a decade of IDA-assisted educational reform that saw continued growth in primary school enrollment and completion rates. IDA is investing in Punjab and Sindh Education Sector Reform projects that enhance results through monitoring and impact evaluations. These second-generation efforts help to develop better sector management and bring improvements in access and quality to scale.

For many children, especially girls, this means the chance to attend school and learn what they need to lead successful lives.

access and quality have resulted from building schools, improving school facilities and hiring new teachers.

While progress has been made to build the capacity of education systems, much remains to be done to ensure children receive a high quality education, which in turn will create opportunities to improve their quality of life.

IDA is working with countries to improve the quality of education by focusing on better learning outcomes and results.

In many IDA countries this means making sure education systems at all levels provide children with adequate classrooms and well run schools. In places like Montenegro and Vietnam, teacher training programs have been key. Nepal has seen success with community management of schools. In many countries, IDA is supporting curriculum reform and learning assessments to monitor quality. In Pakistan, IDA support has focused on strengthening school systems and improving policies on the basis of rigorous evaluation (see Box 2).

Targeted efforts are needed to bring the remaining out-of-school children into the classroom, especially girls, rural students, indigenous populations, and other disadvantaged children. Examples of how IDA is helping to reach these groups include providing school feeding programs in Haiti, India and Djibouti, and working with NGOs to open schools in remote areas of Pakistan.

Secondary Education: The Road Ahead

As primary school access, enrollment and completion increase, countries are faced with a new set of challenges. Once children graduate from primary school, what next? In many low-income countries, secondary school offerings are extremely limited in scope and capacity.

Success of universal primary completion along with the need for a skilled workforce has created new challenges and opportunities for post-primary education.

Box 3. Uganda Offers More Opportunities in Secondary Education

A new IDA project is helping expand and improve opportunities for secondary education in Uganda. In fiscal year 2009 IDA committed US\$150 million to fund Uganda's Post Primary Education and Training project.

Today only 58 percent of primary school students graduate into secondary school. This project aims to increase access to lower secondary education, and improve the quality of its offerings. To achieve these goals, IDA is focusing on expanding school infrastructure to accommodate students. In addition to class space, well-trained teachers are essential to the success of the secondary education sector. Funds are also going toward expanding a national teachers' college.

Quality also depends on school leadership as well as the availability and design of learning materials. IDA funds will be provided to train school management, acquire textbooks, shape curriculum, and develop and monitor academic performance assessments that gauge learning outcomes.

Lastly, improved strategic planning for secondary education in Uganda is helping to chart new waters. Advocacy and communications efforts are working to support the government's efforts by reaching core audiences. Planning for future expansions in Uganda's upper secondary and vocational education is also underway.

Around the world, an estimated 264 million secondary school age youth are not currently attending school. Growing demand for post primary education puts new strains on the resources of education systems. IDA funding helps fill this gap and provides countries with the resources needed to sustain momentum and meet the growing demand, especially during the economic crisis.

IDA is working with governments in places like Uganda to expand access and improve quality in secondary education (see Box 3). Bangladesh has successfully achieved increased secondary school enrollment and decreased drop-out rates by using stipends and other incentives.

Tertiary Education: Linking Highly Skilled Workers to the Labor Market

In most low-income countries, tertiary education systems are generally too small to meet the demands of their growing econo-

mies. They are often marked by inequitable financing, low academic quality, ineffective governance and inefficient student flows, meaning students take longer than required to graduate.

That's why IDA has been supporting the expansion and improvement of higher education systems in developing countries. In Bangladesh, IDA supports government efforts to increase the quality and relevance of its teaching and research programs. In Vietnam IDA is helping develop government policies that will strengthen the operation of the nation's universities so they can become more autonomous and adapt rapidly to the changing needs of the labor market (see Box 4).

In Mozambique, IDA is supporting three major public institutions of higher education across a range of disciplines, and has funded reforms of technical and vocational education that better responds to the needs of the labor market.

Box 4. Vietnam Modernizes its Higher Education Sector

Vietnam's colleges and universities are changing with the help of IDA funding and paving the way for the future of higher education in Vietnam. As Vietnam transitions from its centrally planned economic structure of previous decades, particular attention has shifted to meeting the nation's need for well-trained, highly educated workers. Reform has focused on decentralizing higher education, so that universities become more autonomous and can adapt to the changing market.

In recent years, US\$98 Million in IDA funds have been allocated to improve the capacity of Vietnam's universities to provide relevant, cost-effective, quality programs. Quality improvement grants were awarded on a competitive basis to those universities that demonstrated strong aptitude in academics, financial performance, strategic planning, and performance monitoring.

Recent grants were provided to help build libraries and science laboratories, update computer and information technologies. By using grant-based incentives, IDA is helping Vietnam's universities modernize both their offerings and their governance.

INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS

EFA FAST TRACK INITIATIVE

IDA's convening power helped bilateral leaders from Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, and France create the global Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI) in 2002.

The World Bank hosts the FTI secretariat and manages the US\$1.54 billion FTI Catalytic Fund and US\$115 million Education Program Development Fund established by donors to support the Initiative.

The Fast Track Initiative is a results-based partnership focused on delivering primary education to children in developing countries through country commitment, increased aid, improved aid effectiveness and donor harmonization.

Of the 35 FTI-eligible countries, 6 have achieved universal primary completion as

of December 2008. Eight more countries are currently on track to meet this goal, however the remaining 21 countries—notably in sub-Saharan Africa—face major obstacles and require increased and sustained donor support in order to bring these countries back on track to meet this goal.

However, evidence from a number of FTI-supported countries suggests, that very significant progress is possible over a relatively short period of time with sustained government commitment and coordinated donor support (see Boxes 5-7).

LINKING EDUCATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Through IDA, World Bank teams help low-income countries develop plans for education sectors that are part of a broader national strategy for reducing poverty and boosting economic development. IDA's support has played a crucial role in helping countries generate stable and sustainable increases in domestic financing for education.

Box 5. Improved Donor Coordination Helps Education Efforts in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian government's vision for education prioritizes quality improvement at all education levels. Since 1999, primary school enrollments have increased substantially. The net enrollment rate for the 2006-2007 school year was 76 percent for girls and 83 percent for boys.

The General Education Quality Improvement Program is a unique partnership comprising an IDA commitment of US\$50 million, an Education for All Fast Track Initiative initial commitment of US\$70 million, and US\$100 million in contributions from bilateral development partners including the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Finland and Italy, for a total of US\$220 million.

These contributions reflect a joint effort with the Ethiopian government to address quality through curriculum reform, textbook development, teacher training, management and administration with improvements at the school level.

This partnership has reduced the complexity and cost associated with multi-donor programs, allowing both the Ethiopian government and its partners to place the focus where it should be, improving education.

As well, better donor harmonization has fostered more collaborative relationships between donors themselves, encouraging the sharing of lessons learned during previous Ethiopia programs and activities in other countries.

Box 6. Schools for Rural Children in Mongolia

School has come to the herding families of rural Mongolia, and it is housed in a large, white tent. This allows for school mobility and is part of Mongolia's effort to reach a subset of children in the countryside who may otherwise not have regular access to education. Flexibility is necessary to integrate these nomadic children into the national school system, and the Fast Track Initiative is helping make this happen.



A US\$29.4 million grant from the FTI Catalytic Fund allowed for expansion of basic education programs into Mongolia's more remote regions during 2007-2009. In partnership with FTI, the World Bank and other donors are now working together to address remaining challenges.

Such FTI funds add to IDA support in Mongolia. The IDA Rural Education and Development project provides quality learning materials to Mongolian classrooms. Complemented by innovations focusing on early reading and teacher training, the provision of libraries, digital children's book library and laptops, this project is helping Mongolia bridge the digital divide and improve learning. Photo: Asian Development Bank

Box 7. Sharing What Works in Education

The World Bank's supports research and analytical work in education to help countries around the world design and implement successful reforms. Recent results include:

- **Learning assessments:** The World Bank has published several volumes of the National Assessments of Educational Achievement series. Number 5 in the series focuses on *Using the Results of a National Assessment of Educational Achievement* (2009).
- **School-based management reforms:** IDA has been on the forefront of efforts to bring decision-making closer to the service delivery level in dozens of countries. Recent work has focused on key findings on the impact of such programs worldwide.
- **Reaching poor children through better targeted subsidies:** IDA is helping countries to design targeted subsidies to get and keep disadvantaged children in school, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The recent Bank report, *For Protection and Promotion*, distills lessons on the impact of conditional cash transfers on education from ongoing programs in several countries. Another report, *Rethinking School Feeding*, examines lessons on the design and implementation of school feeding programs and how to help countries evolve from donor-driven to sustainable national programs.
- **Abolishing school fees:** The World Bank's analytical work and policy dialogue, both on education and on fiscal management, have encouraged IDA-supported governments to reduce or eliminate fees at the primary school level—a policy measure which is often key to increasing education access for the poor and for girls.

Many IDA countries are adopting comprehensive or “sector-wide” approaches in education to boost their progress. These strategies embrace a range of efforts to expand education access, by eliminating obstacles to participation in schooling and by providing targeted support to the most vulnerable populations. Such efforts may include coordinated investments to provide clean water near schools, de-worming, nutrition, school feeding and other health activities at the school level, and road repair to reduce the risk for children of travel to school.

Support for policy and institutional reforms is just as important for long-term development, and much of this support is aimed at linking education to broader national poverty reduction strategies. The most effective financial support in this regard is so-called “budget support” for governments, which in turn allows governments to pay the recurrent costs for teacher salaries—often the largest portion

of overall education budget. Through budget support, IDA is helping countries abolish school fees and help ensure that the poorest and most disadvantaged children—especially girls—can go to school.

CREATING A GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE BANK

World Bank staff constitutes a global reservoir of education expertise and ensure that IDA lending for education is accompanied by substantial analytical work, capacity building, and policy advice that benefits from global experience and knowledge on what education programs are most effective in delivering results.

The World Bank supports IDA countries with rigorous impact evaluations in education, to generate stronger evidence about what works under different country conditions.

IDA loans bring together the best in qualitative and quantitative practices to achieve educational goals set by countries and supported by the international community.

On average, the World Bank produces over 20 major pieces of analytical work each year focused on how to improve the education sector in IDA countries. For example, analysis over the past year has examined the impact of the financial crisis on the education sector in developing countries, and examined ways in which countries can better target interventions to those most severely affected in the face of dwindling public and private resources and shifts in economic demand.

BUILDING MOMENTUM

IDA is actively engaged in helping countries address key education challenges. In primary education IDA is providing substantial and stable, long-term financing to help “on track” countries sustain their progress toward the achievement of the education Millennium Development Goals, and is helping jump-start those countries that need to do better.

Through the support of better measurement of education outcomes, IDA is helping countries focus on education quality and results. IDA’s increasing support for post-basic education is helping countries meet rapidly-growing demand for secondary schooling as more children complete primary school and as the labor market requires a better skilled workforce with proper vocational and tertiary education training.

One of the largest sources of education assistance in low-income countries over the past decade has been IDA. Thanks to IDA, many low-income countries have achieved clear results in education. Much remains to be done and continued support for education from IDA, especially during the economic crisis will help keep children in school and provide the financial and technical support necessary for national education objectives, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

July 2009.

www.worldbank.org/ida

www.worldbank.org/education