



Forum: Unesco

Issue: The question of illiteracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Student officer: Yara Cinel

Position: Co-Chair

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

"For everyone everywhere, literacy is a basic human right. "

- Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

What is LITERACY?

This is a simple question with a number of answers. For statistical purposes, UNESCO defines a literate person as someone who can read and write a short simple statement about their life. In recognizing its impact on poverty, health, active citizenship and empowerment, the development community recognizes that "Illiteracy is a condition that denies people opportunity."



The Goal 2 of the Millenium Goals was that to achieve universal primary education. Its target was to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. At present, the problem has not yet been solved.

A lot has been done:

- Literacy rates among adults and youths are on the rise and gender gaps are narrowing.
- New national data show the number of out-of-school children dropped from 102 million to 57 million from 2000 to 2011.
- Primary education enrolment in developing countries reached 90 per cent in 2010.

However, we will have to work harder in order to guarantee universal primary education.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Let's have a look at education in Sub-Saharan Africa:



- More than 1 in 3 adults cannot read which means that 182 million adults are unable to read and write;
- 48 million youths (ages 15-24) are illiterate;
- 22% of primary aged children are not in school, that makes 30 million primary aged children who are not in school.

- In 1990 the adult literacy rate in all of Africa was 53%. In 2015 it is estimated to be 63%.
- In 1990 there were 133 million illiterate adults in sub-Saharan Africa, but by 2011 there were 182 million.

Literacy rates are improving globally, but in terms of raw numbers there are more illiterates than 20 years ago. In sub-Saharan Africa, youth literacy rates (ages 15-24) have increased over the past 20 years, which suggests that adult literacy rates will increase as they grow up. However, youth literacy rates in Sub-Saharan Africa (70% in 2011) are the lowest of any region. For adults in sub-Saharan Africa the rates have improved by 10%, but there is a disparity between literacy for women and men: while 7 in 10 men can read, only half of women can do so. The biggest barrier to increasing literacy is the lack of books, especially in rural areas. The past decade has seen marked advances towards Education for All (EFA) in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet major challenges remain. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 43% of the world's out-of-school children, levels of learning achievement are very low, gender disparities are still large, and the learning needs of young children, adolescents and adults continue to suffer from widespread neglect.

THE ISSUE

Children's education opportunities are shaped long before they enter primary school. The linguistic, cognitive and social skills they develop through early childhood care and education (ECCE) are the foundations for expanded life chances and for lifelong learning. Indicators of child well-being are very low for sub-Saharan Africa, although disparities exist between and within countries. Education is closely linked to wealth conditions; malnutrition and bad condition of health and hygiene negatively affect body and mind of a child.

Literacy opens doors to better livelihoods, improved health and expanded opportunity. It empowers people to take an active role in their communities and to build more secure futures for their families. For this reason it is important to guarantee not only primary education, but adult literacy too. Literate parents are more likely to keep their children healthy and send their children to school, literate people are better able to access other education and employment opportunities and, collectively, literate societies are better geared to meet development challenges.

Financing education is not so easy...

Public spending on education is a vital investment in national prosperity and has a crucial bearing on progress towards the Education for All goals in sub-Saharan Africa. Most countries in the region have backed stronger economic growth between 1999 and 2008 with increased commitments to education, but the recent financial crisis has had a serious impact on government spending in education in some countries. Plans to reduce fiscal deficits among

donors and national governments in coming years also threaten future increases in education spending required to achieve the EFA goals in the region.

And neither is spreading education in aereas affected by conflict..

The impact of armed conflict on education has been widely neglected. This hidden crisis is reinforcing poverty, undermining economic growth and holding back the progress of nations. Violent conflict has interrupted education progress in several countries. For example, Mozambique's civil war from 1977 to 1992 resulted in a loss of 5.3 years of schooling. Even short episodes of violence can be associated with large setbacks. In Rwanda, the four-year interruption in the early 1990s translated into a loss of 1.2 years of schooling. Most fatalities associated with armed conflict occur away from battle zones, and result from disease and malnutrition. These twin killers have claimed the vast majority of the 5.4 million lives that have been lost during the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, host to the world's deadliest conflict. Nearly half the victims were under 5. Conflict-related sickness and hunger have had debilitating consequences for education. Indiscriminate use of force and the deliberate targeting of civilians are hallmarks of violent conflict in the early twentyfirst century, with direct and indirect effects on education.

How can Illiteracy be Solved?

There are not many ways to solve the illiteracy in Africa due to the poor conditions but there are some ways. Basically one of the only ways you can help is to donate to foundations which can help build schools, buy school material, or train teachers so that kids in Africa can have education.

Actually, all that has been done is due to foundations and volunteers; but.. should we do more? or would it be better to ask if we could do more?

In order to find possible legal or political solutions some question must be taken into account:

- Which roles play the Developed Countries in this topic? Are they against to finding a solution?
- Consider the local Government and analyze the reasons why education is overshadowed.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

To conclude, this is a little hint I would like to give you:

- This is a very broad topic, so it is important not to leave out any part of it and, at the same time, to be clear;

- Do not forget that you represent a country different from yours. You have to convey ideas and opinion of someone else;
- Trying to solve this problem in your resolution, remember that the question of illiteracy it is not an isolated issue but a consequence of many others: consider them.

USEFULL LINKS

- <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/Main%20messages%20UIS%20GMR.pdf>
- <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/191393e.pdf>
- <https://www.africanlibraryproject.org/>
- <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/>