



Chapter 1

‘Education for All’ is development

This Report assesses the extent to which the benefits associated with having had a basic level of education are being extended to all children, young people and adults around the world. This objective was strongly articulated at the first World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien in 1990. It was reaffirmed by the World Education Forum, meeting in Dakar in 2000. Delegates at the latter meeting declared that by 2015, all children of primary-school age would participate in free schooling of acceptable quality and that gender disparities in schooling would be eliminated. Adult illiteracy was to be halved, early-childhood education and programmes for out-of-school youth would be greatly increased, and all aspects of education quality would be improved. The first two of the above objectives were adopted – with wording that is different in detail, but not in intent – as two of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to which all countries are committed. Thus, the notion of education for all was made concrete, and placed centrally within the international development agenda. This Report examines whether due progress towards achieving it is being made and, where that is not so, what changes in policy may be needed.

The right to education straddles the division between civil and political rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other.

The extent of progress – for individual countries and regions – is summarized and discussed in Chapter 2. Although not all the Dakar goals can be monitored with the same ease, a mixed picture emerges, with many successes, but also with a substantial number of countries at risk of not achieving the goals. The third chapter, which assesses the state of planning for education for all (EFA), shows that, while there may be fewer completed National Action Plans than expected, the World Education Forum has created a widespread sense of urgency and commitment to EFA objectives. Chapter 4 examines the costs of achieving the goals. Their associated external funding requirements are expected to be higher than other recent estimates have suggested. Furthermore, as shown in the fifth chapter, aid to education has fallen sharply over the past decade, and recent commitments – though substantial – seem unlikely to be able to fill the funding gaps presently anticipated. The final chapter draws together the arguments of the Report, and concludes with some challenges for national and international policy.

In this opening chapter, however, it is worth examining why such attention to the goals is necessary. Is their achievement genuinely of over-riding importance not only for national policy, but also as a focus for international assistance? Three types of argument and evidence have led, in recent years, to this being widely agreed. The first derives from ideas of human rights. The second is a framework informed by notions of individual capacity and capability. The third perspective concerns the ways in which education helps people and societies to achieve other desired development goals. Each of these will be briefly discussed.

Education as a human right

The right to education is well established.¹ Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declared that 'elementary' education shall be free and compulsory, and that the higher levels will be equally available to all on the basis of merit. That these conditions were not fully achieved half a century later testified to the need for special efforts. Accordingly, a rights-based approach to improving access to education of acceptable quality gathered pace, providing a basis for a comparative assessment of national progress, including against international commitments such as those made in Dakar.²

The intrinsic human value of education – its ability to add meaning and value to everyone's lives without discrimination – is at the core of its status as a human right. But education is also an indispensable means to unlock and protect other human rights. It provides some of the scaffolding necessary for the achievement of the rights to good health, liberty, security, economic well-being and participation in social and political activity. Where the right to education is guaranteed, people's access to and enjoyment of other rights is enhanced and the imbalances in life chances are lessened.³

The right to education straddles the division between civil and political rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. It embodies them all. For example, it is of central importance for implementing the rights of girls and women, and the rights of the child. Patterns of exclusion from school are usually not gender-neutral. The commitment to increase girls' access to education has focused on the identification and elimination of obstacles. In turn, this has revealed that discrimination is often complex, with ethnicity, religion, poverty and gender being intertwined. Under these circumstances, merely providing opportunities to attend school will not suffice to eliminate discrimination or to universalize participation. This implies that all human rights *within* education also need *to* be addressed if the right to education is to be achieved.

1. See for example, UNESCO (2000).

2. UNESCO (2002c).

3. Tomasevski (2002).

Children and young people cannot secure their right to education by themselves, although in many developing countries they constitute the majority of the population. They rely on their parents and their teachers. But few of their parents directly provide the tax revenues from which education is financed, and their votes may have only a weak impact upon budgetary allocations. Many teachers are preoccupied with having to battle for their own rights. Therefore, the recognition of children's right to education needs to transcend national borders, although its realization requires governments to commit themselves to universal obligations.

Since education is a universal human right, those denied access to it have their rights violated. Attribution of responsibility for human rights violations is a powerful lever for change. As with other human rights, providing for people's right to education is an obligation of governments, because markets, or charity, are insufficient to secure their implementation. Accordingly, this approach places major responsibility for ensuring service delivery and monitoring on governments,⁴ underpinned by accountability to the national and international instruments of human rights. Such an approach in turn assumes that governments have translated international obligations into national legislation against which citizens have recourse. This is often not the case. Without legislation it is difficult to enforce obligations and lessen the incidence of their violation. In the industrialized world, especially in Western Europe, there is now a substantial body of case law on the right to education, but other parts of the world are less comprehensively served.

The human rights approach to achieving EFA has much in common – both conceptually and operationally – with human development and poverty reduction paradigms. It is holistic, it highlights performance targets and accountability, and facilitates international partnerships around agreed universal objectives. It provides a strong platform for advocacy, stressing that the denial of education is morally unacceptable.

However, translating into practice the principle of human rights as a basis for education policy is more problematic. Firstly, securing a shift in budgetary priorities and planning practices at the national level so as to give first call to EFA goals is not an easy process. Until recently this has been more common among international agencies⁵ than at the level of individual governments. Secondly, progress within a human rights framework for education depends upon careful monitoring, upon the commitment of individual governments and the ability of international bodies such as the United Nations to seek compliance to human rights treaties, conventions and agreements. These conditions, however, are not widespread. Nevertheless, the human rights dimension is an essential component of the national and international processes needed to deliver EFA. It provides a strong moral and legal basis without which the Dakar agenda will not be achieved.

Education and human capabilities

The second half of the twentieth century was a fertile period for theories of economic development. Economists and other social theorists shifted away from their earlier preoccupations with the short run, to consider questions of long-run growth and development – rather in the way the classical economists had done a century or more earlier. The context, however, was different. The new interest in growth and development was focused not upon Europe, but upon post-colonial societies where poverty was ubiquitous. Naturally enough, in those circumstances, income growth was seen as an overwhelming priority, and successful development policies were those which generated a sustained growth in per capita incomes. Economic growth, measured in this way, became the criterion for achieving development and, in some writings, increasingly appeared to define it.

Throughout this period there were, of course, criticisms of the tendency to reduce complex social outcomes to a single, economic indicator.⁶

Providing for people's right to education is an obligation of governments, because markets, or charity, are insufficient to secure their implementation.

4. It is also clear that both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948 and 1950) and subsequent reaffirmations up to and including the Dakar Framework for Action (United Nations, 1979, Articles 13–14; UNESCO, 2000a) have committed governments to the free provision of primary schooling. Fees and charges are still levied in some countries – until recently with international agency support. As indicated later in this Report, this practice has contributed to maintaining low enrolments in some countries.

5. Perhaps most notably illustrated by UNICEF's strategy on the Convention on the Rights of the Child; see Pigozzi (1997).

6. This was particularly so among Latin American sociologists and economists in the 'structuralist' and 'dependency' traditions during the 1970s; see also Seers (1969).

Amartya Sen argues that development occurs when people are able to achieve what makes their lives valuable.

However, the most trenchant critic of such reductionism, and the most creative advocate of alternative criteria for judging development success has been Amartya Sen. The fundamental insight of his 'capability approach' is that development occurs when people are more able to achieve what makes their lives valuable. Accordingly, the objective of development should be to promote and expand the freedom that people have to enjoy 'valuable beings and doings.'⁷ The 'beings and doings' that people value will vary. They may include such things as avoiding illness, being well-nourished and literate, having self-respect, or enjoying relationships and work that matters.

Thus, the capability approach fundamentally shifts the objective of development from income or economic growth as ends in themselves, to people. Markets and income are tremendously important of course, but only because they are means by which people live healthier and more fulfilling lives. The 'good life' is partly a life of genuine choice, and not one in which the person is forced into a particular life – however rich it might be in other respects.⁸ Essentially, this implies that development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.⁹

As with the earlier frameworks of Aristotle and Marx, among others, Sen's capability approach holds that freedom has intrinsic as well as instrumental value. However, freedom here is used in a different and broader sense than is usually the case in western political philosophy. In particular, freedom entails not only negative liberties – for example the rights not to be arbitrarily imprisoned or harmed – but also rights of access to the particular resources that differently-placed individuals would need. For example, a disabled person, a manual labourer, and an elderly grandparent would all require different resources in order to enjoy basic health.

The capability approach thus gives rise to a distinct framework for evaluating development policies and processes. Policies are judged to be successful if they have enhanced people's capabilities – whether or not they have also affected income, growth, and other important means to this end. From this capability

perspective, then, education is important for a number of reasons.¹⁰

First and most fundamentally, having the skills provided by basic education, such as being able to read and write, is valuable in and of itself (Box 1.1). As Sen puts it,

it is often asked whether certain political or social freedoms, such as the liberty of political participation and dissent, or opportunities to receive basic education, are or are not 'conducive to development'. In the light of the more foundational view of development as freedom, this way of posing the question tends to miss the important understanding that these substantive freedoms (that is, the liberty of political participation or the opportunity to receive basic education or health care) are among the *constituent components* of development. Their relevance for development does not have to be freshly established through their indirect contribution to the growth of GNP or to the promotion of industrialization.¹¹

Hence, education counts as a 'valuable being or doing', as an 'end' of development.

Box 1.1. Valuing literacy

A Freire-style phonetic literacy course for women was held in the peri-urban slums of Lahore, Pakistan. The course gathered women who wished to attend a literacy course as a means to generating income. As it turned out, their income did not increase – which was significant as they were very poor. And yet graduates could clearly articulate a set of additional reasons why literacy had been valuable to them. When she was asked what the literacy class had taught her, eloquent Shabnam said that literacy enabled her to trust her own judgement: 'Women think they are like a flower bud – that they do not understand with their own eyes. But we are not buds, we are mountains. We can do anything with our lives. So I tried to open my eyes, and my eyes were opened.'

Nargis spoke about her knowledge: 'We studied the word "food" in class. We knew that we are poor, we can not drink milk, eat many foods; we eat little meat. We learned that it was not necessary . . . Chick peas are 4 rupees a pound, and they have many vitamins. Apples are expensive; carrots are not. But carrots are good for health – as good as expensive things. . . .'

Source: Alkire (2002b).

7. Sen (1999), p. 75.

8. Sen (1996), p. 59.

9. Sen (1996), p. 1.

10. See Dreze and Sen (1995), Chap. 2; Alkire (2002a).

11. Sen (1996), p. 5.

Second, the process of education may be instrumental to displacing other negative processes. For example, compulsory primary education, if it is both provided and enforced, will reduce child labour. Integrating different castes or races of children in the classroom may likewise be valuable as a way of bridging social barriers.

Third, empirical studies have regularly indicated that education has a particularly important role in empowerment of disadvantaged groups, including women. An educated person is more able to understand and invoke her or his own legal rights. By lacking education, conversely, the deprived may not even be able to access the public support that is available to them. Women who are educated, or who have employment may, quite simply, survive better and longer than they would otherwise.¹² Furthermore, persons who are able to access information and formulate positions may join together to achieve collective goals and participate in political change. For example, people may demand financial accountability, or pressure their government to provide resources to avert a famine in a neighbouring district. In contrast, illiteracy can 'muffle the political voice of the underdog'.¹³ In this way, education that is *universal* – attained by all persons regardless of their class or caste or gender – has a further impact in addressing social and economic barriers within a society.

The human capabilities approach to education then, like that of human rights, recognizes that education is intrinsically valuable as an end in itself. While the human rights approach specifies the moral obligation upon others to fulfil this right, the capability approach goes further, clarifying the diverse reasons for education's importance. Although many of the traditional instrumental arguments for education (see below) are accepted, the distinctive feature of the human capability approach is its assessment of policies not on the basis of their impact on incomes, but on whether or not they expand the real freedoms that people value. Education is central to this process.

Education and other development goals

If all people have a right to education, and if its impact upon people's capabilities is intrinsically part of our notion of development, it follows that the provision of a basic level of education for all people must be made universal. The case is clear and uncompromising: countries' development strategies cannot be judged successful without EFA.

Nevertheless, these arguments do not resolve the question as to how much education should be universally available. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and each of its successors – including the Dakar Framework – deliberately left the definition of the primary span of education unspecified. At present the length of primary systems around the world varies between four and seven years of schooling. Thus, the attainment of universal primary education (UPE) would seem to represent the provision of almost twice as much schooling in some countries as in others. Should, then, minimum levels of provision be four years, six years – or perhaps even longer? Further, how should different vehicles and types of education be compared? Are pre-school arrangements to take precedence over literacy schemes, and how should both of these, in terms of national expenditure priorities, compare with primary schooling?

There are neither easy nor universal answers to these questions, if only because their resolution must depend partly upon the particular country-context in which they are raised. Priorities for new educational provision surely depend both upon what is already available and upon the level of a country's development. Nevertheless, some insights can be gained from consulting the large body of literature that has examined the relationship between education and the attainment of other development goals. Much of this is in the 'human capital' tradition. It has used economic research techniques to investigate whether education is productive,¹⁴ and how the benefits and costs of its provision compare across different levels and types of education.

The 'good life' implies genuine choice, not being forced into a particular life – however rich it might be in other respects.

12. Sen (1990, 1992).

13. Sen (2002).

14. Most of this literature has investigated the impact of formal education, although work on the costs and impact of non-formal approaches is beginning to emerge.

Compulsory primary education, if it is both provided and enforced, will reduce child labour.

The returns to formal education

It has long been accepted that schooling has productive value. However, the extent to which its productivity compares well with other investments, and the contrasts between the private and social benefits associated with each level of education, have been areas of much greater controversy. Available estimates of rates of return¹⁵ for developing countries consistently show that both private and social returns to primary schooling are higher than at secondary and tertiary levels. Their magnitudes are generally greater than typical returns to capital in other economic sectors. The most recent comparison of such rates for forty-two countries indicates that average returns to a further year of education across all countries are about 10%.¹⁶ However, returns are sharply higher in developing countries than in the OECD countries. For example estimated 'social' returns to primary schooling range from around 16% in Asia, Middle East, North Africa and Latin America, to about 25% in sub-Saharan Africa.

The interpretation of these results is hampered by a range of methodological problems. First, estimates of social rates of return to education assume that market wages reflect productivity differences. Yet labour markets do not work perfectly, and earnings are a particularly fallible indicator of productivity where – as in many developing countries – large proportions of the wage-employed are in the public sector, on administered pay scales. Second, most estimates do not allow for differences in ability, parental background, or the quality of the schools attended by workers included in the samples.

Third, the full costs to households of sending children to school are often underestimated. For example, families may lose the value of their children working in the house or on the family farm, which can represent a substantial cost to poorer households. The frequent omission of these 'opportunity costs' from calculations of the net benefits of schooling may cause some upward bias in the estimated returns at primary, relative to higher levels of schooling.

Finally, in many countries labour shortages have shifted upwards towards those with secondary and tertiary education. Wage differentials

increasingly reflect this, and some evidence from Africa suggests that private returns to education may now be rising at secondary and tertiary levels relative to primary level.¹⁷ This work is, as yet, suggestive, and further work for other countries would be valuable.

Non-market effects and externalities

Many of the important benefits of education cannot be measured by market wages. A great deal of evidence as to their significance exists. No attempt to summarize details will be made here. However, the following generalizations are broadly supported.

Many studies have shown that schooling improves productivity in rural and urban self-employment. Early evidence suggested that four years schooling was a critical period.¹⁸ More recent work has suggested that additional years continue to make a difference.¹⁹ Many of these benefits stem from literacy which requires schooling of five to six years to be permanently acquired.²⁰ Surveys of the urban informal sector in a range of countries have indicated that primary schooling improves participation in urban informal sector work, and that more education brings an earnings pay-off for such workers. Years spent in both primary and secondary schooling appear to encourage – or facilitate – entrepreneurship.²¹ Thus, schooling appears to have a positive impact on both rural and urban informal production.

In addition to its direct impact on productivity, schooling has a range of other effects upon population control, health and nutrition, with benefits for development. For example, it is well established that primary and secondary schooling significantly facilitates the demographic transition from high to moderate rates of population growth.²² Schooling not only increases the ability of women to regulate their fertility through contraception, but it is also associated with a rise in the age of marriage and an increase in the perceived cost of child-bearing – arising partly from the economic returns to schooling already discussed. The World Fertility Survey shows that, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, women with seven or more years of schooling have lower fertility rates (by between

15. These calculations usually compare the estimated an difference in lifetime earnings resulting from an additional year of education with the costs of its provision to individuals, in the case of private rates, or to society, in the case of social rates of return.

16. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002).

17. See Knight and Sabot (1989) for Kenya; Schultz (1995) for Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana; and the useful review given in Appleton (1999). See also Bennel (1996).

18. Lockheed et. al. (1980).

19. See, for example, Weir (1998).

20. See the evidence in World Bank (2002a), p. 8.

21. World Bank (1991), Figure 3.3.

22. Cochrane (1988); Schultz (1995).

two to three children) than women with only up to three years schooling.²³

The effects of schooling on health are also consequential. Education is associated with improved nutritional content of diets, and earlier and more effective diagnosis of illness. A study in Ghana, for example, showed that an increase in the education of the household head from none to complete primary schooling was associated with a reduction in the household's daily calorie gap by an amount equal to one-fifth of an adult's typical daily caloric requirement.²⁴

There is a strong relationship across countries between life expectancy and literacy. Moreover, infant and child mortality decreases as the mother's level of schooling rises.²⁵ The proportionate reduction in child mortality associated with an additional year of mother's schooling is between 5% and 10% in both rural and urban areas of low income countries.²⁶ Children of more educated mothers tend to be better nourished, and there is evidence that they suffer illness less frequently and less severely than other children.²⁷ Thus, there is well-documented evidence that parents – and particularly women – with more schooling have healthier, more vigorous children.

The evidence given above is only a part of what is relevant in determining the productive value of investment in human resources. Many cross-national correlation studies have examined the relationships between per capita income growth and human development indices of various kinds. Most of the recent studies find a positive association.²⁸ A new generation of growth models has given a central place to human resources, and often attributes to them the characteristic of 'increasing returns'.²⁹ However, the studies discussed above³⁰ comprise the most compelling contributions to the debate; it is the micro evidence revealing the interconnections between the constituent parts of human development, to provide an instrumental case for investments in education which is extremely difficult to dismiss. In that context it is – though not proven – hard to believe that existing social rate-of-return estimates significantly over-value the social productivity of the schooling process, particularly at the primary and secondary levels.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that there is a fundamental identity between securing EFA and achieving development. Both on the grounds of human rights, and of human capabilities, the latter requires that the former be attained.

There is substantial evidence of the benefits from formal education with respect to a wide range of development goals. Most of these benefits begin to appear after five or six years of primary schooling. Countries that can afford to universalize a primary school system of only just six years duration could still expect to gain substantial benefits from doing so. Primary systems of shorter duration, however, would be less likely to deliver those benefits.

The achievement of permanent literacy and of basic numeracy are important ends-in-themselves for many people. They also have a substantial development pay-off. School systems of less than five or six years in duration are unlikely to deliver permanent literacy and, for that reason alone, it appears that a minimum primary cycle length can be defined. Focused literacy campaigns for those beyond school-going age are also capable of bringing substantial benefit to those whose literacies are supported.

As indicated, each of the EFA goals brings separate opportunities for securing other development objectives. Every country will need to define policy priorities in its move towards the individual EFA goals where these have not yet been achieved. Nevertheless, there is an agreed commitment for each country to achieve them by 2015. The next chapter assesses the progress made so far, and the magnitude of the tasks that remain.

A primary school system of only six years duration can still bring substantial benefits to countries.

23. United Nations (1987), Tables 112/115.

24. Kyereme and Thorbecke (1991).

25. O'Hara (1979); World Bank (1991), p. 55.

26. Mensch et. al. (1986).

27. Schultz (1995).

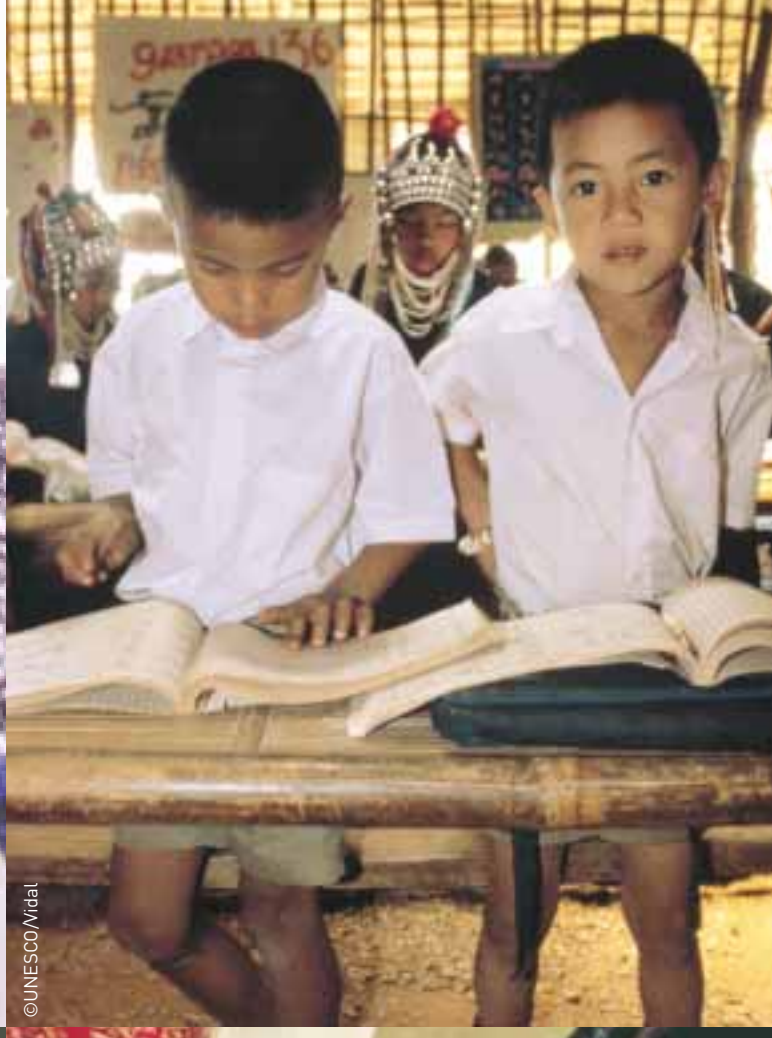
28. Barro (1999); de la Fuente and Domenech (2000).

29. Lucas (1988); Romer (1990, 1994); McMahon (1999).

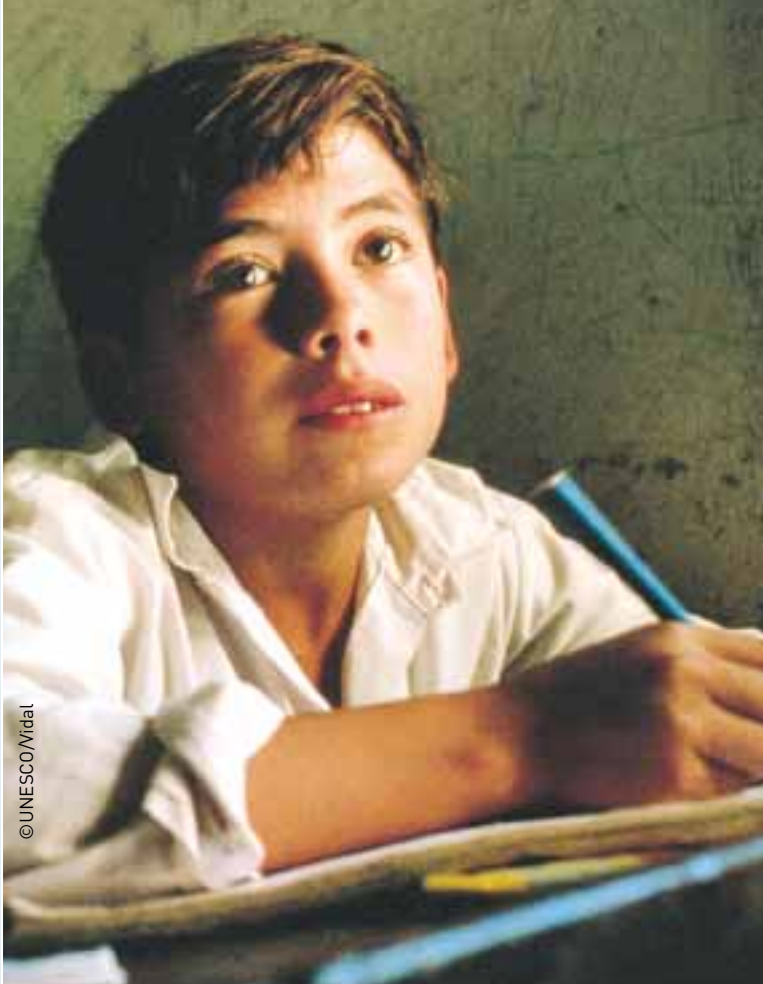
30. Only a small part of the evidence has been mentioned here. See the references in World Bank (2002) for other recent contributions.



©UNESCO/D. Roger



©UNESCO/Vidal



©UNESCO/Vidal



©UNESCO/Vidal