

SCIAF factsheets

education...

People may stress the different things in education:

1. Reading, writing and arithmetic: such skills are an important foundation and without them the poorer people in the world are at a great disadvantage in understanding their rights and in improving their conditions, but giving these basic skills is only a start.
2. Training the workforce: an improvement in educational and training levels will increase productivity and provide higher incomes. With poverty at the root of so much malnutrition, ill-health and exploited labour in the world, this is important, but again not the whole story.
3. Full development of the person: developing people's potential, knowledge and attitudes (a) improves the quality of their own lives and (b) enables them to play their part in improving conditions in their local community and in the development of their society as a whole.

Education For All?

"Education for all" is often quoted as an ideal, but for all the gaps and difficulties in worldwide figures on education big differences between countries are certainly there.

For instance, in industrial countries people over 25 will have had on average around ten years of schooling, but in developing countries as a whole they will have had on average only about four. In the 42 least developed countries this average falls to about 1½ years, with the same for Sub-Saharan Africa. (Note: Sub-Saharan Africa consists of all of Africa south of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt and north of South Africa.) Compare these latter figures with the statement in the 1993 World Education Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) that it is concerned that four years' school life experience is the minimum for getting literacy, basic knowledge and life skills. Add to this that the quality of schooling may be lower because of less-qualified teachers and lack of textbooks and facilities. (The number of children having to repeat a year may show up poor quality of teaching, and one-fifth are said to be "repeaters" in Sub-Saharan Africa.)

Unequal Chances

Children will have less chance of schooling:

Where the family is poor: parents cannot afford the costs and even if schooling is free often need the children to work from an early age to help the family income.

In rural areas: poorer provision of school facilities in remoter areas, plus poor transport facilities and long distances to school make it more difficult to attend. Where people are displaced: refugees, and people displaced within their own country by war or famine, may not be able to get schooling for their children.

Girls: in the least developed countries as a whole, perhaps 20% fewer girls than boys attend school. In some cultures social traditions may not encourage the education of girls. There may be a view that a girl does not need an education to be a wife or mother. The value of the work young girls do in the home or in growing food may prevent them from going to school.

Education For Girls and Women

It is said that 900 million people aged 15 or over in developing countries are illiterate and that of these about 600 million are women and girls. In 25 countries in Asia and Africa one-third or less of the women and girls aged 15 are literate but in most of these countries the figures for males are double, or more, those of females. Some examples of percentages of literate adults, 15+, 1995, will illustrate this:

	MALE	FEMALE
Bangladesh	49	26
Chad	62	35
Sierra Leone	45	15

Education for women and girls is important for future development because women often play a large part in

- keeping the family fit and healthy;
- contributing to the family income;
- doing much of the agricultural work;
- local community affairs and the improvement in local conditions, particularly in rural areas.

There is an important relation between the mother's literacy and the education of the children - where there is "family literacy" the children have a better start.

"Non-Formal Education"

Apart from ordinary schooling, much work is being done on such "non-formal" education as:

- (a) Literacy training for adults: Literacy gives people a basic ability to read about their rights and put forward their case, rather than having to rely upon others to do this for them. This is especially important in, for instance:
- improving their pay and conditions by exploited groups of workers;

- local community members improving their conditions and defending their rights, particularly in poor rural communities or in shanty towns;
- defence of their land rights by minority ethnic groups

(b) Awareness-raising: An essential first step in overcoming injustice is what is sometimes called "conscientisation", namely, awakening a critical sense and making consciences aware of actual situations of injustice. This will help people to organise themselves and lead them on to act to overcome unjust situations. Such awareness-raising often forms an important part in popular education programmes on social problems.

(c) Community leadership training: Local people can often make a valuable contribution to the development of their own local community if given appropriate training in working together in groups and in leadership.

(d) Training of local people in health and nutrition: Much work is done through local families and communities in spreading knowledge of hygiene, in improving nutrition, and in primary health care, including the training of community health workers.

(e) Training in particular skills and trades for income generation: Training in all sorts of skills (sewing, mechanics, carpentry, agriculture, fish-farming, forestry, craft work, etc) can help local people to generate more income, so overcome severe poverty.

What is SCIAF Doing?

SCIAF supports the following education programmes in Uganda

A special school for aids orphans and streetchildren

Adult literacy classes for adults

Job training for young adults who are left to look after their younger brothers and sisters. Young people get the chance to train as tailors, cobblers, bricklayers, caterers, carpenters and graphic designers.

Training for doctors to help them become familiar with better ways of controlling the pain of patients with AIDS
Training of community health workers who help to keep their fellow villagers healthy and free from disease.

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