

**Committee:** Young Delegates Forum

**Issue:** Improving Primary Education in Less Developed Countries

**Student Officer:** George Stergiopoulos

**Position:** Deputy President

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

It is an honor to welcome you to the Young Delegates Forum and to this year's ATSMUN. I am very happy to serve as a Student Officer in this committee and I am looking forward to meeting all of you.

MUN conferences are an amazing experience, in which you can be informed about topical events, meet students from other places and collaborate with them, improve your public speaking skills and find some abilities of yourself that you have not found already. I am really glad I am given the chance to participate as a student

officer in this year's MUN and I sincerely hope that this year's experience will leave an indelible mark in your lives. I will try my best, so that you develop an interest in the procedure of MUN and offer you incentives so as to participate in more of them in the future.

One of the topics that we are about to explore in this year's ATSMUN is "Improving primary education in less developed countries". A great topic, which generates heated debate and is among the most serious problems that the UN are facing today. It is vital to address the problems and the needs of every country, according to its status and by discussing them to come up with feasible suggestions and solutions. Your energetic presence, clear stance on the matter as well as your overall contribution towards achieving an effective result is expected.

I hope that this study guide will provide you with all the information needed to help you with your research. It is very important, apart from conducting a thorough research about the topic, to be aware of your country's traditional policy, so that you take it into consideration during your policy statements.

Do not hesitate to contact me via an e-mail ([gdstergiopoulos@gmail.com](mailto:gdstergiopoulos@gmail.com)) in case you need any help with your preparation or clarifications regarding this study guide.

Get ready for an unforgettable experience in Patras!

Best regards,  
George Stergiopoulos

## **B. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

### **Primary education**

Primary education is the first stage of formal education. It comes after pre-school and before secondary education. Primary educational systems differ from country to country.

### **Commuting**

The process of travelling between a place of residence and a place of work/educational place.

**Active learning**

A process, in which students actively participate in class, instead of passively absorbing knowledge.

**Anti-bias curriculum**

A more democratic approach to education, in which all prejudices and preconceptions regarding sex, ethnicity, personal beliefs etc play no significant role, contributing this way in students not being marginalized because of their background (that is particularly beneficial for pupils from developing countries).

**Apprenticeship**

A traditional method of learning a craft by the supervision of someone with experience.

**E-learning**

A method to facilitate learning using new technologies such as computers.

**Empirical knowledge**

Knowledge obtained from experiences and generally your senses.

**Homeschooling**

An alternative to the typical attendance of school, learning at school via your parents or special tutors.

**Net enrolment rate**

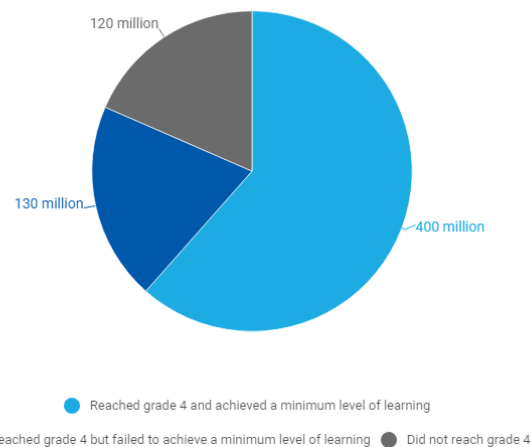
Total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

**Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

NGOs are independent from governments organizations (although sometimes they may be funded by them) who are active in humanitarian, educational, health care, public policy, social, human rights, environmental, and other areas to effect changes according to their objectives.

## Acronyms

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| UN     | United Nations   |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organization                          |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| MDG    | Millennium Development Goals                           |
| WEF    | World Economic Forum                                   |
| EFA    | Education for All                                      |
| GPE    | Global Partnership for Education                       |



## C. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. Primary education nowadays

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century primary education is of paramount importance and it must exist in every country, for every single child. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal 2 was to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015, by which time their aim was to ensure that all children everywhere, regardless of race or gender, will be able to complete primary schooling. The goal was primarily focused on Sub-Saharan and East Asia countries, because they are ones that the highest levels of poverty can be found. In developed regions, particularly Europe and North America, these standards have long been met. Primary education, as a state-provided service, dates back to the 19th century and evolved during the 20th century, becoming the backbone of a country's financial advance. The cases of pupils not attending primary school are almost non-existent and the degree of sophistication that has gone through designing a friendly atmosphere for the young learner is admirable, with all the new educational methods of intuitive learning, E-learning and support for gaining broader knowledge being put into effect.

Unfortunately, in less developed countries there are a lot of students, who do not attend primary school due to the difficulties that they face on a daily basis. From 2000 and then, due to the acts of some international organizations, NGOs and others, we have witnessed an increase in the number of students attending primary schools, but still the overall effect is not satisfying and is miles away from the European standards. Developing countries that deal with this problem are in majority African and Asian ones, which have experienced the scourge of colonialism even in the late decades of the previous century. By attaining their

freedom were they only able to construct their nation from the very foundations. In such a short time span and with the burdens of their war for independence leaving their mark on society still today, it was inevitable for these countries to face immediate and fundamental problems, such as primary education. While more and more children in those areas are attending school worldwide, many of them drop out or fail to meet minimum standards of learning. Of the world's 650 million children of primary school age, 120 million do not reach Grade 4, while another 130 million reach Grade 4 but fail to achieve a minimum level of learning.

*Image 1; Number of children of primary school age worldwide who reach Grade 4 and achieve a minimum level of learning, who reach Grade 4 but fail to achieve a minimum level of learning, and who do not reach Grade 4, 2012 ([UNICEF DATA](#))*

## **2. Reasons why children do not attend school**

In less developed countries some of the reasons that the children do not attend primary school are the difficulties they have to face to get to the school and the high cost of schooling, in comparison with the salaries in the respective countries. Even though in some countries students do not pay fees, there are still other expenses such as uniforms, lunch, books that the state usually cannot provide. The quality of education that schools offer is at most times mediocre (not enough available teachers, neglected school buildings, shortage in school material etc) and parents have to pay extra money to bring private tutors at home, so that they can pass their exams. As everyone can understand, not every family in those countries is willing to pay for education if knowledge gained from school attendance is not adequate for the kids to help their parents with the family business, or other practical financial purposes. Furthermore, being educated in school does not necessarily enhance their prospects of finding a better job with a salary high enough to cover for everyday expenses, as job vacancies are sparse in such countries that the economy is crippled. That is a significant deterrent to finish even the mandatory school programme. Barriers that keep a kid living in a developing country away from school do not stop here. Sex discriminations are also a key factor. Human rights and democratic ideas are not generally in effect in such countries, meaning that tradition and religion play a significant role in the society's progress. Therefore, girls do not enjoy equal educational rights with men and as a result, they tend to take up household tasks instead of going to school. Last but not least, the war situation in the developing country is of paramount importance to a child's education. In case a kid lives in a warzone, where your life is in constant danger, education, even the basic one, is not

prioritized. It is the aversion of diseases, the combat of malnourishment and the guarantee of shelter that matter, above all.

### Most affected regions

Poverty and marginalization has led more than 72 million children to stay out of school. Sub-Sahara Africa is the most affected area with more than 32 million children receiving no education (which means 44.4% of the total children that do not attend school worldwide). Central and Eastern Asia are also highly affected with more than 27 million uneducated children (37.5% of the total children in the same category).

The lack of education has a negative effect on those countries. As children either do not attend school or drop out from the first two grades, they do not have the required knowledge to stimulate a positive impact on the country. Major infrastructure works remain unfinished, scientific progress is obstructed, trade is impeded. Generally, all financial sectors are deprived and the country is plunged in disrepute day by day. In a broader context, democracy itself in those countries is set in danger, since the grown-ups are not informed enough to judge upon such crucial matters as the governing of a country. As a consequence, authoritarian leaders may take power into their own hands and oppress the people.

(Statistics by; <https://www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/>)

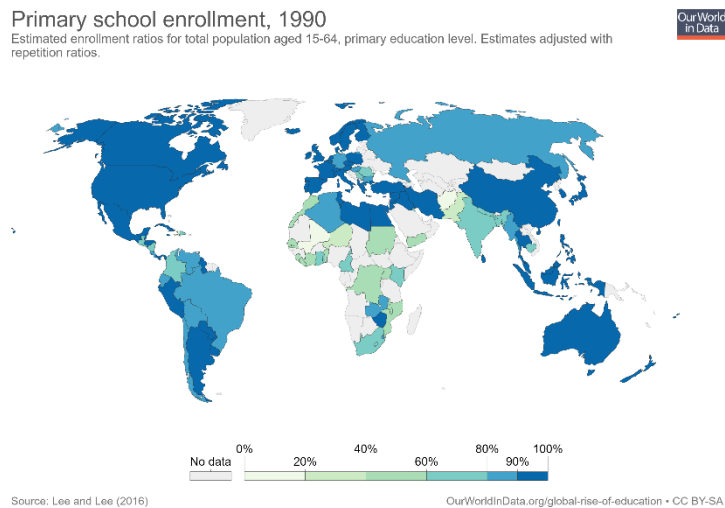
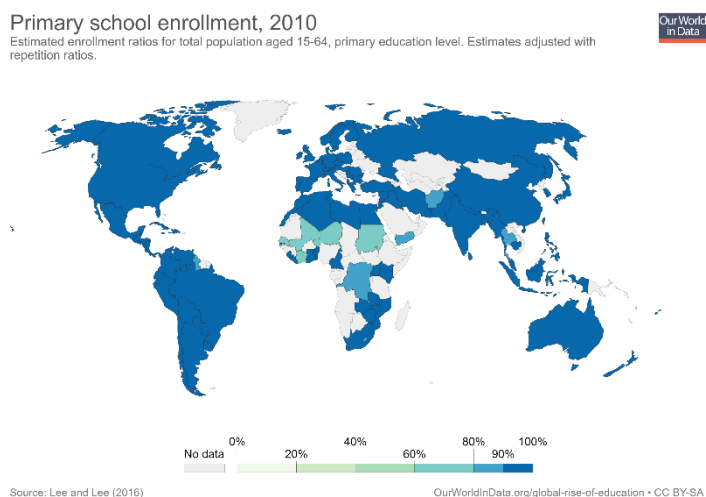


Image 2; Primary school enrollment, 1990 (Source; [Lee and Lee](#))



*Image 3; Primary School enrollment 2010 (Source; [Lee and Lee](#))*

### **3. Some speeches about the importance of primary education.**

**Irina Bokova, Director-general of UNICEF said;**

“We are witnessing a young generation frustrated by the chronic mismatch between skills and work. The best answer to the economic downturn and youth unemployment is to ensure that young people acquire the basic skills and relevant training they need to enter the world of work with confidence,”

“Many, and young women in particular, need to be offered alternative pathways for an education, so that they can gain the skills needed to earn a living, live in dignity and contribute to their communities and societies.”

“Investing in young people’s skills is a smart move for countries seeking to boost their economic growth. The Report estimates that every \$1 spent on a person’s education, yields US\$10-US\$15 in economic growth over that person’s working life-time.”

**Pauline Rose, director of EFA Global Monitoring Report said;**

“There are worrying signs that aid to education may be slowing down just when children and young people need it the most,”

“Governments and donors must find the money and energy to help young people most in need to acquire the skills they and their countries’ economies desperately need. The private sector is the first to benefit from a skilled workforce and must also step up its financial support.”

“Reallocating aid could help fill the funding gap. US\$3.1 billion of aid to post-secondary education never reaches the educational systems of developing countries as it is used to fund foreign students in donor countries. These funds could be better spent addressing the skills deficit for disadvantaged youth in poor countries. The cost of one Nepalese student’s

scholarship in a developed country could give 229 students access to secondary education at home.”

## **D. ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**

### **World Education Forum**

The World Education Forum’s mission is to increase the number of children who have access to education, to establish relationships between schools, initiatives, programs and projects aimed at improving education in all countries and to influence global policies and decision-making processes by setting standards for educational investments for all countries.

### **UNESCO**

“Education for All” is a program which started in 2000 (in the World Education Forum meeting, in Senegal) and it was led by UNESCO. Its goal was to provide “Education of All” by 2015. Apart from the governments of all the countries involved in this program, non-governmental organizations, development agencies and the media helped in order for the program to achieve its goal.

### **Global Partnership for Education**

The Global Partnership for Education is the only global fund solely dedicated to education in developing countries. Established in 2002, GPE is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that aims to strengthen educational systems in developing countries with the aim of significantly increasing the number of children who attend school and learn. GPE brings together developing countries, donors, international organizations, civil society, teacher organizations, the private sector and foundations.

### **BRAC**

BRAC is an NGO in Bangladesh, which has been ranked number one NGO in the world for 2018. BRAC is one of the largest NGOs involved in primary education in Bangladesh and not only. As of the end of 2012, it had more than 22,700 non-formal primary schools with a combined enrolment of 670,000 children. BRAC's education program provides non-formal primary education to those left out of the formal education system, especially poor,



rural, or disadvantaged children, and drop-outs. Moreover, BRAC has been involved in the reduction of the gender gap in the educational system of Bangladesh.

### **Pratham**

Pratham is one of the largest NGO's in India and it was created to accomplish a very important mission. Its mission is "Every child in school and learning well". By increasing the literacy levels of India's poor, which account for about one third of the world's poor, Pratham aims to improve India's economic and social equality. This is carried out through the introduction of low cost education models that are sustainable and reproducible.

### **Escuela Nueva**

Escuela Nueva (in English "new school") is an educational model presented for first time in Colombia. In an "Escuela Nueva" School students are learning on their own pace without facing the teacher. Children learn on their own through conversations with other students who have already mastered a subject. The teacher is restricted to a mere supervising role of giving advices and providing students with guidance, if and when needed.

## **E. UN INVOLVEMENT**

United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) had the biggest meeting in its headquarters, New York in 2000. During this meeting 189-member states worked all together and set some goals. Those goals were named Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Followed by a lot of meetings, UNICEF thought that many of those goals, if not all, could be achieved by 2015. For this to happen, the involvement of all governments and international organizations was needed. The MDG which was about improving primary education in developing countries was the second one (MDG 2). The target, as it was officially presented by UNICEF, was; "To ensure that children universally – including both boys and girls – will be able to complete a full course of primary education by 2015"

Some of the achievements of the MDG 2 include;

- An increase in the primary school net enrolment in the developing world from 83 percent in 2000 to 91 percent in 2015



Image 4; UN image promoting global action, source [un.org](http://un.org)

- An estimated 50 percent decrease in the number of children not attending primary school globally, specifically from 100 million in 2000 to around 57 million in 2015

## MDG 2

Global out-of-school children of primary school age

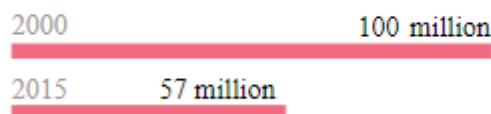


Image 5; Comparison of out-of-primary school children between 2000 and 2015. (Source; [The Guardian](http://TheGuardian), UNICEF data)

- Remarkable improvement in primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa since the establishment of the MDGs. The net enrolment net increased from 8 percent in the period between 1990 and 2000 to 20 percent in the period between 2000 and 2015

Primary school net enrolment rate in sub-Saharan Africa

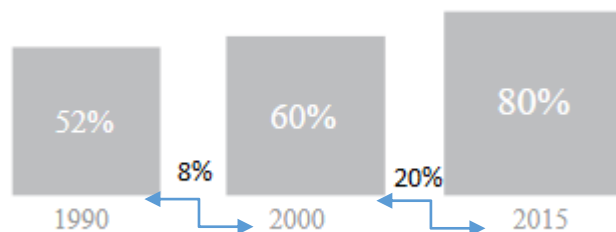


Image 6; Net enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa (source; [The Guardian](http://TheGuardian), UNICEF data)

- Global increase in the literacy rate among youth aged 15 – 24 from 83 percent in 1990 to 91 percent in 2015. At the same time, the gap between men and women has lessened.

## **F. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

There are a lot of measures to be taken so that we are able to witness tangible improvement in primary education of less developed countries. International cooperation is mandatory, and therefore the UN should do everything possible, under their jurisdiction, to ameliorate the situation. Here are some of the possible solutions; (of course there are a lot more and all of them will be discussed and debated during our committee sessions)

### **The involvement of the developed countries**

A lot of countries -especially the less developed- are facing trouble due to financial deficit, which leads to the creation of educational systems that are underfunded or mismanaged. For this problem to be solved, assistance by the developed and financial independent countries is mandatory. Monitored by the UN, those countries should set up an annual fund to provide for the less developed countries. By helping them organize more resilient and stable educational systems, more and more pupils in those countries will have the opportunity to reinforce their educational prospects. As we have mentioned before, well-educated people have the power to make a country flourish. Apart from the financial support, human force and experts with contemporary, pupil-friendly teaching methods are needed for the overall transformation of an educational system. Investment in new technologies starting from the basic computers is undoubtedly a key parameter in improving the educational system of those countries. Familiarization with the breakthroughs of this era can enhance their absorbing ability and reduce the costs of operating school facilities.

### **The adjustment of the school subjects**

Parents often prefer to keep their children out of school as they think that they do not obtain the essentials for their livelihood. For example, a parent who is educated in a less developed country would rather their offspring not know about philosophy or sociology because he is convinced that such things are incompatible with real-life choices. So, it is important that schools provide both theoretical and practical lessons. To be more specific, in a country based on naval trade, students should be taught about economical principals on a theoretical level, but also care to learn about ships, merchandise and the currency value.

### **School access**

It is well-known that transportation systems in the majority of developing countries are almost not existent, making school access nothing but easy. Pupils are in most cases obliged to walk long miles to approach the school building, often passing through hazardous environments. There are a lot to be done to combat this issue. Both the creation of more local schools and the construction of better infrastructure require a lot of effort and money, but how can an educational system improve if the necessary presence of the students cannot be guaranteed first?

### **Compulsory school attendance**

A state law is hard to be ignored. Mandatory school presence can act as a deterrent to whoever thinks that school is a waste of time. Although less harsh methods have to be applied as well, the imperative of this duty can make people gradually understand the magnitude of primary education, especially those parents in less developed countries that think by school nothing worthwhile can be achieved.

### **Nutrition and residence**

Providing a daily meal for the family is a challenging bet for many parents in developing countries and a reason why their children often stay out of school. If free nourishment or an eating-vouchers programme is established, it is probable that there will be an influx of students in the school premises. There are worse situations than that, however. Many children do not have the necessary accommodation or live in poorly constructed dwellings. Therefore it is strongly recommended that schools at night can operate as hostels, until proper accommodation for the children in need is prepared.

### **Psychological support**

People living in developing countries experience unspeakable travesties on a daily basis. Their house is very unstable, financial prospects are quite doom, whereas their health condition is likely to be deteriorating day by day due to propagating diseases. That situation is taking a psychological toll on the children. Thus it is advisable for schools to hire psychologists that can encourage the kids to discuss openly their problems. That person, in whom they can confide their worries and

fears, can be the reason why they would like to attend school, as a means to combat their problems by socializing and learning new things.



Image 7; Primary School Students Carrying An Inflated Tire Tube In Their Way To Scholl



Image8; Primary School Students Crossing A River On Inflated Tire Tubes, Rizal Province, Philippines(Image credits; [Panjalu Images/Barcroft Media](#))

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