

# Education beats poverty:

evidence for the effectiveness of education for poverty reduction

**RESULTS**  
the power to end poverty

## Introduction

Education is a means of empowering individuals. It equips individuals with skills and knowledge needed to maximise their full potential and increases their productivity. Education is one of the most powerful tools that can be used to break the cycle of poverty. Educated children earn higher wages, enjoy improved health, are more aware of global environmental problems, play an important role in building stronger and more stable states, and contribute to economic growth. The evidence for the effectiveness of education to fight poverty is vast. We have picked out a few of the strongest arguments and documents below.

## Why should funding for global education be a priority?

- **Economic Growth:** An educated population spurs economic growth. When people have the tools to become self sufficient individuals, they contribute to a stronger economy and can help lift their community out of poverty.
- **Higher Wages and employment:** Educated children enjoy higher earnings. Studies have shown that an additional year of education adds approximately 10 percent to a person's wage – in many cases more. A study examining education and income levels in Uganda found a strong correlation between poverty and lack of education. The study found that an extra year of primary schooling was associated with a 17 percent increase in wages.<sup>1</sup> A study conducted in South Africa, known for its high unemployment rate, found low education levels correlated with higher unemployment for all race groups. People with higher education face an unemployment rate of six percent while those with simply a primary education or less experience unemployment rates close to 40 percent.<sup>2</sup>
- **Healthy Population:** Providing children with an education improves their health, decreases their chances of contracting HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, and reduces infant mortality. An educated woman is more likely to marry later and have fewer and healthier children. Additionally, a healthy society is more economically productive, which further contributes to economic growth. A 2008 study in India looked at the association between adult education and child mortality. The study found a lower incidence of child mortality for households with nine or more years of education.<sup>3</sup>
- **Environmental Awareness:** An educated society with a greater understanding of science has a greater awareness of environmental issues and is more likely to be part of a solution to environmental problems.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Countries reduce their risk of conflict when a greater percentage of the population is educated. Furthermore, an educated society can positively contribute to reconstructing and rebuilding societies that have been affected conflict. A **World Bank** study in 2006 found that a country that has 'ten percentage points more of its youths in schools- say 55% instead of 45% - cuts its risk of conflict from 14% to around 10%.'<sup>4</sup>

## Personal stories about the impact of education

[Pedro](#) lives in Guatemala. Pedro's family's village and school were destroyed during the war, forcing his family to live in a refugee camp, where Pedro was born. Nowadays, Pedro is able to go to school and explains:

*'The best thing is that in the afternoons I go to school. For a long time there was no school here, but now I go every day. This is very important to me because I want to be a doctor when I grow up, so that I can look after people where we live.'*

For a long time [Jyoti](#), who lives in India, was unable to attend school because she was pressured to work to help support her family. She used to believe that gaining an education was an unattainable dream:

*'I had to start work at five o'clock in the morning and worked till late at night, doing whatever was demanded. There was no time for a rest or a break. But I was very keen to go to school. At times I used to sit next to the landlord's children while they were studying. Once the landlady saw this and slapped me. She said people like us should never even dream of education and I should always be ready to work hard.'*

With the help of a local organisation, Jyoti's father was able to escape bonded labour and secure a job with slightly higher pay, meaning Jyoti is now free to return to school. She is very happy to be back in classes and hopes one day to become a teacher so she can *'try my best to encourage children in my village to go to school so they can get good jobs in the future.'*

Many children in developing countries do not enjoy the same access to education as children in developed nations do. However, with a greater commitment to fund global education from the international community, we can help ensure that all children receive an equal opportunity to go to school.

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<sup>1</sup> Appleton, S, 'Education, incomes and poverty in Uganda in the 1990s.' CREDIT Working Paper 01/22, Economics Department, University of Nottingham, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Kingdon, G & Knight, J, 'Race and the incidence of unemployment in South Africa.' Working paper WPS/2001.18, CSAE, University of Oxford, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Singh-Manoux, A, et al., 'Adult education and child mortality in India: the influence of caste, household wealth, and urbanization.' *Epidemiology*, 2008, 19(2):294-301.

<sup>4</sup> Collier, P 'Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy.' World Bank, Washington, DC, 2006.