

A Holistic Approach to Meeting MDG #2

Successful implementation of Millennium Development Goal #2 will ensure that all boys and girls everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary school. As we know, although great progress has been made, worldwide there are still more than 57 million children of primary school age who are not in school.

In Nepal alone, according to UNESCO's newly released [EFA Global Monitoring Report](#), the most recently available data illustrate this global trend:

- Of all children:
 - Approximately 22% do not complete primary school, a noticeable improvement over the rate of 50% ten years previously
 - Approximately 15% have never even started primary school, also a noticeable improvement over 38% ten years previously
- Of the poorest quintile of children:
 - Approximately 40% do not complete primary school, a significant improvement over 75% ten years previously
 - Approximately 20% have never even started primary school, a slight improvement over 25% ten years previously

So yes, things are a lot better than they were just a decade ago. And yes, there is still plenty of room for improvement!

Like so many GCE members, [Educate the Children \(ETC\)](#) is proud to have a long history of [improving both access to education and the quality of education](#), dating from well before the MDGs were adopted. One thing we learned early on is the importance of *a holistic approach*. It is obviously necessary to make school more accessible to children facing obstacles such as family poverty, and to improve the quality of the education they receive, but there are other important factors that affect children's school attendance and success.

- If children do not have enough nutritious food to eat, they are less likely to succeed academically, and more likely to be held back and/or to drop out. ETC helps impoverished families to start and maintain their own **kitchen gardens**, in which they can grow nutritious food year-round – and they can sell any excess produce for additional income. We also provide practical, hands-on training and resource support for women seeking to **start their own small agri-businesses**, such as market gardening or livestock farming enterprises. [Click here](#) to see a photo essay about our agricultural work.
- If children's parents do not see a value in education, they are more likely to keep the children out of school to work for pay or to help with domestic chores. Mothers are highly likely to be illiterate themselves, and daughters' educational opportunities are less valued overall than sons'. Through participation in **ETC's women's groups**, women become literate and numerate, learn important entrepreneurial skills such as price-setting and record-keeping, and gain access to affordable microloans to start their own small businesses. They also receive financial support for one child per woman to attend school,

with preference given to daughters for those who have them. [Click here](#) to see a photo essay about our women's empowerment work.

Our carefully integrated program model aims beyond increased educational access and improvements to the schools themselves. It also ensures that children are better nourished and thus better able to do well academically. It also means that their mothers have a stronger appreciation for the importance of education, and can earn more money to pay school expenses, so that their children are far less likely to be kept home from school.

This is why it is so important to think of the MDGs holistically. Successes or shortfalls in one area are bound to affect results in each of the other areas. NGOs, government entities, and other change agents must continue to strive *both* to help today's adults to make better lives for themselves and their families now, *and* to help today's children to receive the best possible education so that they will grow into the strong, healthy, productive adults of tomorrow!

[Educate the Children's](#) mission is to work with women and children in Nepal to improve health, welfare, and self-sufficiency by building skills that families can pass down to later generations. Through our children's education, women's empowerment, and sustainable agriculture programs, we provide training and resources to help thousands of marginalized and impoverished people make better lives for themselves. For more information about [ETC](#)'s work both pre- and post-quakes, please [click here](#) to watch our short (less than three minutes) video.