

Reuters

World falling behind on 2015 education goal

By David Alexander

Not Even Close

Voice of America

Study Says Universal Education is Attainable and Affordable

By *Barbara Schoetzau*

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A study sponsored by the private American Academy of Arts and Sciences shows that the goal of universal education is both attainable and affordable. From VOA's New York Bureau, correspondent Barbara Schoetzau has the story.

For years, international educators have stressed the importance of universal education as the best way to reduce poverty and improve public health and living standards for the world's people. In 2000 participants at two world conferences on education pledged to achieve universal education with a target date of 2015. But few expect universal education to be achieved by the deadline despite significant strides.

The privately funded study, undertaken by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, presents evidence that the goal of universal education can be achieved with relatively small contributions from wealthy nations.

Joel Cohen, a professor of population studies at the Rockefeller and Columbia universities, is a co-director of the study. He says the project grew out of his work studying the economic, environmental and cultural consequences of population growth and decline.

"By 2050 it is reasonable to expect that the global population will be different in four ways: bigger, older, more urban and more slowly growing," said Joel Cohen. "It will be bigger by two to four billion people and all of that growth will be in poor countries."

The study found that the goals set by world conferences in 2000 are far from being met, despite great strides since 1990. Co-director David Bloom of Harvard University's School of Public Health says the average enrollment of primary school age children across the globe has reached 86 percent. He estimates that about 64 percent of all secondary school age children are currently enrolled in secondary schools.

"The bad news is that even if education continues to expand at the pace that it did between 1990 and the early part of this century, our estimates indicate that 114 million primary school age children will not be enrolled in school by 2015, about one in six," said David Bloom.

Cohen and Bloom estimate that 185 million children of secondary school age, about one in four, will not be enrolled in schools by 2015. Unlike many studies, which focus on primary education, Cohen and Bloom stress the importance of secondary education also. Cohen says it is essential to address universal secondary education.

"The graduates of the secondary schools, some fraction of them, can be fed back to become teachers in primary schools and there is a shortage of well-qualified primary school teachers in many of these

countries," he said. "A second reason to do them together is that having a secondary system that has places increases the incentive for people to complete primary because they have a place to go next. It is not a dead end. If you want to operate in the global economy today, you have to have at least a good equivalent of a high school education."

The population experts say that small contributions from the world's wealthiest nations - about \$7 billion a year - can make enormous changes in improving global education within one decade.

Bloom says governments that made commitments to education such as Singapore and Korea show what can be accomplished. He calls it common sense to educate every child well.

"We found quite a lot of evidence that increased education goes along with great economic opportunity for individuals, lower population growth. Investments in education, improved health - and that works both ways in the sense that investments in health also improve school enrollment, learning capacity and cognitive development and also the quality of the overall educational experience," he said.

The study recommends discussions on regional, national and international levels to debate the issue.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences is a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based group dedicated to the advancement of learning.

Education Week

Worldwide Education Achievable, Study Says

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By Kathleen Kennedy Manzo

Many countries are not on track to reach the goal of universal primary education by 2015, but greater political will and more help from wealthy nations could turn the situation around, maintains a report by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

In fact, the report asserts, increased efforts for expanding academic opportunities in developing nations -- and a relatively modest amount of additional funding for universal education -- could help more than 300 million additional children and youths worldwide attain an education through secondary school.

"Universal, high-quality primary and secondary education is achievable by the middle of the 21st century," the report says, "though probably not at the current rate of progress."

The report, "Educating All Children: A Global Agenda," by the academy, a Cambridge, Mass.-based independent policy research center, outlines an ambitious plan for improving educational access that goes beyond the goals of existing international initiatives, which have long focused on primary education, to include secondary school.

Providing opportunities for secondary education, according to the report, is likely to make primary schooling more attractive and productive and provide the economic benefits that come with a better-educated and more highly skilled citizenry.

"Having a secondary education system increases the incentives for people to complete primary education," said Joel E. Cohen, a professor of populations at Rockefeller and Columbia universities in New York City and an editor of the report. "If you want to participate in the

"We've seen over the last 30 years a considerable increase in the number of children who are enrolled," Nicholas Burnett said last fall when the annual UNESCO report, which he oversees,