



Education: Laying Foundations for Development

Education is a basic human right rooted in international law. It is critical to the development and well-being of individuals and societies. For individuals, a good education ensures a higher quality of life by providing information, skills and knowledge for successful personal development.

At a national level, access to education contributes to the overall economic growth of countries and helps to build shared social and cultural values in society. However, it is estimated that over 115 million children do not attend primary schools.



“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory”.

Article 2. Declaration of Human Rights.

Global illiteracy figures are staggering: there are an estimated 860 million adults and young people worldwide who cannot read and write. Two-thirds of these are women.

There are many reasons why children do not attend schools, including high school fees, safety concerns due to conflict or natural disasters, and prioritising the education of boys over girls. Looking at these underlying factors is critical in ensuring education for all.

What are Irish NGOs doing about it?

Goal Two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is devoted to education and calls for universal primary education for boys and girls by the target date of 2015.

Irish NGOs play several different roles in helping to meet global education targets. In all, their work is helping children to start school at the right age, ensure that girls and boys have access to education and that education is provided in a cost-effective way.



“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”

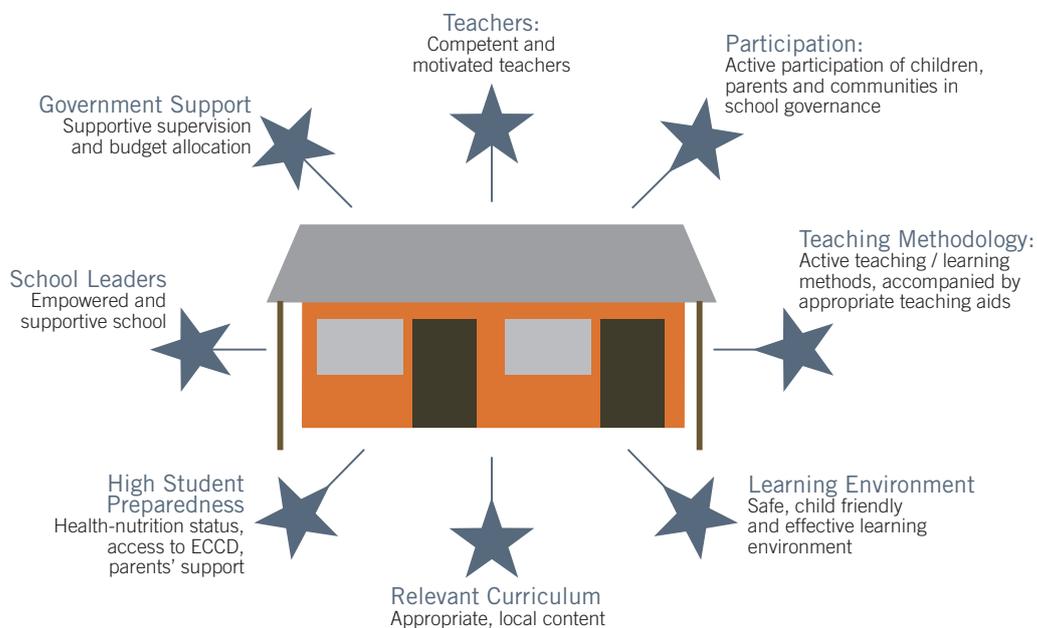
Nelson Mandela

NGOs are working at several different levels:

- ★ Providing education or building schools and latrines;
- ★ Ensuring quality of education. For instance, by helping to establish more adequate teacher training facilities and develop relevant and appropriate curriculum and teaching methodologies;
- ★ Helping to create a safe, child-friendly learning environment;
- ★ Helping to improve the health and nutrition status of school children;
- ★ Promoting the active participation of children, parents and communities in school governance;
- ★ Working within communities to raise understanding of the role of education, particularly education for girls;
- ★ Campaigning for educational resources at national and international levels;
- ★ Working with governments to develop education policy and lobbying for educational reform, such as the *Global Campaign for Education*, or anti-child labour campaigns; and
- ★ Campaigning to double the current figure of only 2.7% of international aid going towards basic education.

Supporting education:

The elements of an integrated approach to child-centred education



Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) global enrolment rates in primary schools have risen: The number of children of primary school age who were out of school fell from 103 million in 1999 to 73 million in 2006.

