

# Millions could escape poverty by finishing secondary education, says UN cultural agency

22 June 2017 – While a new United Nations study shows that the global poverty rate could be more than halved if all adults completed secondary school, data show high out-of-school rates in many countries, making it likely that education completion levels will remain well below that target for generations.

“The new analysis on education’s far-reaching benefits released today should be good news for all those working on the Sustainable Development Goal to eradicate poverty by 2030,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

“It shows that we have a concrete plan to ensure people no longer have to live on barely a few dollars a day, and that plan has education at its heart,” she added.

Based on the effects that education had on growth and poverty reduction in developing countries from 1965 to 2010, the new analysis by UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report team, shows that nearly 60 million people could escape poverty if all adults had just two more years of schooling.

“If all adults completed secondary education, 420 million could be lifted out of poverty, reducing the total number of poor people by more than half globally and by almost two-thirds in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia,” according to UNESCO.

The paper, from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education, is being released ahead of the UN High Level Political Forum ([HLPF](#)) which will be held in New York from 10 to 19 July and focuses on poverty eradication in pursuit of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development. It demonstrates the importance of recognizing education as a core lever for ending poverty in all its forms, everywhere.

Studies have shown that education has direct and indirect impacts on both economic growth and poverty. It provides skills that boost employment opportunities and incomes while helping to protect from socio-economic vulnerabilities. An equitable expansion of education is likely to reduce inequality, lifting the poorest from the bottom of the ladder.

However, if current trends continue, of the 61 million primary school age children currently out of school, 17 million will never set foot in a classroom – one in three of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and Northern Africa, and more than one in four of those in Central Asia and Southern Asia.

Moreover, girls in poor countries continue to face particularly steep barriers to education.

While UNESCO underscores that education must reach the poorest in order to maximize its benefits and reduce income inequality, according to the GEM Report, children from the poorest 20 per cent of families are eight times as likely to be out of school as children from the richest 20 per cent in lower-middle-income countries.

The paper stresses the need to reduce the direct and indirect costs of education for families.

---

## [Global narcotics market 'thriving,' range of available drugs diversifying at alarming pace – UN](#)

22 June 2017 – Of the quarter of a billion people who used drugs in 2015, about 29.5 million or 0.6 per cent of the global adult population were engaged in problematic use and suffered from drug use disorders, including dependence, according to report out today from the United Nations drugs and crime agency.

Opioids were the [most harmful drug type](#) and accounted for 70 per cent of the negative health impact associated with drug use disorders worldwide, said the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)).

There is much work to be done to confront the many harms inflicted by drugs to health, development, peace and security, in all regions of the world, said UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov in a statement on the launch of the 2017 [World Drug Report](#).

Marking 20 years of its publication, the report provides a global overview of the supply and demand for opiates, cocaine, cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances (NPS), as well as their impacts on health.

This year's report states that opium production is up and the cocaine market is thriving. In 2016, global opium production increased by one third compared with the previous year and this was primarily due to higher opium poppy yields in Afghanistan.

The report also highlights the scientific evidence for hepatitis C causing greatest harm among people who use drugs; and spotlights further diversification of the thriving drug market, as well as changing business models for drug trafficking and organized crime.

Disorders related to the use of amphetamines also account for a considerable share of the global burden of disease. And while the NPS market is still relatively small, users are unaware of the content and dosage of psychoactive substances in some NPS. This potentially exposes users to additional serious health risks.

The 2017 report finds that hepatitis C is causing the greatest harm among the estimated 12 million people who inject drugs worldwide. About 1.6 million people are living with HIV and 6.1 million are living with hepatitis C, while around 1.3 million are suffering from both hepatitis C and HIV.

Overall, three times more people who use drugs die from hepatitis C (222,000) than from HIV (60,000).

#### *Changing business models for drug trafficking and organized crime*

In 2014, transnational organized crime groups across the globe were estimated to have generated between one fifth and one third of their revenues from drug sales. Mobile communications offers new opportunities to traffickers, while the 'dark net' allows users to anonymously buy drugs with a crypto-currency, such as bitcoin.

While drug trafficking over the dark net remains small, there has been an increase in drug transactions of some 50 per cent annually between September 2013 and January 2016 according to one study. Typical buyers are recreational users of cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine, hallucinogens and NPS.

#### *Drugs and terrorism*

Although not all terrorist groups depend on drug profits, some do, notes the report. Without the proceeds of drug production and trafficking, which make up almost half of the Taliban's annual income, the reach and impact of the group would probably not be what it is today.

Up to 85 per cent of opium cultivation in Afghanistan occurs in territory under some influence of the Taliban.

---

## [Many aid groups unable to manage war zone risks, says UN-backed report](#)

22 June 2017 – Humanitarian aid workers want to help people in some of the biggest war zones, but extreme risks and threats are paralyzing their operations, a United Nations-backed report today concluded.

'Conflict parties' lack of respect for the fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law and the brutality and volatility of today's

armed conflicts make it extremely difficult and dangerous for these brave aid workers [to deliver humanitarian assistance and protection](#) in complex emergencies,&#8221 said UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien, whose Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) co-produced the report.

[Presence and Proximity: To Stay and Deliver, Five Years On](#), produced by OCHA, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Jindal School of International Affairs in India, is based on interviews with more than 2,000 international and national aid workers, and includes case studies on humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Syria and Yemen.

&#8220It is our duty as aid workers to work where needs are greatest,&#8221 said Jan Egeland, Secretary General of NRC. &#8220But our international humanitarian community is failing too many people in too many places, from Syria and Yemen to South Sudan and Nigeria. Extreme risks and threats are paralysing too many organizations and their ability to deliver aid and save lives.&#8221

Among its findings, the report found that as overall needs in the field have grown, so have the funding gaps, which necessitate cutting of projects and aid work.

Based on interviews with aid workers, the authors also concluded that abductions of workers are on the rise, criminality is seen as a rising threat, and the number of incidents against national aid workers has increased.

&#8220Humanitarians expressed an increased sense of risk and vulnerability, even though most major security incidents affecting humanitarians occur in a very small number of countries and tend to reflect the increased level of humanitarian activity in proximity to ongoing conflict rather than expanded targeting of humanitarians around the world,&#8221 the authors wrote.

The report is a five-year follow up to the 2011 document, [To Stay and Deliver](#), which provided advice and recommendations to practitioners on critical issues, such as risk management, responsible partnerships, adherence to humanitarian principles, acceptance and negotiations with relevant actors.

Among the conclusions, the authors wrote that &#8220not enough progress has been achieved since 2011, and many of the recommendations contained in the initial report remain particularly relevant today.&#8221

Other trends noted that humanitarians are more focused on security analysis, and that remote programming &#8211 the concept of using local organizations to help implement aid activities &#8211 can generate risks and undermine the quality of protection and humanitarian programmes.

---

# Iraq's children caught in cycle of violence and poverty as conflict escalates, UNICEF warns

22 June 2017 – The past three years of intensifying conflict in Iraq have left the country's children trapped in a grinding cycle of violence and poverty, an assessment out today by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has warned, calling on the warring parties to immediately end hostilities.

“Across Iraq, [children continue to witness sheer horror](#) and unimaginable violence,” said Peter Hawkins, the UNICEF Representative in the country, in a statement on the launch of the new assessment.

Entitled *Nowhere to Go*, the assessment underscores that more than five million children in the country are in need of urgent humanitarian aid.

“They have been killed, injured, abducted and forced to shoot and kill in one of the most brutal wars in recent history,” Mr. Hawkins emphasized.

In west Mosul, children are being deliberately targeted and killed to punish families and deter them from fleeing the violence. In less than two months, at least 23 children have been killed and 123 have been injured in that part of the city alone, according to UNICEF.

Among others, the assessment on Iraq outlines that since 2014:

- 1,075 children have been killed, 152 in the first six months of this year;
- 1,130 have been maimed and injured, 255 in the first six months of 2017; and
- More than 4,650 have been separated from their families.

In addition, over the same three-year period, there have been 138 attacks on schools and 58 on hospitals; over three million children miss school on a regular basis while 1.2 million are out of school; and one in every four children comes from a poor household.

For nearly four decades, Iraq has faced violence, war, sanctions and instability. But in the last three years alone, conflict has displaced three million people – half of them children. Many parts of the country were turned into war zones with civilian infrastructure severely damaged or destroyed. Half of all schools in Iraq are now in need of repairs.

As life opportunities for children dwindle, UNICEF continues to respond to their growing needs and those of their families.

Pointing out that all warring parties owe it to the children of Iraq to end

the violence, UNICEF is appealing for an immediate end to the conflict. The agency is also calling for all children affected by the crisis to have access to unimpeded and sustained humanitarian assistance and basic services; and for children in detention to have access to legal protection and services in line with international standards of juvenile detention.

UNICEF also requesting an end to all grave violations against children including killing, maiming and recruitment and an end to attacks on civilian infrastructure; freedom for all families to move, should they wish to flee or return to home; and increased investments to improve the quality of education, healthcare and protection services for all children.

Finally, the agency called for sustained humanitarian contributions, noting its funding gap of \$100 million for lifesaving emergency operations in Iraq and to support children returning home to resume their lives.

---

## [UN agency condemns killing of two journalists working on assignment in Iraq](#)

22 June 2017 – The killing of two journalists in Iraq drew strong condemnation today from the United Nations agency tasked with defending press freedom and the safety of journalists.

Journalists face tremendous dangers in carrying out their job, a job where they provide us with vital information enabling us to build towards peace, said Irina Bokova, the head of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

Kurdish journalist Bakhtyar Haddad and French reporter Stéphane Villeneuve were working together in Mosul, Iraq, on a programme for France 2 when they were killed as a result of a roadside bomb explosion.

Their names will be added to UNESCO's [dedicated webpage](#) commemorating the lives of journalists killed in the line of duty.