

Foreword

Economic growth and social development are closely related to the skills of the population, indicating that a central post-2015 development goal for education should be that all youth achieve at least basic skills as a foundation for work and further learning, not merely that they gain access to schooling. Achieving such a goal would lead to remarkable overall economic gains while providing for broad participation in the benefits of development and facilitating poverty reduction, social and civic participation, health improvement, and gender equity.

To inform the post-2015 development agenda, this report provides the most comprehensive picture to date of the quality of learning outcomes around the world and then estimates the long-term economic gains of improving access to education and raising the quality of learning outcomes. The economic benefit of achieving universal basic skills has tremendous potential as a way to address issues of poverty and limited healthcare, and to foster the new technologies needed to improve the sustainability and inclusiveness of growth. No substitute for improved skills has been identified that offers similar possibilities of facilitating the inclusive growth needed to address the full range of development goals.

As the report shows, many countries could feasibly meet the goal of universal basic skills over the next decade and a half, assuming they duplicate the record of the most rapidly improving education systems.

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