

Education

In Australia and other rich countries, all children will spend time in school and learn to read and write. Education is a right for all children that gives them choices and opportunities in life. However, in the world today, 75 million children will never go to primary school. Poverty causes many children in Africa, Asia and the Pacific to miss out on the chance to go to school. Why? What is it about poor countries that causes so many children to miss out on their right to an education?

School fees

Firstly, in most poor countries, both government and private schools charge fees. Governments in poor countries have a limited amount of money and so they charge fees. Many families are too poor to pay the fees and so the children miss out on education. Poor parents struggle to pay for the food and clothes they need.

Table 1: Primary Education

	% of Grade 1 children reaching Grade 5
Australia	100
PNG	68
Cambodia	63
Laos	63
Sudan	79

Child labour and girls

Secondly, poor families often need their children to help bring in money or help around the home. Children may drop out of school because they are sent out to work. Many children in Africa, especially girls, will spend much of their day walking four to six kilometres to collect water from a well or working in the fields. Also, many girls will stay at home to look after the children and do chores while their mother goes to work.

Teachers

Thirdly, poor countries struggle to spend enough money to train and pay qualified teachers. Developing

countries need to increase the number of teachers and the quality of teachers – and this means they need to increase the pay for teachers too.

Conflict

Next, schools need to be seen as safe places. In countries where there is war or conflict (e.g. East Timor, Iraq, Sudan), children may be kept from school to help keep them safe. Peace is essential if children are going to attend school and be able to concentrate on learning.

Health

Finally, malnutrition and illness are much more common in developing countries. Dirty drinking water and poor sanitation cause diseases that keep children and teachers from attending school – and can even kill them. Also, when parents are sick, children have to go to work or stay at home to do the household chores.

In conclusion, there are many reasons why children in poverty miss out on their right to a basic education. These are factors that can be changed, but poor countries need our help to do that.

Children have a right to an education that develops each child's personality and talents to the full. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 28/29)



In Papua New Guinea, one in three children do not finish primary school.