



### **UN Secretary General: education of paramount importance**

In 2000, the United Nations promised that all children would have access to primary education, yet with only two more years until 2015 (The deadline for all Millennium Development Goals), it is unlikely that this particular MDG will be met. Therefore, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon launched a new education initiative on 26th September 2012 called Education First which focuses on three priorities:

1. Putting every child in school
  
2. Improving the quality of learning
  
3. Fostering global citizenship

In practice this means that the world needs two million more teachers and that the world's poorest countries need almost four million new classrooms to accommodate those who are not in school.

In countries ravaged by war or other crises, education is the key to development and helping communities and especially children to escape from poverty. Or as the Secretary-General said in his speech launching the Education First initiative, "when we put Education First, we can

reduce poverty and hunger, end wasted potential – and look forward to stronger and better societies for all”. Mr. Ban knows the power of education from his own experience. “In my small village after the war, I had no school building. Our class gathered under a tree. But whatever we lacked in supplies, we made up for in our passion for learning”. Because of his own experience, his drive to make education for all a priority comes from the heart.

Although the right to education is one of the fundamental rights in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, today worldwide, some 61 million children are still not in school. This is a huge loss to societies around the globe, not only in loss of potential but also an economic loss as every dollar invested in education generates \$10 to \$15 in returns. Companies from all over the world have come to understand this, and at the launch of the Education First initiative, Ban Ki-moon announced that dozens of top companies and private foundations have mobilized over US\$1.5 billion (almost £800 million) in new financing to ensure all children and young people have a quality, relevant and transformative education.

In July, former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown was appointed Special Envoy for Global Education to the United Nations.

For more information on the Education First initiative: <http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/about.html>

For more information on the Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

For more information on Gordon Brown and his position as Special Envoy for Global Education to the United Nations: <http://gordonandsarahbrown.com/2012/07/un-statement/>