

# Millennium Development Goal 2



*Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling*

### Scripture Reflection:

'I summon heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I offer you the choice of life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life and you and your descendants will live.' (Deut 30:19).

### Food for thought

The freedom to choose is a wonderful gift which most of us take for granted. We sometimes make wrong choices but at least we can choose! Without access to basic education, without at least a basic literacy level, people's choices are severely limited. Education is one of the most important keys to unlocking human potential. Education provides us with the tools to become all that we can be. And yet, this most basic of opportunities is denied to 150 million children who don't receive even a primary school education. Their choices will always be limited. It will be almost impossible for them to escape the poverty cycle. Providing an education to any child allows them the opportunity to choose life!

### A story from the field

In Peru, many Columbians serve on the northern edges of Lima where the poorest families live crowded together in makeshift shanties. It's a tough place to raise children and even tougher if the family has a child with a mental or physical disability.

Very few facilities exist which cater for the children of the poor with disabilities. But all children deserve fullness of life. Thirty years ago, Columbians established the Manuel Duato Special Needs School. About 85 children attend the pre-school classes and an additional 190 children with hearing problems are taught until they are 14 when they leave to attend a local high school. Another 160 have Downs Syndrome. About 120 students are in occupational therapy in which they learn skills for life in their adult years.

### How should we respond?

**We are called to respond on two levels:**

*\* Educate others in your community about the issues. Is there a local social justice group you could join? Invite a guest speaker from an organisation that works with the poor.*

*\* Share your life experience and wisdom with your children and grandchildren. Encourage them to become more aware of the reality of so many people in our world. Encourage them to become involved in local community issues.*

**To make poverty history**



Columbian Fr David Wall takes time out to visit the staff members and students of the Manuel Duato Special Needs School in Lima, Peru.

### Net enrolment ration in primary education, 1990/91 and 2003/04 (%)

	1990/91	2003/04
Sub-Saharan Africa	53	64
Oceania	74	80
Western Asia	80	83
Southern Asia	72	89
CIS, Europe	91	90
CIS, Asia	84	92
South-Eastern Asia	92	93
Eastern Asia	98	94
Northern Africa	81	94
Latin America & the Caribbean	86	95

**Universal primary education is in sight, though Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind**

### Proportion of children of primary school age out of school by sex, 1996/2004 (%)

	Girls	Boys
Sub-Saharan Africa	42	38
Southern Asia	29	22
Oceania	26	18
Western Asia	22	16
CIS, Asia	15	16
Northern Africa	14	12
CIS, Europe	11	12
South-Eastern Asia	10	10
Eastern Asia	1	1

**An educational gender gap persists**