

# 3 Who teaches you?

This section addresses the issues of access to education, literacy and learning in developing countries. Art prints, photographs, activities and discussion challenge students to think of what they need to know to be a member of their society and what they learn from their culture and arts.

## Objectives

Students will:

- Define "education" and distinguish different forms of learning, discussing where and from whom people learn
- Compare their classroom and school day with that of children in developing countries
- Give reasons for differences in educational opportunity
- Show how language, folklore, music and art both reflect and teach societal values

Materials	
<b>Arts Prints:</b>	<i>The School</i> by Christina Lozano Chavez, Columbia <i>Classroom Scene</i> by Satpal Singh, India
<b>Photographs:</b>	<i>Studying in Sierra Leone</i> <i>Basket Weaving in Indonesia</i>
<b>Chart:</b>	<i>Comparing Literacy in Different Countries</i> (Activity #7)
<b>Activity Sheets:</b>	Who teaches you? Activities #1 - #6
<b>Maps, Globes:</b>	

## Getting started

Ask students to think of all the people who have taught them important things, what these things were, and where they were learned. Was it in a classroom or outside school?

Use the photograph *Basket Weaving in Indonesia* to expand students' idea of education and discuss the importance of nonformal education in developing countries and the development of practical skills to earn a living. Encourage spontaneous reactions to the other art prints and photographs depicting school scenes.

*What do you see in the pictures?*

*What is the same? What is different?*

*How do you think the children in the various pictures feel about school?*

Most children in developing countries do not go to school beyond sixth grade because they cannot afford the costs (e.g. tuition and required uniforms). They need to work to contribute to their family's income. Have your students consider what they would do if they quit school after sixth grade. What kind of future would they have?

## Teacher background information

Education is a very broad concept. Much is learned from people and events outside the school and classroom. For example, there are many things that we must know to function in our society. A broad definition of education includes formal education (what is learned in schools), nonformal education (what is learned through organized activities outside school), and informal education (what we learn from life).

**LOW LITERACY RATES** generally characterize developing countries. In Sierra Leone, only 58% of adult men and 21% of adult women can read and write. Only a few students -25% of boys and 11% of

girls - continue on to secondary school. Formal education ends in primary school for the majority of children in developing countries.

Thailand, unlike Sierra Leone, has very high literacy rates, with 94% of men and 88% of women able to read and write. This is due in large part to a historic tradition where reading and writing were taught by Buddhist monks.

**LITERACY AND SURVIVAL.** Low literacy rates are more than just statistics. Not being able to read affects many aspects of life. Recent studies show that increasing a mother's education improves the health and survival of her children. Education also increases the productivity of farmers. Fundamentally, education gives people access to more opportunities to improve their lives.

**ACCESS TO FORMAL EDUCATION** is limited, especially in rural areas where schools are few and far between. In some communities, children must actually help to build their own schools. They may have to walk two hours to get to school. Many schools do not have teachers year-round. Some teachers may not have had the opportunity to complete secondary school themselves. Schools also lack supplies and equipment.

**POVERTY** affects educational opportunity. School fees and the cost of books and required uniforms can be a heavy economic burden for a family. A family may only be able to afford to send one son to school. Daughters are needed at home to work in the field or care for younger children. Education for girls is of lower priority.

**NONFORMAL EDUCATION** plays an important role in increasing educational opportunities in developing countries. The nonformal classroom can be anywhere - in the fields, at a health center or at a school. The emphasis is on teaching practical skills to meet local needs. Examples range from agricultural and vocational training to classes in family health and income generation.

**EDUCATION AND CULTURE** are closely connected. Many developing countries rely on traditional ways of educating and preparing children for the responsibilities of adulthood.

Some of the methods of transmitting information are through stories, songs, and the arts. In most societies artistic traditions keep a record of history and also inform about current events. This is particularly significant in countries with low literacy rates and also in those where the media is censored. Teenagers in Colombia have made a mural reflecting the developments in their community; people in Sierra Leone sing of the difficulties of men leaving their families to go to work in the mines; traveling theater groups in India educate about current issues; and in Thailand, rock stars have begun to address the problems of the poor in their songs.

**"Even though people are different, they are special in their own little way. I felt useful because I could help other people understand something in Spanish."** -5th grader. Providence, RI

**"I was surprised that the children have to walk miles to get to school"** -5th grader, Clayville. RI

**Activity Sheets: Who teaches you?**

#1. **The Classroom:** Introductory activity in which students define different kinds of education by listing important things they have learned, who taught them and the places where they were learned. Students identify similarities and differences between Satpal's classroom and their school.

#2. **The School:** Students analyze the details of Cristina's drawing to interpret her feelings towards school and the reasons why school is important to her. Her description, given in both Spanish and English, provides the opportunity to compare languages.

#3. **Count in Different Languages:** Students copy numbers and compute easy math problems in another language and script.

#4. **Literacy: What Does It Mean?:** Students interpret a graphic chart comparing literacy rates of men and women in the United States and six developing countries.

#5. **Abdulai's Day:** Students read an account of Abdulai's day and make a schedule of the events in his day to compare to their own day.

#6. **What is a Proverb?:** Students match the meaning of proverbs from Sierra Leone to their equivalents in the United States. (Answers: 1-b; 2- c; 3-d; 4-a.)

### **Developing critical thinking: questions for further exploration**

- How would your life be different if you could not read?
- What role do the arts - drawings, stories, songs, television, movies - play in teaching important things? Give an example of a popular song, TV show or movie. What would children in India or Sierra Leone learn from it?
- How would increasing literacy among girls affect overall social and economic conditions in a country?

### **Multidisciplinary approaches**

**Art/Music.** Construct African masks. Research their role and function in imparting values and beliefs. Make the "talking" drums used in West Africa and discuss how they are used to communicate important messages.

**Language Arts.** Post signs with important instructions in another language so children can see how much they depend on literacy. Students make "international" signs or posters that can be understood by children in any developing country. Signs must communicate without using words.

**Social Studies/Art.** Simulate a classroom in India and the scarcity of learning materials. Students can brainstorm substitutes for paper, pencil and books and experiment using them for a class period. Chalk or stone chips can be used for pencils. A slate can be made from cardboard painted black. Introduce an abacus for counting. How is the learning process affected?

**Social Studies/Math.** Have students use the World Almanac to compute and compare statistics on educational resources available in selected developing and developed countries such as schools, televisions, and radios.

**School Lunch Program – Tuluá, Columbia**

Too many children in the world go to school in the morning without having eaten. We know that without eating, levels of concentration and discipline are low and learning is not optimal.

Many economically disadvantaged student in Tuluá, Colombia got help to meet the expenses of school fees and uniforms. However, this program did not address the problem of malnutrition that was affecting their studies.

Parents and teachers decided that the problem of malnutrition could be tackled by a school lunch program. They approached the appropriate government department and, with the active participation of school teachers and the community, launched the program. It was a success. As one teacher describes it:

*"If you could be here and see it, then you would understand what a difference the school lunch program has made. The level of concentration, discipline and results have improved tremendously. The children have begun to look better. They feel happy and play a lot more."*

PLAN International Field Report,  
Tuluá, Colombia

**Most children in developing countries do not have the chance to continue their education beyond the sixth grade. These students in Sierra Leone are studying hard.**

**BASIC INDICATORS**

	<b>Annual GNP Per capita (US \$)</b>	<b>% of adults literate (male/female)</b>	<b>Total Population (millions)</b>
<b>Columbia</b>			
<b>Honduras</b>			
<b>India</b>			
<b>Indonesia</b>			
<b>Sierra Leon</b>			
<b>Thailand</b>			
<b>USA</b>			

**"We are poor, very, very poor. But we are not stupid. That is why we despise our illiteracy."** from Silver Shackles: Women and Development in India, Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay

Adapted from *The State of the World's Children 1989*, UNICEF