**Post-UN Decade for Literacy**

***Literacy is the gift that keeps on giving***

**W**hat are some ways that United Nations agencies have been bringing people the [tools](http://www.unepd.info/Vocab6.html) they need to learn to read and write -- even people in the most remote parts of the world? Sometimes books and other educational materials travel to these hard-to-reach places -- by elephant! In the [rugged](http://www.unepd.info/Vocab6.html), mountainous [terrain](http://www.unepd.info/Vocab6.html) of northern Thailand, for example, elephants carry books, video players, television sets - and even teams of teachers - to the hill tribe people. The elephants arrive every month with their literacy teams and [supplies](http://www.unepd.info/Vocab6.html).  
With the official launch of the Decade for Literacy, (2003 -- 2012), the UN agency, UNESCO had been coordinating efforts like these and more to promote literacy and education programmes for people all over the world--even those in the most hard-to-reach places.   
Because two thirds of the world’s 860 million illiterate adults are women, the first two years of the Literacy Decade will be devoted to the theme, "Literacy and Gender".

In northwestern India, a non-governmental organization (NGO) named Lok Jumbish [encouraging](http://www.unepd.info/Vocab6.html) literacy by [setting up](http://www.unepd.info/Vocab6.html) women's groups in every village where a literacy program has been [implemented](http://www.unepd.info/Vocab6.html). The groups offer a chance for women to meet and discuss their concerns. They also provide them with professional training.

Now that we are looking back on the Decade for Literacy: what were some of its results?

The global youth literacy rate, for the population aged 15-24 years, increased from 83 percent in 1990 to 87 percent in 2000 and to 90 percent in 2011. The number of illiterate young people declined from 168 million  
in 1990 to 139 million in 2000 and to 123 million in 2011

Learning in school, for which literacy is key, became more accessible to children during the Decade for Literacy. This greater accessibility led to an increase in the attention given to the quality of learning. Between 1999 and 2010, the global primary net enrollment ratio increased from 84 percent to 91 percent. The Arab States, South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa made the biggest strides.

The Decade has also seen an enhanced quality of life through the beneficial effects of literacy skills on political, social, economic, human and cultural conditions for individuals, families and societies. For example, evidence shows that a child born to a literate mother is 50 percent more likely to survive past age 5, and that an extra year of schooling increases an individual's earnings by up to 10 percent

So many reasons why increased literacy is the gift that keeps on giving.

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