Секция «Международные организации и мировые политические процессы»

The importance of eradication of illiteracy on the global level

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Literacy is a skill, which we've gained since we were little kids, can you imagine our life if we weren't able to read this now? Or use the computers and internet? For our society (for the record, Russia scored 99,7% in literacy rate among young people from 15 to 24 [1]) illiteracy means just bad grammar, punctuation and poor usage of stylistic tools. But for third world countries it means much more.

If you can't read then you are eliminated from information absorption and have very low opportunities to succeed as a worker because you are not qualified. Quality basic education provides students with the skills needed later in life and for further studies. Literate parents are more likely to send their children to school. A literate person has more opportunities for continuous, ongoing education and a literate society has better mechanisms to adapt to emerging development challenges.

There was a story in media about one woman in Mumbai, India, who managed to get by as a cook. Her employers let her know what food to prepare by leaving pictures of vegetables, rice and another dishes stuck to the fridge each morning. And she thought she was lucky holding this position, but also understood that she could have more, if she was able to read and write. [2]

Literacy is a human right which means expanded personal freedoms and opportunities, as well as a tool for development of individual human and society as a whole. Opportunities for further education are determined by the level of literacy. Literacy is at the heart of basic education for all, it is a prerequisite for poverty eradication, limiting growth of the population, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.

American writer and dramatist Gore Vidal once said: «Half of the American people have never read a newspaper. Half never voted for President. One hopes it is the same half». If voters are illiterate there is a low chance that elections will be fair.

For this situation the list for illiterate voters consists of images of parties or politicians to vote. But if a person doesn't know the program behind the candidate because he/she is not up with the news stream of newspapers and internet, he/she will vote by amusing prejudices like picking favorite picture or from the advice of someone they know. That means spoiling the votes and election seems then unfair and wrong. Also this people can be under pressure to sell their votes or intimidated into voting for crooks and thugs.

In India, for example, they use symbols for each party or politicians, many African countries put photos as well as names on ballot paper, Gambians vote by dropping marbles in drums decorated with candidates' faces. [2] Voter-education campaigns matter too, but it's weak in most places and it is about a procedure, there is no guarantee that elections will be cleaner.

Despite all the notes for progress and lacks in the spreading illiteracy programs, I believe that we can't separate it from other society problems as poverty. The problem of illiteracy should be followed by the other millennium development goal - eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. [5] As stated in the report by the World Bank, we can reduce poverty and hunger by:

- investing in agriculture,

- creating jobs,
- expanding social safety nets,
- expanding nutrition programs that target children under 2 years of age,
- universalizing education,
- promoting gender equality,
- protecting vulnerable countries during crises.

In agreement with the World Bank's Education strategy [4]:

1) Measure education outcomes, especially for poor people and disadvantaged communities
2) Offer innovative incentives, like cash for attendance, to keep kids in school
3) Ensure that education leads to learning skills and that it is relevant and of good quality
4) Establish standards for teachers and schools
5) Train teachers, especially those who serve disadvantaged communities

Since its creation, UNESCO has played a leading role in promoting literacy. But addressing the global literacy challenge remains difficult.[3]

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), which ended on 31 December 2012, was a UN initiative launched in 2003 to provide an impetus for achieving the six Education for All (EFA) goals and developing literate environments. These are essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.

In line with the UNLD International Plan of Action, UNESCO facilitates the design of policy frameworks that promote a literate environment, with specific attention to the following:

- Providing service while respecting diversity of context,
- Promoting quality contents, pedagogical practices and the training of facilitators,
- Creating rich and relevant literate environments with respect to gender, linguistic, and cultural diversity through diverse modes of delivery, including ICTs and Community Learning Centers,
- Linking formal and non-formal approaches to education,
- Creating synergies between governmental and non-governmental actors,
- Promoting local community responsibility and management of programmes.

What people can do with literacy often depends on how they acquired it. Well designed programmes provide the best opportunities for acquiring sustainable literacy skills and using them meaningfully.

Источники и литература

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2) The Economist: Illiterate voters: http://www.economist.com/news/international/21600162-teaching-those-who-cannot-read-how-vote-makes-cleaner-fairer-elections-making-their?zid=316&ah=2f6fb672faf113fdd3b11cd1b1bf8a77
3) UNESCO: Literacy: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/

4) World Bank: Investing in Education for Half a Century: http://www.worldbank.org/mdgs/education.html

5) World Bank Group: Working to End Extreme Poverty and Hunger: http://www.worldbank.org/mdgs/poverty_hunger.html

Иллюстрации

Рис. 1. Voting in India