



## UNESCO - Decade of Literacy: 2003-2012

The Right to Literacy Campaign recognizes the need for international efforts toward promoting literacy and campaign leaders have met and communicated with UNESCO leaders to add support and to commit to a role the United States can play toward achieving international goals. UNESCO leads the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) under the slogan of “Literacy as Freedom”. Launched at UN Headquarters in 2003, the Decade aims to increase literacy levels and to empower all people everywhere. In declaring this Decade, the international community recognized that the promotion of literacy is in the interest of all, as part of efforts towards peace, respect and exchange in a globalizing world. At the request of the UN General Assembly, UNESCO is coordinating the Decade and its international activities. UNESCO launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) in 2005 as a framework for achieving the Decade’s goals.

The Education for All goal of increasing literacy rates by 50% by 2015 provides the overall target for the Decade. The UN Literacy Decade expresses the collective will of the international community to promote a literate environment for all, girls and boys, women and men in both developing and developed countries. The Decade was established for three reasons:

- On a global scale, one in five adults cannot read nor write. According to the latest estimates, 776 million people are illiterate and two-thirds of these are women. In a modern world, such levels are unacceptable.
- Literacy is a human right. Basic education, within which literacy is the key learning tool, was recognised as a human right over 50 years ago, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right continues to be violated for a large proportion of humanity.
- Literacy efforts up to now have proved inadequate, at national and international levels. The Decade is an opportunity to make a sustained collective effort which will go beyond one-shot programmes or campaigns.

For more information on the UN Literacy Decade, visit the [UNESCO](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/un-literacy-decade/) website.

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