

An open letter to Ban Ki-moon and world leaders

781 million people are illiterate worldwide.

Those 781 million people cannot understand a voting form, or the label on a medicine bottle. They cannot read a newspaper. They are denied the dignity the ability to read and write brings to people's lives.

As writers, we know the power of words. We believe it is unacceptable for anyone not to have the opportunity to become literate. As a global community we must ensure that all children are guaranteed the opportunity to attend school.

But the truth is that many children are missing out simply because of where they are born. Over half of the world's out of school children, 37 million, live in countries affected by conflict. War in these countries has destroyed schools, forced teachers to flee, and caused education systems to collapse.

On 25 September 2008 you will meet in New York to discuss the Millennium Development Goals.

- We call on you to take action to make the Millennium Development Goal on education a reality – that by 2015 every child is receiving an education, and developing the ability to read and write.
- We call on you to ensure those children that are hardest to reach, such as those affected by conflict, are not left behind.

We call on the world's leaders (who have the responsibility, power and opportunity) to take the urgent action that is needed to make education for all a reality.

This open letter is signed by 260 writers from 49 countries

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Australia Solding, Anna

Austria Eberstaller, Sigrid; Rapp, Brigitte; Richter, Werner

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Bosnia and Herzegovina Stanistic, Sasa

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China Geng, Zhihui

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Ethiopia	Ambatchew, Abiye Daniel; Woldemariam, Befekadu Bekele
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Malawi Chikoti, Shadreck

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Montenegro Vuskovic, Lina

Mozambique Couto, Mia

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Portugal Saramago, Jose

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South Africa Mhlope, Gcina

Spain Camps Monfa, Carme; Ferrari, Maria Angela

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