



For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY

## Press centre

### News note

#### **Education the key to freeing tens of millions of children from hazardous labour**

*World Day against Child Labour 2008 focuses attention on the role of education in lifting children out of the labour market*

NEW YORK, 12 June 2008 – UNICEF estimates that there are 158 million children under the age of 15 who are trapped in child labour around the world. The vast majority of these children have little or no hope of accessing an education which would break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy that undermines their future.

Over 100 million children, nearly 70 per cent of all child labourers, work in agriculture in rural areas where access to schools, availability of trained teachers and educational supplies is severely limited. Even in urban areas, poor and marginalized children are unable to benefit from greater access to school facilities because of cost, caste and culture.

Gender is a crucial determinant of whether a child is able to seize the opportunity education provides. In Latin America 90 per cent of all child domestic labourers are girls. Across Sub Saharan Africa, where one in three children work, only 59 per cent of girls attend primary school.

However, recent data has provided hope in the battle against child labour. Education is the best weapon in this global fight, and the number of children out of school has dropped from 115 million in 2002 to 93 million in 2005-2006.

Part of this success has come from new initiatives to bring down the cost of schooling, making it more accessible to more children. This includes the School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) launched by UNICEF and the World Bank in 2005 to support countries in implementing school fee abolition policies.

There has also been a five per cent increase in enrollment and retention of school children in 11 countries in West Africa because of the provision of essential learning packages to schools. This has meant that families have not had to find the money to buy their children's school supplies, making impoverished parents more likely to send their children to school.

In Afghanistan, the development of a Community Based Schools initiative has seen 3,000 schools built in remote villages for 140,000 children.

But with over 150 million children still labouring instead of learning, there is more that governments and the international community can do to help get them back into school. This includes ensuring free education for all children at least to the minimum age of employment; providing flexible and properly resourced education programmes for child labourers and other marginalized groups to enable children to learn as well as work; and providing child-friendly quality education and skills training by properly trained and resourced teachers.

Though these initiatives, education can be made available to more children, providing a way out of often hazardous labour and giving children and families hope for a better future.

### **About UNICEF**

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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