

Intervention in the High-Level Education Event, May 2, 2007, Brussels

Audience: Political reps, donors, agencies.

Tone: Urgency, can do, passion, call to action

Make reference, as relevant, to intervention by children, and by Nick Burnett on global EFA monitoring report

77 million children are waking up today and not able to go to school. They will spend their day working at home, collecting wood or water, looking for paid work or begging in the streets – wondering what their future holds for them.

What's less well understood is that 39 million of these children are waking up in conflict affected fragile states – countries with governments either unable or unwilling to invest in education. These children are exposed to serious risks – recruited into the armed militia, trafficked, exploited and abused. Their future is a cycle of poverty-conflict-poverty.

Save the Children has worked with these children and their communities for many years – re-establishing services in emergencies, re-building infrastructure, training teachers, distributing supplies, strengthening nascent education systems and helping Ministries build back better.

We meet with children who prioritise their education – their future – over their daily needs. We listen to their families, who expect education to bring a better chance in life for their children. And we support their communities, who will always give more than they have to create a school. Save the Children knows that education for all children – *including* children in the DRC, in Afghanistan, in Nepal, in Colombia, in Sierra Leone and in Somalia – is not only essential, but it is possible.

Save the Children also works with government in CAFS (conflict affected fragile states), and international institutions, including everyone in this room – those who have the power and the ability to rewrite the future of these children. *We all* have a role to play in making this happen, enabling all children to have a quality education. Save the Children is committed to playing its role in countries affected by conflict – directly supporting 8 million children to go to school, and inspiring change that will assist millions more.

As part of Save the Children's campaign 'Rewrite the Future', our recent research has shown that:

- There is insufficient aid available to reach education for all. **Only 2 donors are giving their fair share of aid to education** (Netherlands, Norway).
Some of the G8 are the worst performers, some giving less than 20% of their fair share. Donors must live up to their promises and deliver aid for education.
- Of the education aid that there is, too little reaches countries most in need – particularly those affected by conflict, where most out of school children live. **These countries receive only 1/5 of all education aid, despite having more than half of the world's out of school children.** Conflict is one of the greatest barriers to achieving EFA – we must address this issue and not fail children in these countries. Children are not responsible for conflicts and should not be made to pay the price.
- Despite the perception that it is too risky to invest in these countries - **aid does in fact reach countries affected by conflict and fragile states, but**

only 4% of it goes to education – the education sector is significantly underinvested in by donors. Mechanisms and channels do exist to support these countries – we challenge donors to improve these mechanisms, disburse funds more quickly and reach all children. We will work with donors and governments to do this but we cannot accept this as an excuse for not supporting education in these countries. We must do better.

- And, lastly but also of critical importance is the need to include education in all humanitarian response. Our research shows that humanitarian aid – on which many of these countries depend – barely includes education. **Only 5 out of 22 donors include education in their humanitarian policy.** Yet education is vital even in the midst of a crisis; it provides a safety net for children and a path to a more stable and prosperous future. While donors may recognise the importance of education to children in crisis, its role in creating stability and good governance, its importance in easing the transition to development, and its role in achieving education for all – many do not put this into practice when an emergency strikes. Now is the time to do this.

I call on you all today to assess your agency's policy and practice. To ask searching questions about your commitment to education, about your aid allocations and about reaching the hardest to reach, and about your commitment to the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education.

Today is a day for us, sitting here thousands of miles away from war torn villages and urban slums, to keep our promises and rewrite the future for millions of marginalised children.

Children cannot wait. They grow up, they miss their education, and they lose their chance. It doesn't have to be that way, we have a chance to change this – but we must act now.