



Calendar

49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and Beijing +10 - New York	28 Feb-11 March
International Women's Day	8 March
Launch of GAW report and related events worldwide	
OECD Working Group on Economic Policy - Paris	8-9 March
G8 Employment Conference - London	10 March
EI/ETUCE Pan-European Bureau - Brussels	14 March
UN Commission on Human Rights - Geneva	14 M - 22 April
Global Unions Task Force on Trade, Investment & International Labour Standards - Geneva	11-13 April
25th EI Executive Board Meeting - Brussels	12-14 April
Global Action Week for Education	25-30 April
EI/ETUCE Bureau Meeting - Brussels	28 April
OECD Forum 2005 - Paris	2-3 May
114th meeting of the TUAC Plenary Session - Paris	2 May
ICFTU Women's Committee Meeting - Brussels	11-13 May
4th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - New York	16-27 May
TUAC Working Group on Education, Training and Employment Policy - Paris	24-25 May
93rd Session of the ILO Conference - Geneva	31 May-16 June
GUF Conference - Interim meeting - Geneva	9 June
EI/ETUCE Bureau - Brussels	13 June
EI Pan-European Committee/ETUCE Executive Board Meeting - Brussels	13-14 June

EI prepares for the 2005 Education For All Campaign

2005 was the first deadline of the Education For All commitments and of the Millennium Development Goals for education. EI and the Global Campaign for Education have therefore decided to launch a major international campaign on Education For All (EFA). *"Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality"* was the first objective to be achieved by the 180 States who ratified the EFA commitment. On **International Women's Day**, on **March 8**, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) will launch a report showing that most countries miserably failed to meet the 2005 education objective. In April, **Global Action Week** from **24 to 30 April** on the theme of *"Educate to End Poverty"* will coincide with the World Bank spring meetings. The GCE will lobby the World Bank to obtain more guarantees for the countries not covered by the EFA Fast Track Initiative, but desperately in need of financial assistance to meet their EFA commitments.

On 1 July, EI and its member organisations will join the **Global Call to Action against Poverty**, also called the **White Band Day** because all activists will be wearing a white armband. On 6-8 July, the governments meeting for the G8 Summit in Scotland will be asked to convert the external debt of poor countries into funds allocated to education.

A first evaluation of the achievement of, or rather the failure to achieve, the Millennium Development Goals will be organised at the **UN MDG Summit** in New York (14-16 September 2005). On **10 September**, before the start of the UN Summit, a second White Band Day will be organised.

World Teachers' Day on **5 October** will also tie in the EFA campaign on the theme *"Quality Teachers for Quality Education"*. The EFA campaign will end in November with the annual **High Level Meeting** on EFA, where EI will be represented.

EI and the GCE urge all teachers, unionists and activists to mobilise to show that free quality public education is the key to a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous future.

Glossary

CSW UN Commission on the Status of Women
EFA Education For All
ETUCE European Trade Union Committee for Education
EU European Union
FTI Bank World's Fast Track Initiative
GATS General Agreement on Trade in Services
GAW Global Action Week
GCE Global Campaign for Education
G8 the eight most industrialised countries in the world
ICFTU International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO International Labour Organisation
GUF Global Union Federations
MDG Millennium Development Goals
OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSI Public Services International
TILS Global Unions Taskforce on Trade, Investment and Labour Standards
TUAC Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD
WFP World Food Programme
WTD World Teachers' Day
WTO World Trade Organisation



Education International is a world-wide trade union organisation of education personnel, whose **29** million members represent all sectors of education from pre-school to university in **343** national trade unions and associations in **165** countries and territories.

colophon

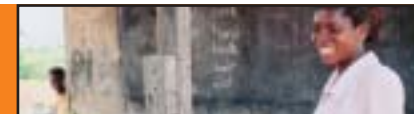
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Education International

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Beijing +10 Campaign → page 13



WORLDS OF EDUCATION



Many EI member organisations generously contributed to the **EI Tsunami Relief Program**. Over 280,000 Euros were transferred to the EI Solidarity Fund. 20,000 Euros were given directly to teachers during the EI mission in Aceh and Sri Lanka. The rest will be spent wisely on comprehensive initiative to rebuild schools and resume the education process in the regions hit by the Tsunami. See pages 2-3

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Global Action Week 2005 and beyond

Teachers everywhere are organising activities for Global Action Week on 24-30 April 2005! In a lot of countries, EI member organisations are taking the lead in national coalitions. It is the case in Brazil, Japan, Argentina, Malawi, Germany, Haiti, Canada and Pakistan, among others.

The ultimate goal of Global Action Week is to change the fate of the millions of children who are still deprived of their right to education.

The main activity this year is *"Send my Friend to School"*. It consists in making life

size cut-outs of children or adults to send them to decision makers or use them for a *"National Pledge Event"*. Those national events –marches, rallies, hearings at Parliaments– should culminate in asking Heads of State to commit to the global and national pledge to take action during 2005 to implement the education Millennium Development Goal.

However, Global Action Week is just one element of the big Education For All campaign (see page 16).

REBUILDING SCHOOLS TO RESTORE HOPE

In January, the EI General Secretary led a Global Unions Tsunami mission in Aceh, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka to meet with trade union organisations and assess their needs. The victims in the disaster-hit regions need assistance, not only in the form of immediate humanitarian relief but also in ensuring that trade unions are fully involved in the reconstruction process.

Emotionally shaken by the destruction "on an absolutely unprecedented and unimaginable scale", the members of the mission (see box) have returned with their own testimony to "the massive extent of human distress" observed on the ground, stressing in particular the "horrifying proportion of children among the victims".

The poor are paying the highest price

"Children have been the main victims of the Tsunami. As many as 70,000 may not have survived the disaster. The number of children who lost a parent or became orphans may be twice as many. Hundreds of thousands of children who survived the ordeal became displaced are traumatised," witnessed Fred van Leeuwen.

The poor are paying the highest price. Their houses were the first to be washed away, and with the collapse of the fisheries, coastal agriculture, trading and informal economies they have also lost their main sources of revenue. These groups, the most vulnerable and the poor, should also be the prime targets of the trade union solidarity programs.

In both Indonesia and Sri Lanka the immediate need for food, sanitation and shelter have been addressed more or less effectively. Programs for recovery and reconstruction are now being implemented. The success of these programs will depend on the availability of the funds committed by the international community, together with the capacity and willingness of national authorities to spend these funds wisely and to enable civil society to participate.

In Indonesia, most of the devastation occurred in Aceh. Over 220,000 people died. Half a million of those who survived have lost their jobs. These jobs were primarily in the agriculture and fishery sectors, but there were also many jobs lost in the education and other public sectors, as schools and public buildings were destroyed. Over 400,000 people are homeless and have found shelter in 52 temporary refugee camps. There were about 4,000 refugees in the TVRI Refugee Camp visited by the Global Unions mission.

Fred van Leeuwen met Ibu Hajah Arjumainar, a 46 year old teacher, in the camp. Her husband and four children (aged between 5 and 16 years old) have been missing since 26

December. She spends her days searching for her family and her nights at the camp, lying awake, praying to Allah for their safe return.

Like Arjumainar there are thousands who lost members of their families and friends. Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province, had a population of 223,629. More than 80,000 are

Member organisations in India, Kenya, Malaysia, the Maldives, Tanzania and Thailand have endured hardships as well. Most of the Global Unions recommendations for assistance programs are also applicable to these countries. Indonesia and Sri Lanka were selected for the mission because they were the most severely affected.

either dead or missing, according to governmental sources. During the Global Unions mission, corpses were still being uncovered from the mountains of debris and pools of filthy, stagnant water that covers an area of 80 km². This land was formerly home to over 100,000 people. Houses, schools and other buildings were swept away. The whole area smelled of death; the local victims of Aceh are buried in mass graves.

Helping rebuild teachers' homes and schools

EI has a member organisation in Aceh belonging to the Teachers' Association of the Republic of Indonesia (PGRI), with 50,592 members. The education department of the province has reported that 1,532 teachers were killed or are missing. This figure refers to 10 out of 13 badly affected districts. More than 750 school buildings have been destroyed. The mission team provided immediate financial assistance on site to

teachers in the refugee camps and PGRI has been collecting funds from its members across Indonesia for the reconstruction of homes, schools and for school facilities.

Apart from helping rebuild teachers' homes and schools, assistance is necessary to help teachers and children who are traumatised. Getting the chil-

dren back to school is helping them overcome their traumas. Many teachers are too traumatised to commence their work again and the federal government has flown-in teacher trainees to teach in the refugee camps. School materials are provided by Unicef.

Danger of exploitation in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the Global Unions mission heard of several instances of the abuse of people locally. Child trafficking is one of the key problems. Children searching for their parents were said to have been kidnapped and sold out of the country. Governments violate the property rights of the victims by denying that their previous property stood on a particular plot of land or by forcing them to relocate elsewhere. Another instance of abuse is the artificial increase in prices for local commodities such as food and clothing.

The post-Tsunami targets:

1. Global Unions will support vocational education programs to assist people in resuming their lives. It is important that the local economies are given a jump start and that people become self-reliant again. The Global Unions will assist people in the fishing, agricultural and informal economic sectors to build organisations.

2. The return to school will facilitate the communities to return to normality and will give children a better chance of overcoming their traumas. Moreover, schools provide the best possible protection of children against exploitation by merciless traders, as well as against certain "acts of benevolence" undertaken by foreign organisations and individuals,

such as the adoption of children. Some also claim to be "counselling" children when they are in fact proselytising them. Global Unions and their members could contribute to the achievement of this aim by helping to reconstruct or repair school buildings and to provide school furniture and materials, by supporting scholarship programs for Tsunami orphans, and by sponsoring crash courses for local teachers in trauma counselling.

3. The reconstruction or repair of workers' homes and of union offices is to be started immediately. This will generate economic activity, create employment possibilities, and provide confidence in a shared future. Global Unions and their members could contribute to the achievement of this aim by sponsoring housing

programs, including the establishment of cooperatives.

4. Trade unions must help ensure a fair distribution of aid, and fight exploitation and violations of human and trade union rights. National and local unions should be represented on bodies established by the authorities to coordinate rehabilitation programs. EI provided financial assistance to the families of union members who have died, and to members who have lost their properties.

KINDLY SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO:
EI SOLIDARITY FUND / Tsunami Relief Program
Account number: 310-100-6170-75B
Bank name: ING Belgium
IBAN Code: BE05 3101 0061 7075
SWIFT code: BB RUBE BB 100

Over 2,000 teachers have been killed by the Tsunami in Banda Aceh (Indonesia) and more than 750 school buildings have been completely destroyed. The needs of the education community are huge.

The tsunami destroyed many houses and other buildings ed funds to rebuild schools in order to re-establish the educa-

along the southeastern coast of the island. Normal activities were resuming in the education facilities in the areas which were not destroyed. School buildings have been used as refugee camps. The Sri Lankan government said it had allocated funds to rebuild schools in order to re-establish the education system as soon as possible. According to the Ministry, 170 school buildings are out of use, of which 72 are completely destroyed. No solution has yet been found for the thousands of orphans whose future remain uncertain. It is suggested that funds be established to provide scholarships to orphans or help

local families adopting orphans. There is also a need for local teachers to be counselled to enable them to come to terms with the death and destruction which they have witnessed. It is important that the counselling is done by local professionals. The GUFs team noticed that various foreign and non-professional groups such as religious sects or untrained "disaster tourists" were exploiting the

present vulnerable psychological state of the victims for their own purposes rather than assisting them. Generally speaking, the local unions also stressed the need for the international trade union movement to assist them in the fight against the erosion of workers' rights and the danger of more ruthless exploitation of both adult and child workers.

The Global Unions Mission

16-25 January 2005

Headed by Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary of Education International (EI) and Chair of the Global Union Federations' (GUFs) General Conference, the mission also included the EI Chief Coordinator (Asia Pacific Region) Aloysius Mathews, Tom Hobart, Vice President of the AFT, HM Rusli Yunus, Vice President PGRI Aceh, ICFTU Assistant General Secretary Mamounata Cissé, ICFTU-APRO General Secretary Noriyuki Suzuki and regional representatives from Global Union Federations of Metalworkers, Transport and Buildworkers.

By speaking to local trade unionists and other social activists on the ground, the fact-finding mission was able to supplement the reports already received from the trade unions in the region, with a view to establishing priorities.



► Tom Hobart, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers and Fred van Leeuwen, EI General Secretary, surveying the ruins of a secondary school in Aceh. None of its students and teachers survived the tsunami.



► Children have been the main victims of the Tsunami. 70,000 may not have survived the disaster. The number of children who lost a parent or became orphans may be twice as many.

Southern Sudan: extreme marginalisation

The education situation in southern Sudan is catastrophic. Only one in five children goes to school. This is the lowest rate in the world and only one pupil in fifty finishes primary school. For women, it is even worse. Nine out of ten women are illiterate. There are only a handful of secondary schools and no universities in this region.



"In terms of education, Southern Sudan is one of the worst affected regions in the world. One in two schools has no buildings and lessons take place outdoors. The region was already marginalised before the beginning of the war in 1983: three quarters of all adults were illiterate", says Ben Parker, the Unicef spokesman for Southern Sudan. To encourage parents to send their children to school, the

of food at school has paid off since it was introduced in 2001. It saves parents money and they can be certain that their children do not go hungry during the day", explains Tharcissus Nitta, spokesman for the WFP for southern Sudan.

One of the main problems is the situation amongst teaching staff. Primary school teachers are not trained and most are unqualified. Across the country, only 7% of teachers have received appropriate training and many have not even finished the initial stage of training. Furthermore, they cannot rely on good textbooks. "There are no textbooks for southern Sudan. We just use any books we can find, from Kenya, Uganda or the north of the country. This complicates the task for NGO's who do not know what to buy us!", explains the headmaster of the Deng Nhial primary school. Named after a southern rebel leader killed in combat, the school is now traditional, but when it was established in 1999, it was intended

Of the 830 pupils in the school, only 85 are girls and there is only one in the final year of primary school. According to the national average, one girl in every 100 finishes primary school. This is the lowest rate in the world. The tradition of the Dinkas, the majority ethnic group in the region is to blame according to Bul Jallad, one of the teachers. "For we Dinka, girls are seen as goods. Most parents refuse to send them to school and girls must be exchanged for a dowry, for example cows."

At the other side of the village, a primary school for girls was opened two years ago. Seven hundred young girls from Rumbek are educated there. According to Unicef, in order for education to develop in Southern Sudan, very small schools in each village need to be established. This will fulfil two objectives. Firstly, parents will be reassured of the wellbeing of their children who will not need to walk several kilometres to school. Secondly, it will keep young people close to their families so they can continue to help with household tasks.

World Food Programme (WFP) supplies food to nearly 100,000 pupils in southern Sudan. "If children do not eat during the day, they are in no condition to follow lessons. The distribution

for demobilised child soldiers. Nobody has the means to pay for them and many among them cannot even feed their families.

SUDAN HAS BEEN AT CIVIL WAR SINCE 1983, WHEN THE SUDANESE PRESIDENT AT THE TIME PUT AN END TO THE AUTONOMOUS STATUS OF THE SOUTH AND INTRODUCED SHARIA LAW (ISLAMIC LAW). THE SUDAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (SPLA), WHICH ORIGINATED IN THE SOUTH AND IS MAINLY COMPRISED OF CHRISTIANS AND ANIMISTS, REBELLED AGAINST THE ARAB-MUSLIM NORTH. FURTHERMORE, SOUTHERN SUDAN IS RICH IN OIL. IN ONE YEAR, THE SITUATION HAS SERIOUSLY DETERIORATED IN DARFUR, ON THE BORDER WITH CHAD. EI AND ITS AMERICAN AFFILIATE AFT HAVE TRIED TO REACH THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN DARFUR TO HELP THOSE INVOLVED IN EDUCATION BUT THIS HAS PROVED TO BE LOGISTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE. DESPITE NUMEROUS PEACE AGREEMENTS, MORE THAN 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY DIED AND 4 MILLION PEOPLE HAVE LOST THEIR HOMES IN THE CONFLICT.

Education For All: An empty slogan in Mali?

by Ibrahima Diallo, National Union for Education and Culture

In Mali, the intervention of the private sector in education and the huge reliance on contracted teachers paid for by the communities, tend to reduce education to a mere commercial activity, observes Ibrahima Diallo from the

that everybody has the right to education. This education must be free and compulsory, at least where basic and elementary schooling is concerned. We must not forget that Mali signed this declaration and must conform to it in principle.

The concept of education as a public service falls exclusively within the remit of the republic.

This therefore runs contrary to the idea of service in the hands of the private sector which is based on making a profit, and for that matter, a quick profit.

The social partners in education; that is teachers' unions, pupils' parents' associations and friends of the school, must ensure that they play their role as a counter-force which can reverse this tendency through actions that oppose policies and proposals dictated by supporters of northern neo-liberalism.

National Union for Education and Culture (SNEC).

For over a decade, national policies, under pressure from international financial institutions, have been subjecting schools to the laws of the market. State institutions are continually losing ground to private or community institutions. We are therefore witnessing a rapid and anarchic increase in these new types of school at the beginning of each term, which are maintained and managed by economic operators who do not always have the required skills and profile.

Their presence in elementary education is not a good sign and contradicts article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states

41%

In Burkina Faso, free education has led to a 41% increase in girls' attendance at school. Thanks to state funding of all female pupils enrolled in the first year starting from the academic year 2003/2004, the number of young girls enrolled in the first year has increased from 89,000 to 127,000, an annual progression rate of 41%.

10 year evaluation of the implementation of the Action Beijing+10 programme by Burkina Faso.



Changing strategies for EFA in South Asia

One quarter of world's population lives in South Asia where nearly two out of every five children do not attend school and one out of two adults is illiterate. It is this alarming reality which prompted the Dakar Framework for Action to include South Asia as a region for priority action.

In fact, not all the seven countries[1] that constitute the South Asian block are in the same league. According to UNESCO, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, have made remarkable progress in education, practically eradicating illiteracy and achieving near universal participation of children in primary education. Several other countries have also made considerable progress in recent years. Yet, the warnings sounded by UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report are unambiguous: countries in the region have not done enough.

The populations that remain without access to basic education are essentially marginalised and poor, often living in remote and hostile geographical areas and mainly constituted of ethnic and linguistic minority groups. The majority of these children are girls. But providing access to primary schooling for these groups requires a radical shift in policies and perspectives. A mere linear spread of facilities is not enough. "Addressing demand focused on the needs and aspirations of local communities and adopting flexible means of delivery without jeopardizing quality are two crucial prerequisites to the success of any national EFA policy," says Govinda, from the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration in India.

According to UNESCO, changing strategies for faster progress also implies urgently undertaking governance reforms with greater sincerity. The roles of bureaucracy and civil society have to be redefined, and entrenched problems such as child labour have to be seriously addressed. Resources should be targeted to reach disadvantaged groups and areas rather than searching for pan-national solutions. The key to moving ahead lies at the local level, through effective community involvement and the empowering of women.

[1] Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines and Sri Lanka

Academics are an essential component of the Bologna process

An EI PanEuropean conference insisted that the higher education unions should be involved actively in the Bologna process which is shaping the future enlarged European higher education area.

Participants from national teachers unions representing 21 countries, including 8 countries from Central and Eastern Europe, defined the contribution of higher education teachers and researchers to the Bologna Process. A ministerial conference will take place on the bologna process in Bergen, Norway, in May 2005.

The EI/ETUCE conference was organised in Brussels (11-12 February) with the Director General of the Norwegian Minister of Education, Jan Levy, present on behalf of the Minister, Mrs Clemet, and of Per Nyborg, who heads of the Secretariat of the Bologna Follow-up mechanism. Both Mr Levy and Nyborg stated that academics would be an essential component of the Bologna process and will be invited

to participate in the Bergen Conference and in the follow-up process.

Academic staff unions adopted a policy statement on the Bologna process where-in they request to be involved in the process at the European and national levels. A union survey, which will be part of EI's contribution to the Bergen Ministerial Conference, highlights the lack of direct representation of academic and research staff in the Bologna Process.

The conference was also a good opportunity for trade unionists to reinforce their cooperation with representatives of the European higher education institutions (EUA) and with the European Association of Students (ESIB).

A workshop was dedicated to the status of doctorates. The trade unions do not consider the positioning of the doctorate as the third stage of higher education as being suitable to increase the attractiveness of this qualification. Rather, the trade unions called for the recognition of the doctorate

as the first stage in an academic/research career. Young academics should be employed on doctoral research contracts and paid accordingly. Junior academic and research staff should not be kept on 'atypical contracts' which essentially exploit their labour for indefinite periods, or on a series of short-term contracts.

Teacher education will be affected by the new Bachelors' and Masters' degrees. Unions believe it is essential that the application of the 'Bologna' principles must not lead to any dilution of teacher education qualifications and advocate for each country to decide the most appropriate way to organise teacher education.

The conference also stressed its support for a "unification" within the European areas of research and higher education. So far, the processes of higher education on one side, and research on the other have been developed separately, in spite of the clear overlaps. Unions suggest that at least a more integrated process be envisaged.

Education top priority for leaders at World Economic Forum

Education is among the most important issues facing the world today, according to a vote by about 750 business and political leaders at the World Economic Forum. Education outpolled the Middle East crisis, trade, governance and five other global concerns to be-

come one of the top priorities for the annual business summit. A WEF report on the Millennium Development Goals launched at Davos slammed rich countries for providing only a fraction of the aid needed to deliver universal education, and slated the private sector for apathy on basic edu-

cation. The report also highlights the lack of consultation of the teachers movement: "Although teachers are perhaps the most important constituency in education reform, they are frequently ignored in policy dialogue, monitoring and implementation. But over the past two years, Education International,

representing some 29 million teachers worldwide, has initiated programmes to help national unions engage more systematically in EFA-related processes, including HIV/AIDS prevention and the development of sector plans."

www.weforum.org/pdf/ggi2005low.pdf

Campaign against the commercialisation of education

In 2005, EI will intensify its lobby in favour of the exclusion of education, and other basic social services, from agreements which national governments may reach in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The lobbying carried out by EI and its member organisations will reach its momentum at the Sixth World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference to be held in Hong Kong from 13 to 18 December 2005. However, a closer deadline is May 2005, by when WTO member countries are invited to submit "new and improved" offers on services commitments, particularly in the education sector.

EI has scheduled a number of advocacy and information activities for its member organisations. The first one was a lobby meeting with senior trade representatives of countries having a high profile, either in favour or against GATS. In April, EI will organise a world conference focusing on the challenges of GATS. Later, EI and its member organisations will finetune their strategy to make an impact at the WTO Ministerial Conference in December.

An eyeopener

From 15-17 February, an EI led delegation used the opportunity of a high level WTO negotiating session in Geneva, to meet senior trade officials from eleven major member states: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chili, India, Jamaica, Japan, Pakistan, South Africa, Switzerland, and USA. The EI delegation was composed of trade union experts from EI af-

filiates in Australia, Canada, the UK and the United States. Some country representatives admitted that the lobby session has been an eyeopener regarding the potential risk of making GATS commitments for education. The bilateral discussions with the WTO secretariat proved also to be useful.

Undermining equity and quality

EI has been concerned at the growing threat to education—and specifically higher education—of global, regional and bilateral agreements aimed at the creation of a profit-led marketplace in education. EI believes that this will not only create a range of challenges for the employees and students world-wide, but that it could undermine the quality of education and research, and subvert their role and purpose in a way which has implications for society globally.

EI has taken a leading role in

alerting member organisations, national governments and international agencies about the dangers of the GATS process. The fact that the GATS is driven by trade considerations without regard to the nature of the services which are put up for trade or the collateral damage which will result, coupled with the virtual irreversibility of GATS commitments, make this agreement extremely dangerous, particularly when combined with the pressure of powerful industrialised countries exerted against weaker countries, which in some cases have been unaware of the disadvantageous and binding nature of the agreements they have entered into.

At the centre of the debate is a fundamental clash of values. On the one hand, there are those who would see education simply as another commercial venture and who view

emerging trade treaties as ways to expand and lock-in private market forces. On the other hand, others assert that education is above all a human right and a public good, and that market forces alone cannot guarantee the maintenance and enhancement of an accessible, equitable and high quality education system.

"In the emerging global economy where the neo-liberal values of privatisation and market competition are dominant, it is crucial for those of us committed to public education to reaffirm certain fundamental values and principles. One of these principles is that education is a right and not a commodity," said EI Deputy General Secretary, leading the EI delegation at the WTO premises.

In order to keep all member organisations abreast of the developments in GATS, EI releases electronic newsletters devoted to the GATS campaign, TradeEducation.



In 2004, six member organisations were given a 500 Euros grant offered by EI for internet connection. These are in Africa: FESEN Togo, SYNESCI Ivory Coast, SYNAPES Benin, SNEN, Niger and FESER Cameroon, and in Asia, ETTU East Timor.

Organisations are encouraged to use the Internet meaningfully. EI intends to mobilise more resources for the provision of information technology facilities to affiliates concerned so as to enhance the work they do.

Death of the EI Co-ordinator Peter Dawson



It was with great regret that on 19 Jan, we learned of the death after a long illness, of Peter Dawson, who had worked with EI and ETUCE staff for over a decade. He

will be sadly missed by all of his former colleagues and his many friends in teacher organisations both in Europe and farther afield.

Peter had served as the General Secretary of NATFHE in the UK throughout the Thatcher era. He was well known for his commitment to defending the rights of teachers. He continued to serve

teachers in the capacity of first General Secretary of ETUCE and subsequently as EI Co-ordinator for Europe. Since 1998 he has acted as London-based consultant to the EI General Secretary.

Peter's death is deeply regretted by all his friends and colleagues. He will also be sorely missed by his wife, Yvonne, and family. Our deepest condolences are extended to them.

EI Handbook available

EI prepared an updated Handbook which contains all the official documents (Constitution, By-Laws, list of Executive Board members, addresses of EI headquar-

ters and regional offices, etc.) and a full list of member organisations. These documents can also be found on the EI website and in the Congress CD. The handbook may be obtained from the secretariat.



Women trade unionists in Palestine: battling on all fronts

Although generally well qualified, Palestinian women remain on the margins of the labour market. Yet within the current context of mass unemployment and increasingly precarious, underpaid jobs,

they bear the brunt of the crisis, playing an essential role in the coping strategies of their families and communities. These were the findings of a study carried out by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

The labour market segregation penalises Palestinian women, who remain largely concentrated in the industrial zones, domestic work and, primarily, agriculture, a sector where the work they do is all-too-often unpaid. Curfews, roadblocks and border closure which characterise the occupation have led to the bankruptcy of various industries, which traditionally employed women, such as the textile sector. As a result, the majority of Palestinian women have turned to some kind of home-based employment in an attempt to escape poverty. But the work done at home is not considered official, is not protected by any laws, and does not provide them with a proper salary. "Because they are the first to lose their jobs, women accept deplorable working conditions, making pickles, for example, or other food products in their homes. But how can we defend them when they are not considered as genuine workers by the law?" explains Abba Masrujeh, women's coordinator of Palestine's general federation of trade unions, PGFTU, an ICFTU affiliate.

In addition to discrimination in



the labour market, they also have to cope with negative trends in Palestinian society, manifested for example in the rise of conservative ideas and the upsurge in early marriages arranged by families who, driven by mounting poverty, are anxious to be freed of mouths to feed. Furthermore, those women employed outside the home all-too-often carry the burden of moral disgrace, a factor deterring others from even looking for work after leaving school. The young women who do, nonetheless, enter the labour market often see their careers come to an end when they have children, such as the difficulties in combining work and family responsibilities given the appalling lack of childcare facilities.

"For all women, it is a daily battle to meet the basic needs of the family. Getting to work, to school with the children, to the market, to the hospital or to the houses of friends and relatives ... is like trying to get round an assault course, with all the roadblocks and military operations. The day-to-day struggle is the same for women trade unionists... But, on top of all this, they have to battle to carry out their "normal" trade union work, such as visiting the workers, holding meetings, negotiating with employers, lobbying the authorities on trade union issues, or fighting for gender equality both within society and the labour movement itself," explains Masrujeh.

www.icftu.org

Spain swaps debt for funds for education



10 years of compulsory education. The announcement was made in January 2005 by the Spanish Prime Minister, José Zapatero (picture). It is the first time that this trade union demand has been met. The April EI Executive Board will devote a session to this issue.

The Spanish Labour government has just decided to convert a part of the external debt of Argentina into funds for education. As a result, 60 million Euros will be devoted to education. The Argentinian Minister for Education announced that this sum will be mainly used to increase the number of grants to make sure that larger number of young people complete the

EI Protests

Ethiopia

Thanks to international pressure, coordinated by EI, a trade union leader of the Ethiopian Teachers Association was released from prison. "Your prompt reaction concerning Mr. Abate Angore's detention truly made a difference," wrote ETA President Taye Woldeesmiat. The situation is still very tense in Ethiopia. The authorities are constantly intimidating the independent teachers union ETA and limit the freedom of speech and movement of trade unionists.

Chad

Teachers in the capital of Chad, N'Djamena, went on strike in January to demand the payment of salary arrears. They have progressively resumed their duty from January 25 following the advice of their union SET. No agreement has yet been finalised with the government for the 3 months of salary arrears, but the government has begun to pay the teachers, and SET will continue the negotiations.

Taiwan

EI urged the President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) on January 14 to significantly improve the state's union law. Presently, Article 4 of the Union Law denies teachers their right to form and join unions. In the letter, EI expressed solidarity with its member organisation, the National Teacher Association (NTA) and will continue to monitor the situation in the country.

Turkey

EI continues to support its affiliate in Turkey, Egitim Sen, which is constantly being harassed by the authorities. The main bone of contention is the union positive stance on teaching in mother language, e.a. kurdish in Turkey. EI and the European Trade Union Committee for Education arranged meetings between the Turkish teacher leader Alladdin Dincer and the chairperson of the Socialist group at the European Parliament, Poul Nyrup Rasmussens and other members of the European Parliament and European Commission.

Nicaragua: Quality teachers have a price

Nicaragua could become a new test country where the government is using the IMF austerity plan to refuse teachers a promised wage increase. EI will take up the case with the international financial institutions. In the meantime, EI sent a solidarity message to support its unions CGTEN-ANDEN and CNMN which have launched a national strike in January.

Teachers unions request the implementation of the National Education Plan which provided a substantial pay rise. Education Minister Miguel Angel Garcia claims that his ministry is willing to discuss with teachers' unions but that it will not respect the negotiated plan. The minister refers to the agreement signed in November 2004 with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which prohibits the government from increasing

spending on public services such as health care and education.

In 2000, the Nicaraguan government elaborated a National Education Plan, in accordance with the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All (EFA), which enabled the country to take part in the Fast track Initiative, along with Honduras and Bolivia. The plan provided that by 2005, teacher salaries should be equal to the "canasta básica", the basic living index. Today, the "canasta básica" is fixed at C\$2,600 (US\$158). But the current salary for a primary school teacher is C\$1,146 (US\$70) and C\$1,331 (US\$80) for a secondary school teacher, way below the "canasta básica".

The government uses the agreement with the IMF and the budgetary constraints to



► The government uses the budgetary constraints of the IMF to refuse to raise teachers' salaries to the equivalent of basic living index.

refuse to raise teachers' salaries to the full equivalent of the "canasta básica". The government also turned down the union's proposal to offer teachers a C\$706 bonus. A major demonstration took place on the 8 February, in which about 20,000 teachers, students and workers from other sectors participated. The government threatened to fire any teacher who did take part in the strike.

EI will take up the matter with the international financial institutions. In 2004, EI and the World Bank established an in-

formal consultation mechanism, called "early warning system", to address situations where the EI member organisations believe that international financial institutions act in contradiction to their official policy. In public, the World Bank and the IMF claim that they support quality education provided by qualified teachers. And quality teachers have a price!

NEWS FROM AFFILIATES



ZNUT Zambia deplores falling education standards



➤ ZNUT Secretary Roy Mwaba

The failure of the Zambian government to employ 9,000 teachers that were trained between 2002 and 2003, has had disastrous consequences on the delivery of primary education in the country. Teachers report massive school dropout rates and schools now face the choice of either turning away pupils from class or functioning with as many as 100 pupils per classroom.

In December 2004, Zambian Minister of Education Andrew Mulenga revealed that out of approximately 236,000 pupils who had registered for grade seven examinations, only 111,861 had made it to grade eight.

Government inertia

This state of affairs has been blamed on the government's inertia and failure to improve the working conditions of teachers, especially those in rural areas, involving hardships allowances and other risk benefits. The Zambia National Union of Teachers (ZNUT) has attributed the country's declining education standards to the government's poor investment in the teaching profession.

ZNUT Secretary Roy Mwaba said the union regretted that only half of the pupils who sat for primary examinations were admitted to secondary school. "Even for those who

passed, the effects of the bad teaching will be seen later on when they start working", Mwaba said.

Investigations reveal that due to shortage of teachers, many are forced to teach subjects other than those in which they are specialised. "We as teachers are de-motivated, so how can we teach when we are so overloaded?", asked Clement Mweene, a primary school teacher in Lusaka. Even the World Bank acknowledged that Zambian teachers are underpaid.

"Without a teacher, there will be no lawyer, there will be no President and there will be no medical doctor", lamented a political opponent, in reference to the 9,000 teachers not employed.

No free education

Former Education Minister Dr. Sicalwe Kasanda thought that the free education policy for primary education was well-intended, but would fall short of achieving universal education.

Dr. Kasanda says offering free education may increase dependency of the citizens on their government, with those who can afford to pay for education also trying to get it free. This would also result in greater government expenditure!

Several analysts have called for the country to establish a third

university to help absorb the 20,000+ school certificate holders graduating every year. Together the two existing universities enroll less than 3,000 students a year, out of the 20,000 secondary school graduates.

In an effort to avert teacher shortage, the government has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS). According to the agreement, Community Schools in Zambia will seek to provide in four years the same primary education as that provided in seven years in the formal education sector. Teachers in community schools are not formally trained and come from the community where the school is based. They use whatever buildings or open spaces they find as classrooms, and have limited resources, equipment and classroom materials. ZOCS is working together with the Ministry of Education to issue teacher certification, identical to that in the formal sector.

EFA process in jeopardy

The teacher crisis, together with other issues arising from the lack of resources, could derail Zambia's Education For All program. Zambia is at great risk of failing to achieve universal completion of primary school by 2015 along with almost all the other Millennium Development Goals.

Teachers on unlimited strike for better salary

About twelve thousand teachers in Zambia have been on unlimited strike since 26 January to demand better pay and housing benefits. The government declared the strike illegal and threatened severe sanctions against the teachers. The majority of them are members of the Zambia National Union of Teachers, the EI affiliate. ZNUT has 48,000 members and according to their spokesperson, the strike will not stop until the government accepts their demands. Students in the northern province of Copperbelt took to the streets in support of their teachers. Education Minister Andrew Mulenga said the strike was illegal because "the government has not refused to negotiate with the teachers".

NEWS FROM AFFILIATES

NUT steps up campaign on pensions

The NUT/United Kingdom is consulting its members on a 'Pensions Day of Action' to be called after Easter.

Together with other public service unions, the NUT is seeking to organise a day of action. The NUT would co-ordinate the organisation with other teacher

unions. NASUWT has asked its representatives to call joint union workplace meetings so that members can sign letters to MPs opposing Government plans. The Government has proposed to raise the normal pension age for teachers from 60 to 65. For existing members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), the change will not come into effect until 1 September 2013. All service after 2013 will be on the basis of a normal pension age of 65. The NUT has calculated that teachers now at the start of their careers would lose tens of thousands of pounds unless they retire at 65 instead of 60. Government proposals to improve pensions arrangements should be agreed to without changes in the normal age of full pension entitlement.

"The Government refuses to listen to teachers and other public service workers about the injustice of their proposals to worsen their pension schemes. I call upon members to select the strongest possible option, a one-day strike, as their choice for a formal ballot. The NUT, the other teachers' organisations and the public service unions have used their best endeavours to persuade the Government to withdraw its proposals," said NUT General Secretary Steve Sinnott.

www.teachers.org.uk



➤ NUT General Secretary Steve Sinnott

Nepal: NTA Vice-President released

NTA/Nepal wrote to thank EI and its affiliates for their support following the release of their Vice President Prem Singh Vohara from the Maoists rebels. Mr Vohara was abducted seven months ago. However, violence continues to affect teachers in the country. Schools remained closed after Maoist rebels shot and severely injured a teacher, Tara Bhattarai, on school premises. A group of Maoist rebels dragged Bhattarai out of the classroom and shot him in front of stu-

dents. The incident shocked parents, students and teachers. Approximately 150 teachers across the country have been killed and hundreds injured in the nearly-decade long Maoist insurgency. However it remains very difficult to have consistent figures. EI has been working with its Nepalese affiliates to make the government provide the necessary protection to teachers and students. The EI Congress adopted a resolution denouncing the appalling situation of teachers in Nepal.

Pay review in Guinea

Teachers in Guinea prevailed in January when they forced the government to bend after several days of strike. The two EI affiliated unions were demanding the complete application of the 2000 protocol signed with the government which fixes the scale for pay rises. This protocol made provision for a 40% pay increase. Teachers in Guinea earn an average of 250,000 Guinean francs (US\$70) per month which does not provide a decent living considering the major increase in the prices of foodstuffs and transport reported in recent months. "Teachers' pay is ridiculous and their living conditions are difficult", says Bamba Camara, Secretary General of the Guinean Teachers' Federation. "Transport alone accounts for half of their salary, on top of other outgoings such as the rent and electricity and water bills. A bag

of rice, for example, costs around 70,000 francs (20 dollars)".

In October, the Guinean Teachers' Federation and Free Union of Teachers and Researchers of Guinea submitted their demands to the government which failed to act. The unions began the strike on 10th January. Pupils joined teachers in the streets, but anti-riot police suppressed protestors. EI sent a letter of support to its affiliates.

On 17th January, the Guinean Teachers' Federation and Free Union of Teachers and Researchers of Guinea signed a protocol of agreement with the government planning a 9 to 10% increase in all civil servants' pay applicable from 1st January 2005.



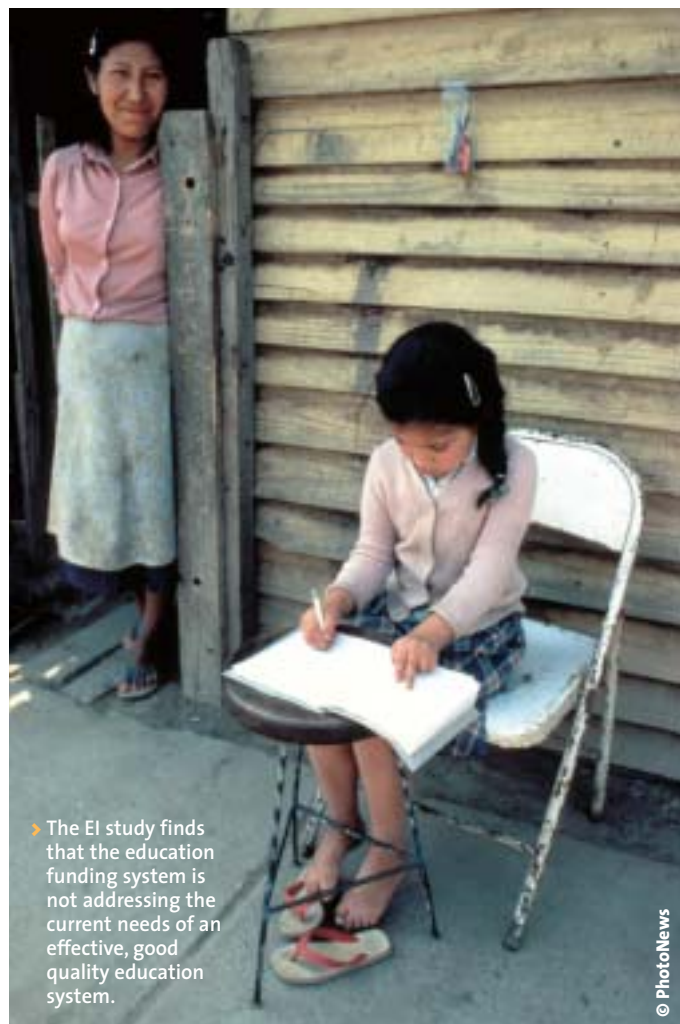
➤ Bamba Camara, Secretary General of the Guinean Teachers' Federation FSPE

Railing against private universities

The Cambodian teachers' union welcomed a government initiative to take harsh measures against unlicensed private universities. Henceforth, unapproved private universities will no longer have the right to advertise in order to "recruit" students. Rong Chungg, chairman of the EI affiliated Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association

(CITA) welcomes the ministry's decision. "Many students enrolled at these private universities find they have been duped when the school goes bankrupt", he says. The union is asking the ministry to be more vigilant in granting licenses, and in particular in monitoring institutions' quality of teaching and financial capacities.

Selling-off Chile's education



► The EI study finds that the education funding system is not addressing the current needs of an effective, good quality education system.

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EI has published a research study on how the free-market policies developed since the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile have impacted on its education system.

The EI study was done by Chilean Professor Marcial Maldonado Tapia, and takes a forensic look at the consequences for access, funding, assessment, fairness, academic performances, and the status and working conditions of teachers. It singles out the far-reaching educational and structural changes made to the education system since the

1973 coup. Educationally, it has been given a market economy and profit spin, shaping the views of generations of children. The structural changes have run along two lines: privatisation and decentralisation.

Free market policies

The free market policies of the 80s turned education into a market instead of a means of empowerment addressing the social demand, notes the EI study, which inveighs against forcing families to pay school fees. The string of so-called consensus governments over

the past ten years since Pinochet's downfall have made no fundamental changes to the policy imposed by the military dictatorship.

Maldonado finds that the system has developed around two main principles: privatisation and municipalisation, as Education Ministry responsibilities have been devolved to the country's 340 local municipal government units.

Not only was the education budget cut, but public financial and human resources were put into private independent schools. The privatisation process went even further in higher education, forcing public universities to seek out alternative sources of funding, effectively abolishing free higher education.

Educational environment

Driven by a desire to get Chile into the international economic marketplace, the dictatorship put economic skills at the core of learning. Education was given a competitiveness spin.

The study shows how the teachers' union Colegio de Profesores de Chile, a member of EI, fully engaged in promoting a different view of educa-

tion based on quality and equity. The CPC is a strong believer in democratic, participatory school management, and a consistent advocate of teachers' roles as active players in developing democracy in education.

Teachers' status

The municipalisation of education has not done any favours for teachers on the public payroll, about 40% of the total. Their salaries are set nationally by law, but all their other conditions of service have to be negotiated with the education authority - now local government.

Summing up, the study finds that the education funding system is not addressing the current needs of an effective, good quality education system. Even the investments of recent years are still too little for infrastructure, teaching aids, teachers' salaries and staff training needs. The author decries the siphoning-off of public funds into private education with no public oversight over how the funds are used or how schools are run.

The 63 page study can be downloaded from the EI website in Spanish only; an English version may be produced.



BEIJING+10: from broken promises to real action

take educational reforms free from gender bias". The second review (Beijing+10) will take place in New York, from 28th February to 11th March 2005. EI will be in New York with a delegation of 15 women headed by EI Vice President Susan

commitments made earlier. However, some governments are critical of the Beijing commitment and would like to dilute some aspects of the platform. One of the main tasks of the trade union delegation will be to lobby in order to prevent

Beijing 1995 World Conference on Women was a milestone in the struggle of women for the recognition of their fundamental human rights. The Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) is the most comprehensive document ever produced on women's rights and an "agenda for women's empowerment". It respects and values the full diversity of women's situations and conditions, and recognises that women face particular barriers to their empowerment. However, the platform needs to be implemented!

Indeed, ten years later, gender disparities are still apparent, also in education. The high rate of illiteracy remains a severe impediment to the advancement of women and to development. In particular in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia, access to education and retention of girls is still poor. Public education investment, that could ensure equal education for all, is insufficient.

Discriminatory practices against women and girls persist in many areas, owing to customary attitudes, early marriages, pregnancies and care duties at home, sexual and moral harassment, inadequate and gender-blind teaching and educational materials and lack

of appropriate gender sensitive initial and in-services teachers training. Parents are still more likely to invest in the education of a boy.

The feminisation of HIV/AIDS has dramatic consequences for families: an increasing number of girls are dropping out to assist family members affected by the pandemic. According to UNAIDS, in sub-Saharan Africa at the end of 2004, 57% of all adults (15-49 years old) living with the virus were women. Women are physically more susceptible when exposed to the virus, and too often they do not have the social and economic power to avoid exposure. Sex education, free from prejudices, based on scientific outcomes, could reduce in a significant way women's vulnerability, build self-confidence and enable them to defend their health and reproductive rights.

Part of the evaluation process

The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the body responsible for the follow-up and implementation of the Beijing programme. It made a first appraisal and revision in June 2000 (Beijing+5) and stated that there is "insufficient political will and commitment to improve educational and under-

"Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.[...] Investing in formal and non-formal education and training of girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable"

Beijing Platform for Action 1995, Strategic objective B, paragraph 69

Hopgood and Marilies Retting, EI Executive Board member and President of EI Status of Women Committee. The trade union delegation will also include representatives from ICF-TU, PSI and national trade union confederations.

What will be the outcome of Beijing+10?

According to the preliminary agreement reached by Member States at the 2004 UN Commission on the Status of Women, the purpose of the evaluation is NOT to negotiate another document or political declaration, but rather to focus on the results and to identify emerging issues and challenges, in order to reaffirm the

this from happening. The trade union movement is determined to reject any attempt to water down or dilute the political commitments made to women in 1995 and the year 2000.

The EI delegation will focus its advocacy in urging governments to support the gender parity and gender equality goals and to allocate enough human and financial resources for a quality public Education For All commitment which ensures all women and girls - regardless of their national or ethnic origins, economic or social position, migrant status, disability, or any other characteristic or condition- access to all levels of education.

PUBLICATIONS

EI released CD-rom on World Congress



EI published a CD-rom containing all the resolutions, speeches, press releases, photos and other material produced at its last World Congress held in Porto Alegre, Brazil last July. For more information on the CD-rom, please write to: info@ei-ie.org

ILO: AIDS is a workplace issue

The ILO report on HIV/AIDS and work uses newly developed demographic and epidemiological data to provide a global projection of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world of work.

AIDS is a workplace issue not only because it affects labour and productivity, but also because the workplace has a vital role to play in the wider struggle to limit the spread and effects of the epidemic. An estimated 36,5 million people of working age are HIV infected and by next year the global labour force will have lost as many as 28 million workers due to AIDS since the start of the epidemics.

"HIV/AIDS destroys human capi-



tal built up over the years and erodes the capacity for economic growth," says the report, adding: "Undoubtedly governments need to act in urging, promoting and supporting workplace action as an integral part of the national HIV/AIDS strategy, and all social partners must ensure that they work together to achieve

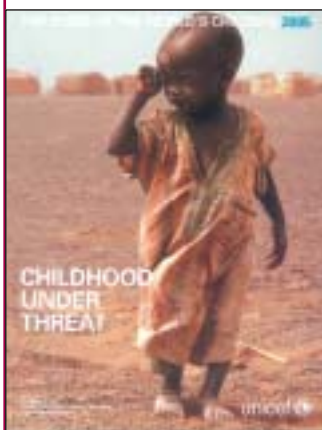
control over the epidemic and its effects."

The report also stresses that HIV/AIDS is a major challenge to the success of Education For All. *"HIV affects staff at all levels in the education sector [...] at the same time, reduced economic growth due to HIV/AIDS affects the public revenue base, reducing public expenditure on education."*

EI has increased its cooperation with the ILO regarding the EI/WHO Education for Prevention programme.

www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/publ/global_est/

UNICEF's State of the World's Children



"When half the world's children are growing up hungry and unhealthy, when schools have become targets and whole villages are being emptied by AIDS, we've failed to deliver on the promise of childhood," says UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy.

The report argues that children experience poverty differently from adults and that traditional income or consumption measurements do not capture how poverty actually impacts on childhood.

The report also makes clear that poverty is not exclusive to developing countries. In 11 of 15 industrialised nations for which comparable data are available, the proportion of children living in low-income households during the last decade has risen.

The impact of armed conflicts on children has been high: Nearly half of the 3,6 million

people killed in war since 1990 have been children. And children are no longer immune from being singled out as targets, a trend underscored by the September 2004 attack on schoolchildren in Beslan.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on children is seen most dramatically in the wave of AIDS orphans that has now grown to 15 million worldwide. The death of a parent pervades every aspect of a child's life, the report finds, from emotional well-being to physical security, mental development and overall health. HIV/AIDS is not only killing parents but is destroying the protective network of adults in children's lives. Many of the ailing and dying are teachers, health workers and other adults on whom children rely.

The State of the World's Children argues that bridging the gap between the ideal

childhood and the reality experienced by half the world's children is a matter of choice. It requires among other things: adopting a human rights-based approach to social and economic development and increased investment in children by donors and governments, with national budgets monitored and analysed from the perspective of their impact on children.

The 2005 edition of UNICEF's State of the World's Children (SOWC) is available online at: <http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/>

- **640 million children do not have adequate shelter**
- **140 million children, the majority of them girls, have never been to school**
- **90 million children are severely food deprived**

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

ABIBATA DIALLO education adviser in Burkina Faso



Abibata is 35 years old and lives in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. She is married with 3 children aged 4 to 13. She is Secretary for Women's Issues and an elected Board member of the Secondary and Higher Education Teachers Union (SNESS). She is also Chairwoman of the SNESS Women's Coordinating Committee as well as education adviser for the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education. In addition, she is deputy treasurer and member of the steering committee for the HIV/AIDS prevention project jointly run by the SNESS and the Union of Primary Schoolteachers of Burkina SNEA-B since 2002.

After obtaining her secondary education teachers' training certificate (CAPES) in her home district of Bobo Dioulasso, Abibata then took a Master's degree in History and Geography at the University of Ouagadougou. It was during that time that she became involved in the trade union movement. Following her graduation, she became a civil servant in Pô and in 1995 she enlisted in the SNESS as a rank-and-file activist. In 1997, she was assigned to the Philippe Zinda Kaboré high school in Ouagadougou, where she taught history and geography to pupils from Grades One to Eight (aged 13 to 20 on average). She joined the local SNESS branch. In 1999, she became deputy treasurer of SNESS Women's Coordinating Committee and a year later, in 2000, she was elected Secretary for External Relations. In 2002, she successfully

passed the examination to become an education adviser. Finally, during the last SNESS Congress in April 2004, Abibata was elected Secretary for Women's Issues, a post she still holds today.

Preparing for the education advisers' examination meant spending a full year at the Koudougou teachers' training college (a 7-hour drive from Ouagadougou). Her children were taken care of during the week by her husband and a house help. She returned home every weekend. She was the only woman candidate in her year and throughout her time in Koudougou, she had to put up with constant unpleasant remarks from her male colleagues on not being at home to look after her young children. In Burkina Faso, as in many other African countries, raising children is exclusively a woman's task. Although her husband - also a teacher - tries his best to help out, Abibata has to make sacrifices to juggle her work and family commitments. This in itself is not always an easy task. Her husband encouraged her to take the education advisers' examination and in the end, their daily life went fairly smoothly throughout Abibata's year of absence.

Abibata is generally up by 6.00 am. She gets her three children ready and takes them to school. By around 7.45 am, she reaches her office, which is in an annex of the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESSRS), within the Department for Teacher Training and Inspection. Most mornings, she writes reports on classroom inspections and works on programme and curricula development. She collects her children from school around noon for lunch and takes them back by 2.30 pm. She then returns to the office to carry on the work started in the morning, until 5.30 pm. After her working day, she picks her children up from school, goes home, prepares dinner, helps the children with their homework and sometimes finishes off work started earlier in the day. She goes to bed at around 10.30 pm, after having eaten and watched the news on television.

In addition to all this, Abibata attends the meetings of SNESS Executive Board every fortnight (Friday evenings), as well as the monthly meetings of the SNESS Women's Coordinating Committee. The meetings are scheduled according to other members' schedules. They are

generally held on Tuesdays or Thursdays in the evening, when there are no late afternoon classes. The Executive Board meetings go on until quite late, and may not end before 11.00 at night. Abibata always gives her husband plenty of advance notice. However, emergency meetings are not unknown.

Most Burkinabé men do not like their wives getting involved in trade union activities, especially if it means 'staying out' late. But Abibata's husband has no problem with it. Sometimes her children complain when their mother is not there for them, though they understand and support their mother's commitment. Her eldest daughter is even proud of what she does.

The couple are among the better-off in terms of disposable income. They have more than enough to live "decently", which is more than can be said for most teachers in Burkina Faso, where entry-level salaries are approximately 75,000 CFA a month (115 EUR) rising to 120,000 CFA (185 EUR) after 10 years.

Abibata has plans for the future: she wants to take her studies further and join the teaching inspectorate. She has big career ambitions, which is quite unusual for a woman in Burkina Faso. She would also like to encourage all her female colleagues to get more involved in trade unionism.