

EVERY CHILD NEEDS A TEACHER

"Any nation is as great, as good, as its citizens make it... It is teachers more than any other single group of people who determine attitudes, and who shape the ideas and aspirations of the nation."

Julius Nyerere in "The Power of Teachers", 1966



If you can read this, thank a teacher.

GCE Global Action Week 24–30 April 2006

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR
EDUCATION
www.campaignforeducation.org



calendar

JANUARY

GUFs General Conference –Brussels, Belgium	10-11
Polycentric World Social Forum –Bamako, Mali	19-23
Africa regional seminar on GATS and EFA in Africa –Bamako, Mali	20-22
World Economic Forum –Davos, Switzerland	25-29
OECD Tertiary Education Workshop –Paris, France	26-27

FEBRUARY

EI Status of Women Committee –Brussels, Belgium	20
26 th EI Executive Board –Brussels, Belgium	21-23
50 th UN Commission on the Status of Women –New York, USA	27 Feb-10 M.

MARCH

International Women's Day	8
Pan-European Higher Education & Research Standing Committee –Sesimbra Portugal	16-18
ICFTU Women's Committee –Brussels, Belgium	22-24
ICFTU/GUFs meetings with IMF and WB –Washington DC, USA	27-29
2nd EI Research (ResNet) meeting –Brussels, Belgium	29-30
TUAC economic group (preparation for G8) –Washington DC, USA	30-31

APRIL

Pan-European Equal Opportunities Committee –Brussels	20-21
Global Action Week for Education	24-30

glossary

AIDS Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
EFA Education For All
EI Education International
ETUCE European Trade Union for Education
EU European Union
FTI Fast Track Initiative
GATS General Agreement on Trade in Services
GAW Global Action Week
GCAP Global Call to Action against Poverty
GCE Global Campaign for Education
GDP Gross Domestic Product
GUFs Global Union Federations
G8 The eight most advanced industrialized countries
HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICFTU International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO International Labour Organisation
IMF International Monetary Fund

MDGs Millennium Development Goals
NGO Non Governmental Organisation
OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSPs Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
TUAC Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD
UN United Nations
UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
WB World Bank
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 **348** national trade unions and associations in **166** countries and territories.

colophon

Address:

Education International
 5, bd du Roi Albert II
 1210 Brussels, Belgium
 Tel.: +32 2 224 0611
 Fax: +32 2 224 0606
 headoffice@ei-ie.org
 www.ei-ie.org

Editor responsible at law:

Fred van Leeuwen,
 General Secretary
Editor: Dominique Marlet

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Ms Fatimé, teacher in a refugee camp in Darfur, Sudan
 © J.-Cl. Badoux

WORLDS OF EDUCATION

n°17
January-February 2006



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HIV and AIDS Prevention

The school remains the best place to fight HIV/AIDS and related discrimination.

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Education for All

Pursuing the EFA agenda vigorously at the EFA High Level Meeting and G8 Summit.

8-11

Worldwatch: Teachers' Rights

Share the victories and battles of colleagues worldwide.

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International Convention on cultural diversity

148 countries made a pledge that cultural goods are not commodities, but rather are keys to community development and dialogue.



Medical progress is essential to combat the disease. But there is also a “social” vaccine for HIV/AIDS: education.

“Efforts to combat HIV/AIDS through education are a key element. By training teachers, helping to develop reproductive health services and organising sex education programmes, we can win the prevention battle. In this way, we can do more and do better in the fight against the pandemic, so that this reality does not become fatality.” For once, this comment does not come from a representative of EI, but from Louis Michel, European Commissioner responsible for development and humanitarian aid.

In cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Education Development Centre (EDC) and the teachers' trade unions in 17 countries affected by the pandemic, EI has been implementing an extensive HIV/AIDS prevention programme in schools since 2001. The programme trains thousands of teachers in the acquisition of skills necessary for the prevention of HIV/AIDS. It provides teachers with the knowledge and the confidence needed to answer questions in schools relating to HIV and

AIDS and to share their skills with their colleagues and students.

In four years, the EI programme trained some 133,000 teachers in over 25,000 schools. EI and its 348 affiliated organisations throughout the world consider that it is essential to promote education not only as a fundamental right for all, but also as an indispensable tool to preserve lives.

AIDS: no continent is spared

The HIV/AIDS epidemic affects approximately 1.6 million people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, thus one quarter more than in 2003 and twenty times more than ten years ago. Three-quarters of the infections reported between 2000 and 2004 concerned young people under the age of 30.

The bulk of people contaminated with the disease in this region are found in Russia and the Ukraine, the two most densely-populated countries of the former USSR. While Russia has *“a huge number of young people who inject drugs”*, a practice which is playing a key role in the epidemic, there are few programmes to reduce risks (distribution of clean syringes and condoms). Heroin substitution treatments involving methadone are outlawed, according to the report (see article on opposite page).

Change of behaviour

In the countries reporting a reduction in prevalence (Kenya, Zimbabwe and the Caribbean countries), UNAIDS has noted the decisive role of behavioural change such as increased use of condoms, delaying the first sexual experience and having fewer sexual partners.

The level of knowledge about sexuality without risks and HIV is still low in many countries, even in the countries where the prevalence of the disease is high and on the increase.

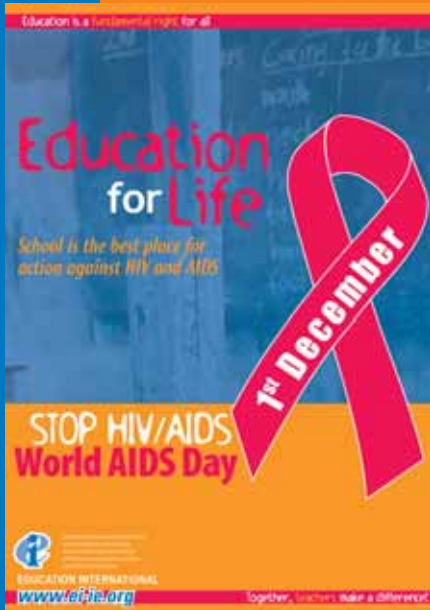
Extension of the EI programme

EI and its affiliates have been active in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention in schools for several years in Africa and the Caribbean. However, given the terrible damage wreaked by the HIV epidemic in other

world regions, EI will be able to assist affiliates in Latin America and Asia as of 2006 so that their members are properly trained in how to protect themselves against HIV and to educate others to prevent its spread. The objective of EI and its partners is to assist more affiliates who seek help in every region affected by the virus, not least of all Russia and Eastern Europe, where infection rates are increasing exponentially.

EI encourages all its member organisations throughout the world to place prevention of HIV/AIDS at the forefront of their trade union agenda. EI considers that school should be the main place for promoting the health of students and teachers. Therefore, it asks its members to contribute to combating HIV/AIDS in schools using appropriate means at their disposal.

The annual report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and World Health Organisation (WHO) Common Programme on HIV/AIDS, AIDS epidemic update 2005, points out that the steepest increases in infections occurred in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. However Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the most affected globally, with 64% of new infections (over three million people) occurring there.



PREVENTION

the AIDS vaccine



Kaliningrad, Russia, November 2005: in an apartment that is just as dilapidated as the concrete building in which it is located, Taia (32) recounts her wayward life. From her Armenian origins and the constant moving because of the various postings of her father, who was in the army, to a carefree adolescence during the Perestroika era with her musician friends and experimentation with hard drugs in Kaliningrad, a Baltic port which, in the 1990s, was turned into a “special economic zone”, in reality a platform for legal and illegal trafficking.

Cheap “good quality” heroin was to be found in abundance there, even just outside

Kaliningrad: repression is the method used to prevent HIV/AIDS

the school gates. HIV/AIDS was also emerging in Russia, but at that time the existence of the virus was completely shrouded in silence. The epidemic appeared later than in Africa, Western Europe, North and South America, but the country’s authorities did not take advantage of this time-lag to prepare for its arrival.

A bell rings. Sergei appears in the kitchen in a blue school uniform. In a flash, his good humour lights up the apartment. The eight years of this sickly child’s life are a miracle in themselves. “He is being treated for tuberculosis and has been receiving tritherapy for the past three years. Nobody at school knows about it. When he was smaller, no kindergarten would take him”, confides Taia.

“It’s an unwritten rule in Kaliningrad and probably in a lot of towns in Russia: those who are HIV-positive keep it secret. Ignorance and prejudice affect many layers of society”, explains Sacha, a young activist in the campaign to combat HIV/AIDS. Sacha is very active in the Kaliningrad University Students’ Association, which is affiliated to the

regional section (KOPF) of the Federation of Trade Unions in Russia (FNPR). His association is one of the few organisations in civil society (which is in its infancy in Kaliningrad) mobilising not only for prevention, but also to defend the rights of those who are HIV-positive. Otherwise, in Kaliningrad, in teachers’ trade unions as in other workers’ organisations, HIV/AIDS is mentioned only in a recommendation here and there during international meetings.

“A few years ago, when the epidemic had experienced its highest growth rate, a lot of teachers in the region became involved in information programmes. Now, nothing like that is happening anymore”, says Evgenia Viktorovna, a teacher at the psycho-pedagogical rehabilitation and correction centre for minors, the only establishment in the region designed to treat addiction among the under-18s. Although it has a capacity of 25, the centre, which is stocked with recent equipment and a multidisciplinary team currently has only 13 children. This is even more serious in light of the fact that out of a total population of one million, there are between 8,000 and 20,000 injecting drug takers in the region), a majority of whom are young people. Evgenia blames this failure on administrative formalities that are excessively cumbersome for parents, who are often themselves experience a range of

problems including, most notably, alcoholism.

But the real explanation lies in the fact that the criminalisation of drug addiction has been pushed to extremes. In 2003, the Russian drugs squad was considerably extended in terms of numbers and powers, however without obtaining any effective results in the region. Drugs finds are small, and no trafficking networks have been dismantled. On the other hand, small drug users have never been the subject of so much police violence. What is more serious still is that the only programme (exchange of used syringes for new ones, and medical, psychological and social assistance and surveillance) to help drug addicts regardless of whether they are HIV-positive was dropped because it was regarded as “encouraging” the problem. The subsequent effect of this was not long in coming: 17 deaths from overdoses in the region in 2002, rising to 307 in 2004.



Public rehabilitation and correction centre for children.

40.3 million people are living with HIV/AIDS. In 2005, UNAIDS counted an average of 14,000 new infections each day. Within the time it takes you to read this article, a child will have died of an AIDS-related disease; another child will have contracted HIV; and four young people between the ages of 15 and 24 will have been infected by HIV. EI’s programme to train teachers is helping to save lives by making prevention the norm.

Success in learning for all



> HLG opening ceremony in Beijing

The fifth High Level Group on Education For All coincided with the Fast-Track Initiative Partners' Meeting in Beijing. EI Founding President Mary Hatwood Futrell and EI Deputy General Secretary took part in the meetings to remind decision makers about the urgent need to implement aid pledges for education.

The achievement of Education For All is an essential element in combating poverty. It is urgent and vital to finance the EFA initiative. EI therefore took advantage of these high-level meetings to remind governments and donor agencies that the time had come to turn promises into hard cash.

G8 target

While it is true that the G8 Summit in Russia (St Petersburg) next July will also concern education, the gener-

ous decisions of the previous G8 held at Gleneagles in Scotland have not yet produced tangible results. In 2005, industrialised governments' share of funding for development aid stagnated at 0.25%, well below the 0.7% of GDP recommended, and below the average of 0.33% donated in the 1990s.

It has been proven by an analysis of the implementation of national EFA plans, and confirmed by the world report, that the proposals by developing governments are not sufficiently based on own financing and are mostly reliant on the support of the international community.

While the HLG press release underlines that at least EUR 5 billion is still lacking each year to achieve EFA, it confines itself to asking for new commitments to education.

The EFA High Level Group brings together heads of States, ministers, heads and top officials of multilateral and bilateral agencies, and leaders of NGOs. EI Founding President Mary Hatwood Futrell represented EI at the fifth HLG which met from 28-30 November 2005 in Beijing, China. Only 6 Civil Society organisations are part of that group, most of which are also members of the Global Campaign for Education. EI's representation is a recognition of the teacher union movement's involvement in the EFA process.

Adult literacy

This year, adult education and also the education of rural people were the key issues in debates. The question of educating people who live far from urban centres arose in particular in China, the host country for this HLG.

"We—UNESCO and its partners—must remain resolute in our commitment that every child regardless as to where he or she lives will have access to education by 2015", stressed Mary Hatwood

Futrell. *"Teachers should have curricular and instructional materials designed specifically for rural schools. Classes should be interactive. Lessons could be adapted to encourage students to work in groups to use, for example, their math and science skills in real life situations related to farming, fishing, forestry, or animal husbandry"*, added Mary Futrell in the working session on education for the rural communities.

Pursuing the EFA agenda tirelessly and vigorously



Over 100 Education ministers and deputy ministers as well as high-ranking officials and representatives from a further 47 countries participated in a two-day debate on how to accelerate progress towards Education for All by 2015.

The Ministerial Roundtable convened by UNESCO on 7 and 8 October 2005, during the 33rd session of the General Conference, examined four key aspects of EFA: current progress and major challenges five years after Dakar, resource mobilisation and aid effective-

ness, EFA partnerships at country level, and the role and future strategy of UNESCO in coordinating EFA efforts at international level.

The ministers expressed their commitment to reform and good governance in education systems, as well as to mobilising further external aid and using it more effectively. UNESCO's Director General welcomed the communiqué as a platform for deeper and stronger partnerships with national and international partners in EFA.

G8 will continue tackle educational issues in 2006



Russia, which has taken over the presidency of the group of the eight most industrialised countries in the world, has placed education among its top three priorities, together with security of energy supplies and control of infections.

The British Minister of Finance, Gordon Brown, declared himself satisfied that the funding of education in developing countries re-

mained one of the G8's key priorities. In July 2005, the G8 Summit in Scotland chaired by Britain had cancelled the debt of eighteen countries and agreed on financial commitments to ensure Education For All.

On education, the G8 plans to help Africa and other parts of the developing world improve their education systems with the goal of ensuring quality education for all people, the sources said. Experts say this is vital for eradicating poverty

and building the basis for the development of any society, the sources said. Specifically, G8 officials are likely to call for increased vocational training and distance learning with Internet use as a way of promoting education around the world.

The Russian President announced that UNESCO would be invited to the G8 Summit in St Petersburg in July 2006. EI will be present, too, at least in the debates outside the meeting!

BOTSWANA REINTRODUCES SCHOOL FEES

Botswana has announced the reintroduction of fees in its state secondary schools after more than 20 years of free education.

The measure will affect over 170,000 children aged between 13 and 18.

The government says the move is part of a cost-cutting exercise because of falling revenues.

While Botswana's Education Minister, Jacob Nkateand, described the new fees as "a pittance", opponents of the charges, including the Botswana Teachers' Union, say the fees will deter parents from sending their children to school.

Pupils at Community Secondary Schools will pay 194 pula (\$36) a year, while a year at a senior secondary school will cost 452 pula (\$84).

Families will be means tested and there will be some exemptions for the poorest. However, rising unemployment may mean that many will not be able to afford fees. Children of rural farmers with an irregular income will be the worst affected.

EI strongly disapproves of the reintroduction of

school fees; the provision of free, quality, basic education is the responsibility of government.

Turkey: Headscarf and women education



The European Court of Human Rights decided in November to uphold the Turkish government's headscarf ban rejecting the appeal of Leyla Fihin, who was banned from medical school after she refused to remove her headscarf.

The Turkish government has sporadically enforced a ban on headscarves for students and teachers in universities since the 1960s. However, since 1997, women who wear the headscarf are barred from state employment, taking up elected posts in parliament, appearing as lawyers in court and working as teachers in private schools and universities.

"The current government of the religiously oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP) would like to lift the ban on headscarves, but does not dare to defy the mili-

tary on such a sensitive issue", says Human Rights Watch which deplores that Turkish women like Fihin will either have to go abroad to study and practice or forego professional life in Turkey.

The court stated the ban is justified because it protects the secular status of universities. In Turkey, all universities, private and state alike, are subject to the government ban.

400,000

Around 500 containers each holding 800 computers – 400,000 units in all - enter the port of Lagos in Nigeria each month. This alarming figure is cited by the NGO Basel Action Network (BAN) in a report "The Digital Dump: Re-use and Abuse Africa" published for the Tunis Information Society Summit. In a bid to narrow the digital divide, many northern countries are increasingly shipping their old computers to the South. 80% are obsolete and end up being fly-tipped. "Instead of closing the digital gap, we are creating a digital dump", claims the report.

www.ban.org

EI urges WTO to take education out of GATS

In a statement released at the 6th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in December, EI called on member countries to remove education services from the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). "Because there are so many unanswered questions about the impact of GATS on education, and because there is so much at stake, we believe all members must adopt a precautionary approach. They must neither make nor seek any commitments that constrain the rights of government to regulate education as they see fit, including research, audio-visual services, and libraries," stated Thulas Nxesi, President of EI.

The statement also recommends that countries make no commitments to private edu-

cation services. "We believe strongly that, at its root, GATS is in conflict with educational values. The GATS is a commercial agreement designed to expand business opportunities for investors. Education, by contrast, is a human right that serves the public interest and must not be treated as a commodity subject to commercial trade rules," said EI President.

Building awareness

In 2006, EI will further develop the advocacy and awareness activities launched in 2005. In mid-February an EI delegation will travel to Geneva to meet a new series of national negotiators at the WTO in order to urge them to exclude education from the agreements on the liberalisation of trade in services.

To put matters in a nutshell, EI will meet representatives from three different groups of countries: Firstly, EI will strengthen the resolve in countries which are reluctant to liberalise their education markets but which are under huge pressure to do so (Philippines, Brazil and South Africa); secondly, it will strive to open the eyes of a number of developing countries which still believe that liberalisation can act as a magic wand to achieve Education For All; and lastly, it will endeavour to change the minds of the leaders of out-and-out liberalisation of education (United States, Australia, the European Union and India) to ensure that the education market is not put in the same package of measures as agricultural products and customs tariffs.

"The mixed outcome of the Hong Kong Conference plays to our advantage," explained EI Deputy General Secretary Elie Jouen, who is responsible in EI for GATS issues. "By deciding not to decide anything, Hong Kong did not ratify the commercialisation of education, nor did it scrap the option of multilateral agreements in favour of bilateral agreements that lack transparency and cannot be monitored."

Negotiators in Hong Kong agreed to reconvene by 31 July at the latest to conclude the WTO Ministerial Conference. This gives teachers' unions six months to convince their respective governments not to turn education into a marketable commodity.



The very character of universities is under threat

The fifth EI International Higher Education Research Conference, held in Melbourne in December has deepened the work of EI in a sector which has been recognised to be at the forefront of globalisation

and the battle to defend education values in the face of both commodification and the wider attacks on human and trade union rights from the neo-liberal agenda and from the so-called "war on terror".

The participation of 90 delegates from 46 organisations in 33 countries reflects EI's growing strength in higher education and research. Thanks, in part, to the support from UNESCO's participation programme, this conference has witnessed a significant increase in the proportion of attending female delegates. EI Vice President, Susan Hopgood, also welcomed the strengthened dialogue with students symbolised by the presence of student representatives at the EI conference. She also urged higher education affiliates to strengthen their work on human and trade union rights including academic freedom.

It is clear that the Australian hosts are facing an unprecedented assault and that Australia is a testing ground for neo-liberal trends which have spread to other countries. EI members must be on the alert, as long-held principles are being scrapped by a government.

"The very character of universities and of higher education is under threat", said Paul Bennett of the British union NATFHE. The key attacks

Academics are the guardians of civil liberty and their unions must support them in this role.



include Casualisation and the growing reliance on contingent labour, combined with the undermining of tenure; Commercialisation of higher education and research, and dependence on corporate interests and the

growth of the private sector and reliance on student fee income including differential fees; Weakening of collective bargaining systems and of trade unions; Managerialism and the application of quantitative measurement of performance and outcomes, leading to pressures towards conformity and institutional loyalty; as well as political and religious interventions. "These trends, taken together, threaten to undermine independent inquiry and analysis and serve to engender a culture of self-censorship", concluded the participants of the EI conference.

Amongst other decisions, participants resolved to reaffirm their commitment to academic freedom; build solidarity with

support and academic related staff; adopt common policy on brain drain and develop a capacity-building approach concerning GATS.

Participants also mandated EI to maximise its opportunities to work with and within the international and regional organisations and processes shaping higher education and research. This will include working with OECD and UNESCO for the implementation of the Guidelines on Quality provision in Cross Border Higher Education. The unions in the European region will also intensify their efforts in order to respond authoritatively to their new responsibilities as members of the Bologna Process.

ACTIVITIES

European teachers' unions consider the plight of migrant children

Europe is a multicultural society embracing religious and cultural diversity. Tolerance and democracy are more important than ever, and it is therefore vital that these values be incorporated in schools to fortify and improve social cohesion.

Over sixty representatives of EI member organisations from all over Europe met in Prague at the beginning of November to examine equality issues. A lot of attention was devoted to the academic achievements of migrant children. Various keynote speakers gave trade unionists food for thought. Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna provided details about the Council of Europe's plan to address low achievements in schools and Misia Coghlan of Eurydice provided a comparative analysis of the school-based integration measures for migrant children.

Specifically, representatives of teachers' unions recommended that access to the teaching profession for members of the national minority and migrant groups be ensured and that the initial and in-service training of teachers and education personnel on the integration of the most vulnerable groups in society be improved. Education unions also recommended that governments abandon education models focusing on "assimilation" patterns.

Another panel was devoted to the status of women in Europe, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. The vast majority of women are working in low paid service sectors.

And moreover are the first hit by poverty and unemployment. All panellists agreed on the need to intensify work on pay equity.

Manuela Tomei of the ILO provided an in-depth study of the employment patterns in the 10 incoming European countries. Most new countries are characterised by longer working hours, temporary contracts and undeclared bonuses. Female employment has dropped dramatically in the 10 incoming European countries.

Common trends and common problems were analysed for both Western and Eastern Europe and it was agreed that a way forward would be to set up a women's network in European Union countries.



PARTICIPANTS OF THE EI PAN EUROPEAN ROUND TABLE ON EQUALITY HELD IN PRAGUE ON 14-15 NOVEMBER 2005.

From Left to Right: Radovan Langer (CMOS PS Czech Republic); Odile Cordelier (SNES France and Vice President of EI Europe); Hanna Vervoort (AOB Netherlands); Marta Scarpato (Education International); Kalina Grzelak (ZNP Poland); Tatiana Babrauskiene (LEETU Lithuania) and Manuela Tomei (International Labour Office).



Deterioration in human and trade union rights in Cambodia

Cambodia has seen a steady deterioration in human rights in the past two years. Exercise of basic freedoms such as expression, assembly, and association has resulted in incarceration, threats, and sometimes death.

Rong Chhun, President of the Independent Teachers' Association CITA, is on the long list of human rights activists and critics of the government who have been arrested and jailed recently. Rong Chhun was jailed on October 15 for defamation and incitement after co-signing a statement by the Cambodia Watchdog Council, which criticised a border agreement between Cambodia and Vietnam.¹

Celebrations of International Human Rights Day, on December 10, were followed by the arrest of the President and various officials of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR). The celebration by some 10,000 participants brought union workers, civil society organisations, and other members of the public together to promote human rights in Cambodia. During this event, CCHR displayed a banner which contained numerous handwrit-

ten statements from citizens, some of which were allegedly critical of the government.

In 2004, two prominent trade union leaders, Chea Vichea and Ros Sovannareth, were murdered under suspicious circumstances. Both were outspoken advocates for improving labour rights, and critical of the government's use of violence in breaking up strikes and labour demonstrations.

Since these most recent arrests, the situation has become critical. Human rights organisations, diplomats, and Cambodian civil society all agree that these arrests are a watershed event, requiring a firm and unified response. Reaction and events in the coming months may well



determine whether Cambodia's fledgling democracy continues to grow or whether the government slips into utter totalitarianism, with no dissent tolerated whatsoever.

EI is encouraging all its member organisations to write protest letters to the government of Cambodia. EI is also trying to set up an international mission to Phnom Penh.

¹ EI launched an Urgent Action Appel in favour of Rong Chhun on 18 October. It is still relevant and can be downloaded from www.ei-ie.org

Ethiopia: Harassment continues

Harassment against the real Ethiopia Teachers' Association is continuing. Since the May 15 parliamentary elections in which opposition parties won a lot of seats, the government has used repression, intimidation and violence to eliminate dissent in both urban centres and rural areas.

In June and again in November, demonstrations by opposition supporters were met with lethal force from the government. Thousands of people arrested in November and afterwards remain in detention, among them 58 teachers and ETA members. On November 12 and 14, the ETA offices in Addis Ababa, in particular the offices of Kassahun Kebede (Chairman of the Addis

Ababa branch of the ETA) and Dr. Taye Woldesmiat (ETA President), were searched by police. Some documents, books and all the electronic equipment donated to the ETA were confiscated by police and the offices were vacated. On December 21, the government charged 131 persons—including ETA officials and members—with various offences including treason, inciting violence and planning to commit genocide.

EI strongly encourages all affiliates and partners to continue sending letters of protest to the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, via the Ethiopian Embassy in the country or region, and to alert foreign ministries about these unfair political trials.

Latest News !
Our colleague Rong Chhun has been released on bail on January 17, but the case is not closed.



European solidarity with Romania

In support of EI's Romanian affiliates, ALMA MATER, FSLI, SPIRU HARET and FEN, who were striking in November, both the EI Pan European Structure and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) issued a 4-point statement to the Romanian government on 24 November.

Romanian teachers demand an increase in public expenditure on education (6% of the

country's GNP) and increased salaries for teachers and other education workers, an improvement in social partnership and defence of union rights. Above all, teacher unions should be involved in decisions regarding reforms of the education system.

A letter was sent to the Romanian President on 24 November, urging his government to enter into negotiations with the teachers.

RIGHTS

Victories

Georgia: Government meets teachers' demands

A rally of the Educators and Scientists Free Trade Union of Georgia (ESFTUG) was successful in persuading the Parliament of Georgia to increase the funding of education during the budget discussion.

After the rally, which gathered over 3,000 teachers in Tbilisi on 13 December, the government promised to allocate additional funding for the education sector and that no school would be closed without prior consultation with, and consent of, trade union organisations. A joint committee will also be established to in-

vestigate ways of ensuring an adequate pension for retiring teachers.

Bulgaria: Strike ends, but unions remain vigilant

Bulgarian teachers ended their hunger strike in December, though EI affiliates SEB and Podkrepa have refused to sign a wage agreement offered by the government and remained on strike alert when term commenced on 10 January.

The Bulgarian Parliament agreed the education budget in December, offering a wage increase of 4% as of 1 January and 6% as of 1 July.

Although the government has promised another wage in-

crease towards the end of 2006, the unions want firm commitments with real figures before endorsing an agreement. Elie Jouen, Deputy General Secretary of Education International, will meet with union representatives and government officials in Bulgaria on 3 and 4 February.

SEB and Podkrepa are grateful for the support letters. "International support meant a lot to the striking teachers," says Kounka Damianova, international secretary of SEB.

New Zealand: Special education staff get pay rises

Special education staff, working in schools and early childhood education centres, have

voted to accept a new collective agreement that will deliver pay rises of up to 18%.

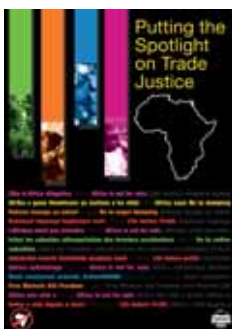
The agreement covers special education advisors, early intervention teachers and kaitakawaenga, who work with indigenous students.

"These are major increases which recognise the value of the work special education personnel perform, in our schools and early childhood education centres, that enable children with special needs to get a quality education," says NZEI Te Riu Roa National President, Colin Tarr.

Trade unions are key actors in overcoming poverty



"So often, we are told that things can't change, that the poor will always be with us. But history is full of examples of things happening when people said they never would. There is no reason why we cannot win the fight to eradicate poverty. And we can be key actors", said ILO Director General Juan Somavia, opening the interna-



> In 2005, EI and the Global Unions joined with NGOs in the Global Campaign Against Poverty GCAP.

poverty. Organised by the ILO's Bureau of Workers Activities (ACTRAV), the symposium brought together national union leaders from all regions, together with Global Unions.

At the opening, Leroy Trotman, Chair of the ILO Workers' Group, recalled the ILO's Declaration of Philadelphia at the end of World War II – "Poverty anywhere is a danger for prosperity everywhere". Rubens Ricupero, former Brazilian Finance Minister and Secretary General of UNCTAD, presented powerful evidence based on economic expertise, to show how a call to action could be put into practice. Bob Harris of EI provided the trade union perspective, calling for "militancy with purpose". He said that "Globalisation in its present form is not a sort of unstoppable, inexorable process"; and that trade unions could over-

come resignation and change attitudes. This view was supported by Chien Yen Goh, representing the third world network, who showed how fair trade deals at the WTO could help end poverty.

Eveline Herfkens, Executive Coordinator of the UN's Millennium Campaign, and former Dutch Minister for Development, said the campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals was back on track after attempts to derail it at the recent UN Summit "At least people are talking about the MDGs again", she said.

Experts from the World Bank, the IMF, the ILO and UNCTAD dealt with a full range of economic issues – debt, aid and trade. The financial institutions came under criticism, and especially their lack of coherence. Peter Bakvis,

Director of the Global Unions Liaison Office in Washington, showed how the Bank recognised trade unions' contributions to equitable development in a recent publication, but encouraged governments to ignore or violate trade union rights in another publication directed to business and investors. There was intense debate with the trade union leaders on implementation of the Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSPs) at the national level.

In other sessions, there were important debates on how freedom of association is essential for social progress, social dialogue for poverty reduction (with the participation of the International Organisation of Employees), the role of gender in poverty, and extending social protection to the poor and excluded.

USA: TEACHER SALARIES LAG BEHIND INFLATION

EI affiliates in the United States of America, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), both denounce the fact that teacher salaries are lagging behind rising inflation rates: inflation increased 3.1% over the past year, while teacher salaries increased by only 2.3%.

Both unions issued surveys showing that, over the last 10 years, compensation for teachers increased at a far slower rate



than salaries for other professionals. Teachers gained just 18 cents for every new dollar

earned by workers in the private sector.

"Without a firm commitment to raising teacher salaries, our schools will continue to have difficulty recruiting and retaining diversified teaching staffs that are prepared to meet the educational needs of our public school children," said Reg Weaver, NEA's President.

"Current salaries fail to reflect the professional qualifications, preparation and challenges that teachers must meet every day in the classroom," said AFT President Edward J. McElroy.

Jamaica: Teachers aim for pay increase

The Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA) is seeking a 55 per cent increase over the 2006-2008 contract period after a two year wage freeze under the Public Sector Memorandum of Understanding.

The Memorandum was signed in February 2004 between the Government and the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions (JCTU), to save the budget and jobs of public sector workers through a two-year wage restraint.

Now EI affiliate the JTA, representing 20,000 members, is seeking a range of improvements to conditions of service.

President of the JCTU, Senator Dwight Nelson states that nothing less than a 30 per cent increase will be acceptable in order

to restore purchasing power.

While acknowledging that the negotiations might prove challenging, JTA President Ruel Reid says he expects the negotiations to be completed by the end of March.

Montenegro: Collective Agreement signed

The Government of the Republic of Montenegro signed the Branch Collective Agreement with EI affiliate the Independent Union of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Montenegro (ITUESCSM) on 23

December, 2005 after Education International's intervention.

In accordance with article 81 of the General Collective Agreement that came into effect in January 2004, the Branch Collective Agreement

for Education should have been signed at the latest by the end of March 2004. By December 2005 it had still not been signed. As this was in violation of ILO Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, ratified

by Montenegro in 2000, EI demanded that the government do so.

ITUESCSM expressed their thanks to EI for support in achieving a satisfactory outcome.



> Aberrahmane Chennaf, General Secretary of SNE

MOROCCO: TRIBUTE TO ABERRAHMANE CHENNAF, GENERAL SECRETARY OF SNE

"It is with deep sadness that I learned about the death of Aberrahmane, a longstanding comrade and friend," said EI's Deputy General Secretary Elie Jouen.

Aberrahmane Chennaf, who died on December 20 of a heart attack, played a leading role in the Moroccan and Arab trade union movement.

Committed to the democratic cause since 1966, Aberrahmane Chennaf fought for free trade unionism in the education sec-

tor in Morocco.

Likewise he was very active in international trade unionism. Recently he advocated for increased dialogue between the EI trade union members in the Middle East.

EI also notes his commitment

to defend quality public school and equality in education, particularly for girls.

AFFILIATES

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: UNION THREATENS LEGAL ACTION TO PROTECT TEACHERS' RIGHTS

El affiliate the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA) is threatening to take legal action to protect the rights of teachers at two technical institutes.

The government is taking steps to transfer both institutes to

University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). In the process, teachers from the school are being rehired as contract employees.

Early in January, the union called on all teachers employed by these two institutes to resist the temptation to apply for positions at the University.

TTUTA President Clyde Perrell said the union is prepared to invoke the law as it related to the termination of employment of teachers, to protect its members' rights. Although Education Minister, Hazel Manning, had promised to meet with all parties involved, the meetings have yet to happen.

WORLD THEMATIC EDUCATION FORUM 2006

The World Forum on Thematic Education, Buenos Aires 2006 is one of the activities taking place under the World Education Forum umbrella. The Buenos Aires forum being held from 4 to 6 May 2006 on the theme "Public education, inclusion and human rights" seeks to contribute to the development of policies, plans and projects that reaffirm education as a public policy and hence a state responsibility.

El affiliate in Argentina, CTERA, is on the Forum executive committee and will be specifically arguing for the right to education for all.

http://www.fmebaires.org.ar/pre_foro/pre_foro.htm

HISTORIC CONFERENCE OF TEACHER UNIONS IN CYPRUS

A joint conference of the five El member teacher unions from the island of Cyprus was held in Nicosia on the 10th November 2005. This was the first conference to be organised by the unions from the north and south of Cyprus since the division of the island after the Turkish invasion in 1974. There are approximately 15,000 teachers in the five unions on the island. KTOS and KTOEOS represent approximately 3,500 teachers in the north of the island and POED, OELMEK and OLTEK represent approximately 11,500 teachers on the south of the island.

The conference was attended by almost one hundred representatives of the unions. The theme of the conference was "Teacher Education" and the keynote

speakers were Martin Romer, General Secretary of ETUCE and Charlie Lennon, El's European Region Co-ordinator. Each of the unions also made a presentation of their views on the issues to the conference. In the presentations speakers highlighted the importance of high quality pre- and in-service education for teachers. They spoke of the multi-faceted role of the teacher in modern schools and the need to provide adequate and properly-funded teacher education throughout the teacher's career. During the discussions there was much interest in the role which the European Union plays in education and was likely to play in the future.

During their presentations many of the speakers also emphasised the key role which

teachers play as leaders in society. In this context the work of the Cypriot unions was recognised as a valuable pointer to the rest of Cypriot society. Earlier in the year the unions had agreed to work together to improve the political situation on the island in the light of the failure of the Annan proposals to gain acceptance amongst the Greek Cypriot population in the 2004 referendum. This conference was the first concrete effort to bring representatives of the two teaching communities together.

Both Martin Romer and Charlie Lennon welcomed the initiative and commended the unions for their efforts to improve the political situation. They offered the help and support of both ETUCE and El's European Region with any further initiatives.

World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education

There is a need for Indigenous education around the world to move forward. The right of Indigenous peoples to retain their languages is essential for their education and for the heritage of their endangered traditional culture. The World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) has become the biggest Indigenous teachers' forum since its incep-

tion in 1987. More than 2,600 Indigenous educators from 50 nations in 20 different countries attended the 7th WIPCE Conference in Waikato, New Zealand, from November 27 to December 1, 2005. They included El affiliates from FTA (Fiji), the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Education, CTF-FCE (Canada), AEU (Australia), NZEI, ASTE and PPTA (New Zealand). More than 500 activities and

presentations inspired solutions for Indigenous peoples' future. They included a presentation entitled "A decade of change and growth" organized by ASTE, and "Enhancing Kaupapa Maori through the union movement" by PPTA.

The next WIPCE will be held in Melbourne, Australia on December 7-11, 2008.



TEACHERS' RIGHTS

Cameroon: schools without teachers, teachers without schools

Public schools in Cameroon lack teachers while at the same time thousands of qualified teachers are unemployed. This is a regrettable squandering of human resources, all the more so considering that qualified teachers are hard to come by in many other African countries.

Four teachers for six classes – this is the reality at the state school in Balepipi (some 300 km northwest of Douala). Made up of three adobe bungalows, it suffers from a chronic shortage of teachers, as do many schools in Cameroon. Such a situation – which some might consider “normal” for an African country – is particularly regrettable in view of the fact that, at the same time, thousands of qualified teachers are unemployed or have gone on strike to demand the payment of over 30 months' salary arrears.

At the end of December, the parents of the students at the Balepipi school did not renew the contract of the teacher to whom they had been paying 10,000 CFA francs (€15) per month (7 months a year) out of their own pocket to teach their children. Their hope was to obtain the appointment of a better qualified teacher whose salary would be paid by the Ministry of Basic Education. As they say in Cameroon, “that rare

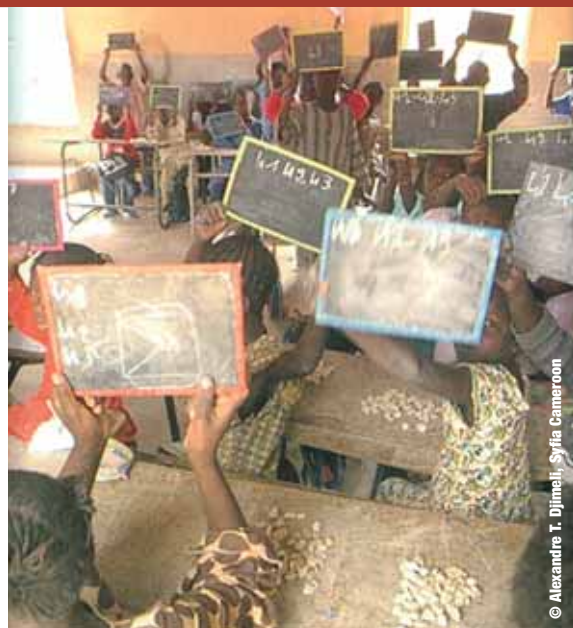
bird never came to roost”, in spite of the fact that the pupils' parents paid 70,000 CFA francs (the equivalent of the yearly salary of the dismissed teacher) to the ministry's local official in order to speed up the process. Having waited in vain for a new teacher, the headmaster, who was already in charge of the second-year intermediate class, now also has to teach the preparatory course.

In Cameroon, there are officially some 11,000 primary state schools, with 55,266 primary school teachers catering for 3 million pupils. This gives us an average teacher/student ratio of 1:54, well below the minimum standard set by UNESCO, i.e. one teacher per 45 students.

Empty promises

Justin Nkodo, a statistician who worked on the School Charter project in 2000, highlights some of the bleak realities already observed at the time: *“When you leave the towns and travel into the countryside in any direction, you will be able to gauge the extent of the disaster: one-room schools (with a single teacher responsible for six different levels), twinned courses taught by individuals with no appropriate training, establishments where more than 85% of teachers are unpaid volunteers, etc. Reading today's official statistics, you might think the government is mocking the educational community.”*

Yet there is no lack of qualified teachers in Cameroon. After the reopening, in 1995/96, of the teacher-training “*écoles normales*”, which had been closed down six years earlier



under the structural adjustment programmes, some 20,000 new teachers qualified. However, only 1,700 of these were employed as public workers. Approximately 14,000 were subsequently employed, starting in 1997/98, as temporary teachers with a monthly salary of 56,400 CFA francs (€86), which is paid 10 months a year. All the others (over 4,000) are unemployed. When the teachers were recruited on a temporary basis, they were promised that they would be given civil servant status after four years' employment – a long-unfulfilled promise in the case of the first batch of recruits, most of whom, moreover, are owed between 10 and 40 months' salary arrears.

Driven by these grievances, teachers regularly stage work stoppages, demonstrations and sit-ins outside public buildings in an attempt to make the authorities keep their promises.

“Budgetary constraints”

At the end of 2002, in a speech to the nation, President Paul Biya announced the recruitment of 30,000 teachers into the public service. A plan was then adopted which involved employing all the temporary

teachers on a permanent basis and gradually integrating the unemployed teachers. However, the plan foundered on the budgetary imperatives alleged by the minister of finance. According to senior officials of the Ministry for Basic Education, the government decided to freeze the recruitment of teachers in order to comply with the budgetary constraints imposed by the World Bank and the IMF.

In actual fact, explains Jean-Paul Njoya (a World Bank consultant for education policies in Cameroon), the international financial institutions “*rarely indicate which items of the budget must be reduced. Governments can even object to the guidelines put forward by these institutions.*”

Together with the Ministry of Defence, the two ministries responsible respectively for secondary and basic education have the largest budgetary allocations. Basic education also receives funds under the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries initiative, Cameroon being an eligible country. However, the available resources are still inadequate to meet the increasingly pressing needs of the education system.

INTERNATIONAL LAW



Teachers for cultural diversity!

148 countries made a pledge that cultural outputs are not commodities, but rather are keys to community development and dialogue.

UNESCO Convention does not pay enough attention to the protection and promotion of cultural diversity within countries, especially in relation to Indigenous cultures. For example, the Convention omits provisions to put an end to the misappropriation of Indigenous expressions and traditional knowledge by transnational companies.

The application of free trade regulations among unequal countries affects cultural diversity. The UNESCO Convention establishes rules, with principles and common references on cultural diversity issues at a global level.

EI calls on its affiliates to support the Convention for Cultural Diversity. All teachers' unions should promote its ratification within their own territories and indeed globally to make it as effective as possible and to support cultural diversity.

Take action to ratify the Convention now!

The CCD can be downloaded at: www.unesco.org/culture/features
The EI resolution on Cultural Diversity is available in three languages on: <http://www.ei-ie.org/indigenouspeoples/en/policy.htm>

WHAT CAN TEACHERS' UNIONS DO?

Lobby governments to ratify the convention to enable its enforcement

Disseminate information about the convention and join local and national awareness campaigns supporting the convention

Encourage intercultural dialogue and respect for cultural diversity in programmes and educational trade union activities

Develop policies and actions seeking to promote peace and respect for all cultures

Integrate teachers from different backgrounds (ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, coloured people, migrants, etc) in union structures.

In October 2005, the General Conference, UNESCO's supreme governing body, adopted by an overwhelming majority a Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (CCD). The new standard-setting instrument, which guarantees the preservation of culture, will enter into force three months after its ratification by at least 30 States. Canada became the first State to ratify the Convention on November 28.

Cultural rights form an integral part of human rights and as such are universal, indivisible and interdependent. Therefore the new Convention recognises that States have primary responsibility for the elaboration of policies, promotion and protection of cultural rights but also to reinforce international cooperation. States are now allowed to subsidise

their cultural outputs and impose quotas to preserve their national cultures.

At the 33d session of UNESCO's General Conference, 148 of the 191 Member States agreed by historic consensus that cultural outputs are rich expressions of the mosaic of cultures created by their own artists and cultural producers throughout history. Therefore cultural goods and services cannot be treated like market commodities or services negotiated under the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which labels education, health and culture as services.

The adoption of the Convention on cultural diversity is a step forward. However, the Convention does not provide sanctions in case of infringement, nor is it clear how disputes will be settled. It is also unfortunate that the

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE CONVENTION ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY (CCD)

- > Respect for human rights
- > Equal dignity of all cultures
- > International solidarity and cooperation
- > Balance between economy and culture
- > Sustainable development
- > Openness, balance and fairness

PUBLICATIONS



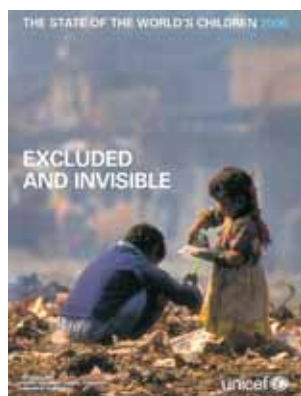
ICFTU ANNUAL SURVEY



According to the “Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights”, published by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), a total of 145 people worldwide lost their lives in 2004 because of their trade union activities, i.e. 16 more than the previous year. The survey, which covers 136 countries from all five continents, also documents over 700 violent attacks on trade unionists, and nearly 500 death threats. According to ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder, “globalisation must be put on a completely different path, with social concerns and ending exploitation at the centre, rather than at the margins.”

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 234 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories.

TO FIND OUT MORE,
VISIT www.icftu.org



The world is not doing enough to improve the fate of hundreds of millions of children, says the latest UNICEF report, “The State of the World’s Children 2006”, published on 14 December last year.

Focusing on the theme “Excluded and invisible children”, the report paints an alarming picture of the situation and emphasises that things will not improve unless countries currently lagging behind double their efforts with the help of donors and international bodies.

Thus, for example, UNICEF indicates that in Morocco some 600,000 children aged 7 to 15 work every day. About 87% of these children come from rural

UNICEF Annual Report

areas and 85% have no school qualifications. A further 800,000 children are considered to be at risk from economic exploitation. One young girl employed as domestic help is reported as working an average of 67 hours per week in very difficult conditions, suffering from isolation and separation. In Casablanca alone, there are more than 23,000 girls under 18 – including an estimated 13,800 under 15 – engaged in labour activities.

Handicapped children form part of “the excluded and invisible”. In rural areas they seldom receive any schooling whatsoever, points out UNICEF.

According to the conclusions of the UNICEF World Report, exclusion “acts against children in all countries”. Its root causes are well-known: poverty, inequality, natural disasters, gender discrimination, conflicts between ethnic groups, weak governance, and diseases

such as malaria and HIV-AIDS. Some 15 million children have lost one or both of their parents to the AIDS pandemic, and nearly 1,800 children under 15 contract the virus every day.

Several factors increase the risk of children “becoming invisible”, including the loss or lack of formal identity, as in the case of children who are not registered at birth. According to UNICEF estimates for 2003, approximately 48 million children (or 36% of all newborns that year) lacked a birth certificate and were therefore at risk of not having their existence officially acknowledged. Every year, on average, more than half the children in developing countries, with the exception of China, are not registered at birth.

http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_30398.html

Barriers to the right to education

In a recently published report on the barriers to education in some 20 countries around the world¹, Human Rights Watch (HRW) indicates that school fees and the related costs of schooling, as well as the HIV-AIDS global pandemic, various forms of discrimination, violence and other obstacles, put education beyond the reach of about 100 million children, most of them girls. The 60-page report, “Failing Our Children – Barriers to the Right to Education”, is based on interviews with hundreds of children and parents in the surveyed countries.

In Salvador, the annual cost of schooling is nearly four times the minimum monthly wage of an agricultural worker. HRW reports that prohibitive school fees are often a root cause of the worst forms of child labour, such as sexual exploitation in Papua New Guinea, domestic work in Indonesia, hazardous labour in Ecuador’s banana plantations, and the conscription of child soldiers in Burma.

HRW also documents the devastating consequences of the HIV-AIDS pandemic for children’s right to education. In sub-Saharan Africa as well as in countries like India and Russia,

HRW found that children affected by HIV-AIDS may be denied access to school or mistreated by teachers because of the stigma associated with HIV-AIDS.

Measures recommended by HRW to achieve gender equality in education include educating families and communities about the benefits of girls’ education, improving security in and around schools, dealing effectively with sexual violence and harassment in schools, and providing incentives – such as free meals and stipends conditional on school attendance – to retain girls in the school system.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH,
BARRIERS TO THE RIGHT TO
EDUCATION, SEPTEMBER 2005,
61 PAGES
[http://hrw.org/reports/2005/
education0905/education0905.pdf](http://hrw.org/reports/2005/education0905/education0905.pdf)

¹The countries surveyed by Human Rights Watch in its study are Brazil, Burma, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Spain, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, United States and Zambia.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

Nadia, teacher in a Roma school

Her work is far from easy and every day brings a new challenge. Yet Nadia Georgiova, a Bulgarian teacher, would not give up her job at School No. 7 in Sliven for anything in the world.

School No. 7 in Sliven, some 270 km east of the capital, Sofia, has 1,250 students, the vast majority of whom are Roma. The 700,000 Roma living in Bulgaria account for 8.9% of the population and, as in other countries of the region, their school performance is below the national average. After 15 years of transition to democracy and the market economy, illiteracy among the adult Roma population has doubled: the average rate is 20%.

Keeping in touch

In order to counter these trends, the teachers of School No. 7 decided to visit the Roma district as often as possible. Once a week, Nadia Georgiova meets Roma parents to encourage them to send their children to school or ensure those who have dropped out resume their studies, or simply to keep in touch and gain a better understanding of their problems. "Links of trust are built. One of the mothers I now meet was one of my first pupils. She has promised me to send her children to school", explains Nadia, with the same warm smile she showed a short while ago during her meetings with the Roma families.

Nadia has been working for some 20 years in this school and would not trade her job for anything in the world. She recognises that many young teachers "crack up" after a few weeks, and she understands their feelings. "True, sometimes you have the impression that you're building on quicksand. You work hard with a group of students and just when you think they are beginning to make some progress, half of them disappear for several

weeks. Many Roma work as seasonal labourers and take their children along with them. The cherry harvest is now starting. So we try to negotiate with the parents. For example, we do revision and perform the tests before the children leave. The girls pose a special challenge. Often, their parents withdraw them from school at the age of 12 or 13 because they want to exert full social control over them, including arranged marriages."

But Nadia also highlights the positive sides of her job: "I feel in touch with real life. I feel I must meet their expectations. This requires a great deal of personal commitment and adaptability. Often I have the impression that I'm fulfilling several roles at once: teacher, psychologist, carer, etc. In the classroom, there is the problem of language. For the time being, we have no Roma teachers, and this is a shame. One of our colleagues speaks Turkish – it's a start, I suppose! The youngest pupils can't speak Bulgarian. Initially, we need the help of older students to make ourselves understood. We also have to cope with rivalries between various groups and local areas. The parents of opposing groups do not wish their children to be in the same class. It is tough, but I love challenges. At the end of the process, it is very rewarding to see them complete their primary education with a good stock of skills."

The teachers function as a highly cohesive team and this helps them in their job. Dialogue among teachers is constant; experiences are shared and teaching methods fine-tuned by working togeth-

er. The team welcomes the creation of an intermediate class between kindergarten and primary school.

Gap between words and the realities

The teachers' federations organise the vast majority of teachers and education workers. As highly representative organisations, they can legitimately initiate important discussions at national level. Teachers' unions conduct vigorous lobbying activities on a range of issues and were instrumental in pushing the adoption of a Law on protection against discrimination in 2003. The unions also work on a day-to-day basis with some 40 Roma organisations and encourage the kind of initiatives taken by teachers in school No. 7.

However, Mitto Mitev is critical of the gap between words and

being segregationist. "I'm the head of a local school that is attended almost exclusively by Roma children. I believe the problem should be seen the other way around: we should aim to raise the level of this school as much as possible so that we can also attract non-Roma children. In the integration programmes, Roma parents are 'encouraged' to enrol their children in the integration classes. A great deal of emphasis is put on the benefits of this, including a school bus shuttle service, free clothes and so on. The truth is that they are not given a real choice. And the 7- or 8-year old Roma children who attend the integration classes live in anguish. They can barely speak any Bulgarian and they sit in the back rows. The result is, at best, that they eventually find their way to a school like ours. At worst, their schooling ends before it has barely started."



➤ Teacher Nadia Georgiova on one of her weekly visits to the families of her pupils.

the realities on the ground, i.e. the worsening living conditions among the Roma population and the proliferation of prejudice and xenophobia in all layers of society. Mitto is all too aware that his school is under threat because it is regarded as

In November 2005, EI's Pan-European region organised a round table on equal opportunities and education for children from minority groups. Several presentations reviewed the approaches to integration/assimilation currently followed by different education systems. For further information, visit EI's website: www.ei-ie.org