



UN NEWS CENTRE

With breaking stories and
newswire products from



Millions of children to benefit from UN partnership to train school principals



UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova

22 September 2011 –

The United Nations educational agency has embarked on a new partnership to train thousands of school principals, beginning in Kenya, Ghana and India, that has the potential to benefit up to 10 million children in the future.

The initiative by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) and the Varkey GEMS Foundation, a not-for-profit education organization, is known as the “10,000 Principals Leadership Programme.”

“This partnership is an excellent example of the new platforms for cooperation the world needs today to achieve education for all,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, adding that tackling complex, global challenges requires innovative and far-reaching partnerships between the public and private spheres.

According to UNESCO, school principals in many developing countries receive little, if any, leadership and development training. The new initiative foresees the training of 10,000 principals in the three countries targeted over four years.

“All evidence shows that supporting the professional development of school principals and leaders is a key to success in any reform aimed at improving the quality of education and transforming the school culture,” said Ms. Bokova.

The agency added that the multiplier effect of the programme has the potential to benefit thousands of teachers and up to 10 million children.

Under the initiative, the Foundation, in cooperation with UNESCO, will provide leadership and professional development courses to improve the skills and knowledge of the school principals.

During the first year, an initial group of trainers will be trained to ensure consistent delivery, as well as building capacity in the required methodology. The 50 to 60 trainers will be further supported to train 500 principals in Ghana, Kenya and India. During the subsequent three years, the 500 trained principals will in turn be responsible for training all the beneficiaries.

The initiative was announced by former United States president Bill Clinton at the yearly meeting in New York of the Clinton Global Initiative. Speaking at that meeting, the founder of the Varkey GEMS Foundation, Sunny Varkey, stressed that the private sector can work with governments and civil society to ensure education for those less fortunate.

“The fact that 67 million children around the world have no access to education is intolerable,” said Mr. Varkey. “For us to confront, collectively, some of the world’s biggest challenges such as poverty, conflict, prejudice and intolerance we need to lift the standards of education worldwide.”

The new initiative reinforces an agreement signed earlier this year between UNESCO and GEMS Education to boost the advancement of girls in mathematics, science and technology through the training of teachers and school leaders, initially in Lesotho and Kenya.

These projects are part of UNESCO’s Global Partnership for Girls’ and Women’s Education launched in May of this year.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[UN high-level forum urges greater efforts to ensure access to decent education for all](#)

