

## **UN-backed partnership promises education for millions more African children**



15 September 2009 – A United Nations-backed campaign to bring education to millions of children in Africa is expanding to reach millions more after exceeding its initial target by raising more than \$50 million.

The Schools for Africa partnership, set up in 2004 by the UN Children’s Fund (**UNICEF**), the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) and the Hamburg Society to raise money to help over 4 million children in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, signed a memorandum of understanding on the expansion in New York today.

“Education is a human right. Children have the right to a quality basic education which is central to human development and a main component for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” UNICEF Director of Programmes Nicholas Alipui said, referring to the targets set by the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 to slash a host of social ills, including poverty, hunger and lack of access to health care and education, all by 2015.

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“By addressing education challenges with particular attention to issues of access, quality and equity, African countries will be in a better position to benefit from economic growth, industrial development and investment opportunities.”

The partnership aims to provide a more safe, protective and accessible learning environment for children and it reached its goal of raising \$50 million, one year in advance. The programme has amassed \$71 million to date.

Fundraising for phase II of the scheme will be launched between 2010 and 2013, and will also support Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. By then the partnership will cover 11 countries – encompassing not just Eastern and Southern Africa, but also the West and Central African regions.

The Schools for Africa partnership attributes its fundraising success to the efforts of 26 national committees around the world.

In 2006, some 101 million children, more than half of them girls, were not attending primary school, according to UNICEF's latest State of the World's Children report. Almost half of them live in sub-Saharan Africa. At the current rate, millions of children especially girls, children with disabilities, orphaned and other vulnerable children will remain excluded and be denied their fundamental right to education in 2015.

The funds will be used to provide textbooks, chairs, desks and tables, safe drinking water, health checks, school meals, immunization, as well as to rehabilitate or build new classrooms and separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys.

Provision will also be made for special care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children and strengthen the linkages between schools and communities through student governance bodies and parent-teacher associations.

Despite efforts to promote access to quality education, many African countries are still grappling with such issues as rural-urban disparities, the combined effects of poverty, climate change, the impact of HIV and AIDS, high dropout rates, deep-seated socio-cultural inequalities, the impact of civil conflicts, and sheer lack of basic infrastructure, including lack of water and poor sanitation.

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