



**Every Child Needs a Teacher:  
Education For All (EFA) Global Action Week  
24-30 April 2006**

*The ILO's Sectoral Activities Programme and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) have issued the following joint note on the occasion of EFA Global Action week*

The right to education is a fundamental human right, yet at least 100 million children are still not enrolled in primary school, 55% of them girls. Fewer than two-thirds of primary school pupils reach the last grade, an indicator of basic literacy, in more than 40 countries. Almost 800 million people aged 15 and above live without basic literacy skills. Nearly one-sixth of humanity does not have these basic tools to work their way out of poverty.

One of the primary reasons why many countries fail to educate their children and their adults is the lack of qualified teachers. Not just teachers, but quality teachers - properly trained to high standards, adequately paid to attract, retain and motivate good people to teach, working in effective teaching and learning environments – the standards established 40 years ago by the world's only comprehensive international standard on the teaching profession, the [ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, 1966](#).

More recently, the [Pretoria Declaration on Teachers \(2005\)](#) summed up the relationship that large numbers of countries still need to focus on:

Teachers make the difference in quality education for all: sufficient numbers of well-qualified, adequately remunerated and highly motivated and professional teachers are the key to realizing quality Education for All (EFA) and MDG goals.

**The shortage of teachers is growing**

The world does not have enough of this precious resource – quality teachers. Forty years ago the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation pointed to teacher shortages and how to deal with them. Forty years on, the shortages remain with us and have been growing in recent years, with almost all countries facing at least one of the following shortfalls in:

- sheer numbers to maintain reasonable, child-centered class sizes, particularly in countries with high HIV and AIDS prevalence rates;
- the overall supply of qualified teachers to meet national professional standards;
- the shortage of qualified teachers in rural, remote and geographically challenged areas, and increasingly in difficult urban zones of many countries; and
- in virtually all countries for chronic shortage subjects, especially mathematics, sciences, information and communications technologies (ICT), and languages, some of the most important educational building blocks for individual self-improvement, for employability and decent work and for sustainable development.

The needs will never be met if countries do not solve the question of how to recruit, educate and retain sufficient numbers of qualified and professionally dedicated teachers. In the words of the [Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts \(CEART\) on the teaching profession \(2003\)](#): “The most serious issue facing the teaching profession is the actual or impending shortage of qualified teachers”.

We do not know with any precision how many teachers are missing from the classrooms – worldwide projections of new teachers needed to meet EFA goals by the 2015 target year vary up to 35 million. In many countries, primary teacher numbers would have to increase by 20% a year to reduce pupil/teacher ratios to 40:1 and to achieve UPE by 2015. Those estimates probably understate the need, because in an increasing number of poor and not so poor countries of Africa, Asia and the Americas, “contract” or “para-teachers” – trained for a few weeks, paid subsistence salaries with little or no professional support - are counted as “teachers” just to fill classrooms and increase enrolments.

Upgrading what amounts to teaching assistants to proper status and qualifications, or replacing them with fully qualified teachers will augment the requirements and drive up the needed investments. The ILO advocates that all countries adhere to a benchmark of 6% of their GDP invested in education and training, an indicator that southern African countries and Nigeria, meeting in Pretoria in December 2005, reaffirmed. Many of the countries unable to meet EFA targets only invest half of this figure in education. The numbers of enrolled pupils and the conditions for quality teachers reflect the under-investment and it is estimated that more than 20 countries are at risk of not achieving universal primary education (UPE) by 2015.

## **The ILO response**

### *Sectoral Activities and Social Dialogue*

The ILO has worked since 2004 with more than 20 countries in Africa, the Americas and Eastern Europe through an action programme – [Teachers for the future: Meeting teacher shortages to achieve Education for All](#) - to address the information gaps, assess teacher needs and develop and apply policy solutions to help Governments, teacher unions and private school employers to work together to meet teaching profession needs. The programme relies heavily on tripartite social dialogue – information sharing, consultation and negotiations – to construct a partnership around consensus policies on what to do. Building on the 1966 Recommendation, the CEART’s experience and recommendations over nearly 40 years, international labour standards and [fundamental principles and rights at work](#), policy dialogue forums in Port of Spain, [Pretoria](#), [Santiago](#) and Sofia have recommended a range of policies on key issues facing decision-makers: governance and financing; teaching profession profiles and deployment, qualifications frameworks, teacher education and professional development, employment, careers, teaching and learning conditions, social dialogue and participatory decision-making and mobility and migration of teachers. Together, they represent a blueprint for future improvements in the teaching profession, provided they are acted on.

### *HIV and AIDS*

Separately, another ILO action programme has helped its tripartite constituents to develop specific workplace-based policies on HIV and AIDS for all kinds of education institutions. The policies are guided by the [ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS in the World of Work](#), and will soon be available for use in the Caribbean, southern Africa and other regions.

## *Child labour and Education for All*

Teachers and their representative organizations have important roles to play in the prevention and elimination of child labour through education. As professionals, they have direct contact with children, which allows them to positively influence children's education and guide them in developing fundamental principles and values in life and their future orientation. They contribute to the prevention of child labour by taking action in schools or the education institutions or programmes in which they work and by reaching out to the wider community.

Good teachers are essential for children to learn and particularly the children that the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) targets through its programmes. The children IPEC works with are already at a disadvantage educationally and it takes a special teacher to reach out to these children, give them confidence, build their self-esteem and help them to succeed in school. In this respect, "Every child working child needs a teacher even more."

If these kinds of teachers cannot be attracted to the profession, properly trained and given decent working conditions, then working children will not benefit from the education and training they need to aspire to a better future. For these reasons, ILO-IPEC has lent its full support to this critical campaign, "Every Child Needs A Teacher", particularly through ILO offices around the world, and urged its staff to renew their efforts with relevant government agencies, teachers' organizations and civil society organizations to support this year's campaign.

### **Our collective responsibility**

Education is everybody's business and everyone has a role to play. Without universal, free, quality education, and the teachers to shape and guide it, EFA will not be achieved. The ILO urges its constituents to take part in the activities proposed around EFA's Global Action Week 2006: Every Child Needs a Teacher, and throughout 2006, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the ILO/UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers*. Contacts may be made with national teachers' organizations, ministries of labour and education and employers' organizations to find out more about national and local activities and how to support them. Further examples of either how to support already organized initiatives or steps to be taken to launch new ones can be found on the following web sites:

- [Sectoral Activities Programme, Education sector](#)
- [International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour \(IPEC\)](#)
- [The Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work](#)
- [UNESCO Education for All by 2015](#)
- [Global Campaign for Education](#)
- [Education International: Global Action Week, 2006](#)