

# CHILD – FRIENDLY SCHOOLS



## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The Child-Friendly School (CFS)** model promotes healthy and protective environments for learning and strives to provide quality basic education in both everyday circumstances and emergencies. Child-Friendly Schools contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. They act in the interests of the 'whole' child, are inclusive and gender-sensitive, and provide school-based health and nutrition services, safe water and suitable sanitation facilities.

Child-Friendly Schools are designed so that children feel safe, secure and protected and have an environment where learning can become fun. The model builds partnerships between schools and the community.

Child-Friendly Schools embrace a philosophy that fosters equality, respect for human rights and participation of all children, along with instructional programmes that promote relevant life skills, such as HIV/AIDS prevention, community involvement and participation, and a child-centred style of teaching and learning.

CFS is a cross-cutting model that can be applied in different countries and cultures. The framework can be utilized in both formal and non-formal education. In Southern Sudan, for instance, these principles are included in the 'Go to School' initiative launched by the Government on 1 April 2006 with support from donors, UNICEF and other UN agencies. Aiming to enrol 1.6 million out-of-school children by the end of 2007, the initiative embraces such child-friendly principles as teacher training, school-supply distribution, and establishing water and sanitation facilities.

Temporary child-friendly learning spaces, provided with 'schools-in-a-box' and other basic educational materials, are part of a larger UNICEF-supported initiative to ensure schooling

during emergencies. To help children recover from traumatic experiences and continue their education, these spaces provide physical and emotional protection, along with a sense of normalcy.

**"The education methods of Child-Friendly Schools are a form of quality education in China, designed to empower children and allow them to develop in a well-rounded and holistic manner."**

Zheng Zengyi,  
Senior Official, Chinese Ministry of Education

The number of countries adopting the Child-Friendly School model increased from 33 in 2004 to at least 50 in 2005. In East Asia and the Pacific, a number of countries have integrated CFS standards into national policies or education-sector investment plans. In China, psychological protection and emergency response will be incorporated into national standards for Child-Friendly Schools.

### Key messages

- Child-Friendly Schools and learning spaces work to strengthen families by establishing vital relationships with communities and teachers. Because the family unit and the school are two of the most important influences for children, engaging parents and caregivers in activities and decisions and mobilizing communities are crucial to establishing schools that function effectively.
- Child-Friendly Schools promote quality teaching and learning processes that include gender-sensitive, individualized instruction, and support the abilities of teachers to apply active, cooperative and democratic learning methods.

- Child-Friendly Schools encourage gender-sensitive learning by providing a secure and intellectually challenging educational setting for both girls and boys. This learning encompasses personal empowerment and social responsibility. It also ensures that children are provided with relevant and flexible gender-responsive curricula, as well as professionally capable and committed teachers.
- Child-Friendly Schools promote a healthy, safe and protective environment for children's emotional, psychological and physical well-being, including school-based health and nutrition services, life skills and provision of water and sanitation facilities. In addition, these schools enforce policies that guarantee children's safety and protection from violence and harassment.

### Recent activities

Child-Friendly School is a broad approach that UNICEF has adopted as a way of building quality education in schools. In the past decade, it has been used by many UNICEF offices and has become the main model through which UNICEF and other partners promote quality education in normal as well as emergency situations (child-friendly learning spaces).

The Child-Friendly Schools for Africa Programme is a multicountry programme comprised of the governments of six countries: Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The programme is supported by UNICEF, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, and the Hamburg Society for the Promotion of Democracy and International Law. Its purpose is to support the accelerated promotion of quality basic education for all children. The programme supports school construction and rehabilitation and provides educational materials. It also develops the capacities of teachers and strengthens school governance and management.

The rapid growth of interest and commitment to this model has resulted in the development of a UNICEF CFS and learning spaces Manual and E-learning Package, to be launched in 2007. These capacity-building tools are designed



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for education policymakers, planners and practitioners, with the intent of strengthening and systematizing education systems and building national capacity for implementing CFS standards, as well as strengthening UNICEF education staff capacity for quality interventions.

### Partnerships

To ensure that schools retain their position as centres for learning and essential services, UNICEF works to strengthen partnerships, expand the CFS model globally, and reinforce mutual learning, research and documentation of good practices. Current partners include UNESCO, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, the World Bank and the World Food Programme, Hamburg Society for the Promotion of Democracy and International Law, Nelson Mandela Foundation, the African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development, Southern African Development Community and the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education.