



Joint Message from UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and Education International on the occasion of World Teachers' Day

NEW YORK/GENEVA/PARIS, 5 October 2011 - Today, on World Teachers' Day, we honour the millions of educators all over the world who devote their lives to teaching children, youth and adults.

This year's theme, "Teachers for Gender equality", reminds us that in order to achieve Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the gender dimension of teaching must receive particular attention, beginning with girls' access to schools. We know, for example, that in many regions a low proportion of female teachers will mean fewer girls at school and consequently even fewer women teachers in the future. Yet educating girls and women has cascading benefits for human development: fewer deaths in childbirth; more healthy babies; more children in school; better protection for children and women from HIV and AIDS, trafficking and sexual exploitation; and the economic and political empowerment of women, leading to stronger and more inclusive development.

If we want to give equal opportunities to our daughters and sons to realize their full potential and claim their rights, we must devise policies and strategies that attract and motivate capable women and men to teach, while also enabling them to create gender-equal learning environments. More and better education for all requires good teachers and incentives to encourage male and female teachers into all areas and levels of teaching. This will ensure that boys and girls have appropriate role models throughout their schooling.

Women make up the majority of the teaching profession at the primary level, 62 % globally but as high a proportion as 99% in some countries. Yet as the profession has become increasingly feminized, conditions of service, pay and status have deteriorated. If teachers are to be good role models for gender equality for boys and girls in all areas and at all levels of schooling, inequities within the teaching profession must be addressed. We must promote equal opportunities for women to be school leaders, institutional managers and decision-makers within ministries of education, for more women to become science, mathematics and technology teachers, and for more men to be recruited as early childhood and primary school educators.

It is also important to identify the causes for the shortage of women teachers where they exist. Adequate provisions for maternity protection and parental leave, as well as effective protection from sexual violence and abuse, are essential. If qualified female teachers avoid postings in disadvantaged and rural areas, how can we convince reluctant parents to send their children to school?

Such issues, including opportunities for teachers to shape education decisions through social dialogue, must be addressed if decent work for teachers - and quality education for children - is to become a reality. We call on all partners in education to work towards full respect for the rights and responsibilities set out in the 1966 ILO-UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers and the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel – the starting points for this special day. These are pillars for building a quality, professional teaching force.

We renew our gratitude and appreciation for the efforts and dedication of women and men teachers, who bear the responsibility of educating future generations to build societies based on sustainable development, peace, democracy, human rights and equality.

Join us today, 5 October 2011, in celebrating teachers around the world!



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