

Regional News Roundup

AFRICA

More girls in school but drop-out rates high

Education officials and advocates have helped get more girls into primary school worldwide but many girls are still dropping out before secondary level, say education experts from 22 countries meeting in the Senegalese capital Dakar. Twice as many primary schools are operating worldwide than in 2000, said Anthony Lake, recently named executive director of UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and more girls are attending school in central and Eastern Europe, east Asia and Latin America. However, only about one-third of countries maintained gender parity at secondary level. And some 72 million children are still not in school – two-thirds of them in sub-Saharan Africa or south and east Asia. The quality of education remains a challenge. "We can convince anyone on access, but 75 percent of children in Africa still fail their exams," said Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta, West Africa director at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). "Curricula are outdated...when we look at quality we have to ensure education is relevant, and can guarantee jobs; we need to prepare children for the world of work."

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89180>

Many more in school but many still out

The number of primary-school-age children who go to school has increased globally, but countries affected by conflict still have large numbers missing out on an education, states a new report. Of the 72 million children out of school (down from 115 million in 2006), 39 million live in conflict-affected countries, according to The Future is Now report, published on 11 May by the Save the Children Alliance. In Somalia 81 percent of children have no access to education. In Southern Sudan, only 14 percent of the children attended school during two decades of conflict that ended in 2005, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Full report:

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/The_Future_is_Now_low_res.pdf

IDP numbers peak at 27 million, says report

At least 6.8 million people were displaced last year, mainly by long-running conflicts, pushing the number of those forced to live away from home to 27 million - the highest since the mid-1990s, a new report states. "The massive population movements and shocking violence are a sad reminder of the price that civilians pay in armed conflict," Elisabeth Rasmusson, secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), said while launching the 2009 annual report on displacement. The report, published by NRC's Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), said that while the number of refugees in the world remained fairly static, that of IDPs was rising steadily. The IDPs, Rasmusson said, were often poorer and more vulnerable than refugees, and unable to travel as far from the conflict zone. The responsibility for their security and welfare should lie with their own governments, but some were reluctant to acknowledge the existence of displaced people within their borders.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89170>

Full report: [http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/resources.nsf/\(httpPublications\)/54C1580B097E58BAC12577250071030F?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/resources.nsf/(httpPublications)/54C1580B097E58BAC12577250071030F?OpenDocument)

SUDAN

Key post referendum issues

Several key issues, such as borders, oil and water have to be discussed should the south vote for independence in a referendum scheduled for January 2010. Five major border areas are in dispute with the most potentially explosive in the oil-producing region of Abyei. Oil revenue accounts for 98 percent of Southern Sudan's government revenue and 60 percent of the national budget. While under the peace accord both sides divide proceeds they will have to negotiate how to share oil revenue in the future. Regarding the use of water, Sudan and Egypt control up to 90 percent of the water resources, following regulations in two treaties. The south will have to decide whether to recognise these treaties or to work towards a fairer accord with other

eastern African countries. Furthermore, questions of rights and citizenship for southerners living in the north and northerners living in the south as well as travel regulations will have to be addressed. The south will also have to decide on the currency it will use, whether to honour international agreements reached by Sudan and both sides have to find a way to deal with national debt estimated at USD 34 million.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89199>

Urgent cash needed for demining

The removal of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Sudan will grind to a halt in June unless money is found to keep operations going, said an official of the UN Mine Action Office in Sudan (UNMAO). The agency urgently requires USD 12 million. Lack of funds, it said, would deter the return of internally displaced persons, hinder economic and social activities, and give room for more landmine-related accidents. More than 20 years of conflict left 19 out of the 25 states affected by mines or ERW. The true extent of Sudan's mine and ERW problem is unknown, according to the UNMAO. Together with its partners, such as Norwegian People's Aid, it has opened up more than 39,819km of road, cleared more than 59,799,476 sqm of land, and destroyed 25,220 mines and 876,552 pieces of unexploded ordnance.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89094>

SOMALIA

End recruitment of child soldiers, officials urge

Two high ranking UN officials who work for the protection of children's rights are deeply concerned about a rise in the recruitment of child soldiers in Somalia. "We are appalled to learn that the recruitment and use of children as soldiers by armed groups in Somalia is rising," UNICEF's Executive Director Anthony Lake and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, said in a press release. "All parties to the conflict are involved, and in some cases children as young as nine years old are being recruited. Recent reports state that schools are being used as recruitment centers and that child soldiers are often beaten or executed when captured." They called for an immediate end to the recruitment of child soldiers in Somalia, offering their assistance with demobilisation and reintegration of the children.

Read more: http://www.unicef.org/emerg/somalia_53592.html

UNHCR calls on governments to strengthen protection for Somali refugees

On 11 May, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) issued new guidelines on the protection of people fleeing Somalia that promote a consistent approach to the protection needs of persons from Somalia. They encourage governments to assess applications for refugee status from persons from central and southern Somalia in the broadest possible way, and to extend complementary forms of international protection, where refugee status is not granted. It is UNHCR's view that asylum seekers from central and southern Somalia are in need of international protection. Those who do not meet the criteria for refugee status under the 1951 Convention or the OAU Convention should benefit from complementary forms of international protection, as applicable in situations of generalised violence or armed conflict. In view of the nature of the conflict and the dramatic humanitarian situation, UNHCR does not believe that Somali refugees can find an internal relocation alternative in central or southern Somalia.

Read more: <http://www.unhcr.org/4be92e3c6.html>

UN moves to halt aid abuses in Somalia

As the humanitarian crisis in Somalia deepens, the UN is taking steps to stop the diversion of badly needed aid to radical Islamist militants, according to a UN report. In March, a UN committee that monitors compliance with a UN sanctions regime imposed on Somalia and Eritrea submitted a report to the Security Council that said as much as half the food aid sent to Somalia is diverted to a network of corrupt contractors, Islamist militants and local UN staff. Following that report, the UN Somalia team has created a database that will include details on all UN service providers and contractors in Somalia. The team has also carried out a revision of the

internal controls over cash transfer systems within Somalia. Prompted by a rapidly deteriorating situation and growing displacement in Somalia the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has recently launched two appeals for an additional USD 60 million to ease the plight of Somali refugees in neighbouring Kenya, Yemen, Ethiopia and Djibouti and those forcibly displaced inside their country.

Read more: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N12193665.htm>