

Media Update

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UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

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Universal Children's Day: Why fair matters

NEW YORK/Islamabad 20 November 2015 – The world remains a deeply unfair place for the poorest and most disadvantaged children despite major advances since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, according to a UNICEF report released today.

“In just over a generation, the world has cut child death rates by half, put over 90 per cent of children in primary school, and increased by 2.6 billion the number of people with access to safe water,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.

“Yet children make up almost half of the world's poor, nearly 250 million children live in conflict-torn countries, and over 200,000 have risked their lives this year seeking refuge in Europe.”

In Pakistan, the situation for children of marginalised and disadvantaged communities is no different from those living in other countries facing socio-economic challenges. They are denied some of the most fundamental rights such as registration at birth, nutrition, immunization, safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and education. This impairs their growth, potential and productivity which in turn affects the national development.

“Children of communities that are least served are the most vulnerable,” said Angela Kearney, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. “Going the extra mile for children who have been left out by providing them equitable access to



public services is the only option to bring them into the mainstream development.”

The report, *For every child, a fair chance: The promise of equity*, presents a statistical picture of how the world’s most marginalized children have fared against basic human development indicators. It points out that:

- Children from the poorest households are nearly twice as likely as those from the richest households to die before age five, and five times more likely to be out of school.
- Girls from the poorest families are four times more likely as those from the richest families to be married before 18.
- More than 2.4 billion people still do not have adequate toilets – 40 per cent of them in South Asia; and more than 660 million still lack access to safe drinking water – nearly half of them in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Roughly half of the 159 million children suffering from stunting live in South Asia and one-third in Africa.

“Such vast inequities fuel a vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty and disadvantage,” Lake said. “But it doesn’t have to be this way. We know how to slow, stop, and reverse it into a virtuous cycle of intergenerational progress. It is up to us to decide to do so through more commitment and resources. We must make this moral, pragmatic, strategic...and fair...choice.”

For every child, a fair chance makes the case for closing persistent gaps in equity, arguing that investing in children, particularly the most vulnerable, is right in principle and right in practice – and that such investment brings multiple benefits not only to children but also to their families, communities and economies.

An impressive team of UNICEF Ambassadors are raising their voices or activating their social media networks to help spur action for the world’s most vulnerable children as part of UNICEF’s “Fight Unfair” campaign. These include Orlando Bloom, Liam Neeson, Sir Roger Moore, Shakira, Ricky Martin, Novak Djokovic, Mia Farrow, Ishmael Beah, Susan Sarandon and Angelique Kidjo.

“It is shocking to think that one in nine children lives in a country affected by armed conflict, witnessing horrific violence and having their rights to survival, health and education destroyed,” said British actor and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Orlando Bloom. “I travelled with UNICEF to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia to see the how war is driving children and their families from their homes. The world is facing the biggest refugee crisis since World War II. Every country that can should be supporting the children and the families who have been affected.”

Download a PDF of the report and multimedia materials from:
<http://uni.cf/1ONW3dm>

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About UNICEF

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