



# International Solidarity Reflection

Education for All

*Shalom*

School Sisters of Notre Dame

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## Introduction

Everyone has a right to quality education. Yet, today 75 million children and 774 million adults are missing out. We know that when individuals have the chance to learn basic life and literacy skills, they flourish, their families are enriched, and their communities are transformed.

## Call to Prayer

“We are convinced anew that education is our response to the cries of Creation, the concrete expression of our solidarity with all. Therefore, we promote education for all, especially those who are marginalized and forgotten. Whenever possible, we link our ministries across the world. We collaborate with others on all levels, sharing our charism and spirituality. Together we carry our mission into the future.” (*Call to Solidarity*)

## Experience

Twelve year old Sakina lives in the far northwest of Nigeria where in some places as few as 1 in 3 girls are enrolled in school and many more girls drop out of school due to severe poverty and harmful traditional practices.

*I used to go to the primary school here in Tudun Kose but now I'm too old to go there and there isn't enough money to send me to the secondary school which is far away. Also, they are preparing me to get married soon. There are a few boys who have asked my father if they can marry me but a choice hasn't been made yet. I spend my day fetching water and pounding millet to make grain for our meals.*

## Reflection

### What we know . . .

- Girls represent 60 percent of all children out of school. Education saves lives by giving women the confidence and power to make better choices for themselves and their children.
- Globally, nearly 250 million children have to work to help their families. They miss out on things like school, playing sports and making friends.
- Millions of children are forced to drop out of school, often due to poverty, before they can complete even a basic education.
- Half of the world's out of school children live in communities where the language used in school is different to that used at home. This is an enormous barrier which affects learning.
- Teacher shortages are made worse by lack of resources and the unpredictability of aid. 18 million more primary teachers are needed by 2015 if we are to achieve the promise of Education for All.

### What we believe . . .

- Everyone has the right to education . . . Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26*)

- If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people. *(Chinese Proverb)*
- Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy, and sustainable human development. *(Kofi Annan, 7<sup>th</sup> Secretary-General of the UN)*
- We know from study after study that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls and women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, promote health—including the prevention of HIV/AIDS—and increase the chances of education for the next generation. *(Kofi Annan, Seventh Secretary-General of the UN)*
- United and content with little, we go out into the whole world, into the tiniest villages, into the poorest dwellings, wherever the Lord calls us, to bring poor children the good news of God’s kingdom. *(Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger )*
- For us education means enabling persons to reach the fullness of their potential as individuals created in God’s image and assisting them to direct their gifts toward building the earth. *(You Are Sent, C 22)*

## Action

Called to solidarity with all Creation we are ready, personally and communally, to risk all we are and all we have for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ. *(Call to Solidarity)*

- What are we willing to risk to ensure education for all?
- What is God asking of us at this new moment? What does the Gospel demand?
- What does our charism require? What would Blessed Theresa have us do?

Whether you’re an educator, concerned citizen, or community leader, there are many ways for you to spread the word about the need for all people everywhere to have a quality education. Tell your elected officials that you expect them to keep their promises. Contact local media and remind them of their responsibility to inform the public. Teach about the right to education and encourage your students to act.

Join the Global Campaign for Education and help ensure everyone gets an educated start that could change their lives and the lives of their families. The campaign exists in over 100 countries, and is made up of hundreds of civil society organizations dedicated to working for quality education for all. Plan to take part in the April 22<sup>nd</sup> “Big Read” during this year’s Education Action Week, April 20-26, 2009. Details are available at [www.campaignforeducation.org/bigread/](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/bigread/)

## Closing Prayer

As members of an international congregation, we recognize our obligation and opportunity to develop a world vision and a sense of global responsibility. Our internationality challenges us to witness to unity in a divided world; to discover unsuspected ways of sharing what we have with the poor and the marginalized; and to search for new channels of service in the universal church. *(You Are Sent, C 26)*