MANUAL

CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

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Quality education is education that works for every child and enables all children to achieve their full potential.

The *Child-Friendly Schools Manual* was developed during three-and-a-half years of continuous work, involving UNICEF education staff and specialists from partner agencies working on quality education. It benefits from fieldwork in 155 countries and territories, evaluations carried out by the Regional Offices and desk reviews conducted by headquarters in New York. We particularly acknowledge the contributions of colleagues who participated in two CFS Writers' Workshops held in Glen Cove, New York, in June 2005 and August 2006.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY A CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS MANUAL?

Schooling is the one experience that most children worldwide have in common and the most common means by which societies prepare their young for the future. On any given day, more than a billion children are in primary or secondary school: 689 million in primary school and 513 million in secondary school. They are in permanent or temporary buildings, in tents or under trees – sharing the experience of learning, developing their potential and enriching their lives. But schooling is not always a positive experience for children. It can mean shivering in cold, unheated buildings or sweltering in hot, airless ones. It can mean being forced to stand in unfurnished classrooms, being hungry, thirsty or unwell; it can also mean being frightened by the threat of punishment, humiliation, bullying or even violence at the hands of teachers and fellow pupils.

These conditions thwart learning. They are made worse when learners are without competent teachers to guide them, textbooks to learn from or exercise books to write in, or if they have textbooks of inferior quality that reinforce damaging stereotypes. Learning is further stymied when schools have no toilets, running water or electricity. It is a challenge to reach the 101 million primary-school-age

children around the world who do not attend school. But it is perhaps even more daunting to rectify the deplorable conditions endured by millions of children already in school, conditions that are antithetical to learning, children's well-being and their future livelihood.

And children face negative conditions not only in school. The home and community environment can also pose challenges that make it difficult for children to enrol in school, attend regularly, complete the final year of the cycle or achieve the prescribed level of learning. Food and water insecurity, undernutrition, parasitic infestations, unhygienic surroundings, chronic poverty, household chores, harmful traditional beliefs and practices, domestic overcrowding, gender discrimination, HIV and AIDS, domestic violence, childcare deficiencies and the increasing prevalence and severity of natural disasters related to climate change are factors that can wreak havoc with a child's right to attend and complete school. Schools must therefore focus on the whole child, which means taking into account conditions in the family or

Recognizing that different children face different circumstances and have different needs, such schools build on the assets that children bring from their homes and communities and also compensate for shortcomings in the home and community environment. They enable children to achieve, at a minimum, the knowledge and skills prescribed in the curriculum. They also help them develop the ability to think and reason, build self-respect and respect for others, and reach their full potential as individuals, members of their communities and citizens of the world. Child-friendly schools (CFS) embrace a multidimensional concept of quality and address the total needs of the child as a learner.

The case for a CFS manual

Various school models illustrate ways to improve the quality of education. However, it is the CFS models that have emerged as the most comprehensive in their approach and the most widespread, both in the number of countries in which they have been put into practice and the geographical distribution of those

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