



**Save the Children** Rewrite the Future

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## **World's richest countries failing to help children affected by conflict**

### *Donors keeping millions out of school*

The world's richest countries, Australia included, are failing to help put an end to devastating impact of conflict in 28 countries, leaving almost 40 million children facing a bleak future, Save the Children has revealed according to a new report.

'Last in Line, Last in School', reveals that the world's richest donors, despite pledging to ensure every child receives an education by 2015, are selecting more stable countries to receive aid for education over those affected by conflict – effectively leaving those countries with little hope of breaking the cycle of poverty and conflict.

In countries affected by conflict, schools can be destroyed, commandeered by armed forces or used as shelter and teachers may be killed or forced to flee, children can be easy targets for recruitment as child soldiers or exploited as cheap labour and are more vulnerable to trafficking and abuse.

The number of out-of-school primary aged children in the world has dramatically fallen from over 100 million to 77 million. Yet this drop has not been seen in countries affected by conflict, where 39 million children remain without an education, rendering the Millennium Development Goal of primary education for all meaningless.

The report reveals:

- Despite donor pledges 20 out of 22 donor countries have, to date, failed to contribute their fair share of funds to achieve education for every child by 2015.
- Australia ranks 10<sup>th</sup> among the 22 donor countries for committing their fair share of aid for education and for supporting education in countries affected by conflict.

- Donors turn a blind eye to providing aid for education in countries affected by conflict because they don't fit their criteria for funding, with Australia's allocation of basic education aid remaining at critically low levels.
- Donors give the least amount of aid for education to the countries most in need of it – conflict affected countries receive less than a fifth of global education aid, despite being home to more than half the world's children missing out on education.

There is currently a US \$9 billion funding gap that donors need to fill if they are to meet their goal of giving every child the chance to go to school by 2015 – at least half of that (US \$5.2 billion) must be targeted at the countries where it can make the biggest difference – those affected by conflict.

Margaret Douglas, Save the Children Australia Chief Executive, says: “Unless the amount of aid for education to conflict affected countries is drastically increased to bring it in line with the amounts given to more stable countries the Millennium Development Goal of education for all will be rendered a failure.”

Donors are reluctant to commit funds to countries that, as a result of conflict, are often in various states, without basic infrastructures and lacking education plans and strategies that donors demand before committing funds. Yet this is the very mandate on which aid efforts must be focused.

Ms Douglas continues: “Education is key to determining the prospects of children and their countries – yet they face a bleak future if wealthy countries, that have promised to give every child the chance to go to school by 2015, continue to ignore the specific needs of conflict affected countries.”

Education is essential to protecting children during conflict and re-building countries in the aftermath, helping increase stability and thereby reducing the risks of countries spiralling into poverty and conflict.

Save the Children Australia is calling for all donors to increase basic education aid to meet their fair share of the US \$9 billion annual financing gap and to increase their commitments to conflict-affected countries, ensuring at least half of all new education aid commitments, \$5.2 billion, reaches children in conflict affected countries.

## **Ends**

For further information, including photography, case studies and interviews with spokespeople please contact:

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### Notes to editors:

- Copies of the report ‘Last in Line, Last in School’, can be downloaded from: [www.savethechildren.org.au](http://www.savethechildren.org.au) at the ‘Publications’ section
- ‘Last in Line, Last in School’ is part of the Rewrite the Future campaign, launched in 2006. Over the next four years, Save the Children will ensure that three million out-of-school children in conflict-affected countries enter school by 2010 and, at the same time, improve the quality of education for five million more.
- For more information on the Rewrite the Future campaign please go to: [www.savethechildren.org.au](http://www.savethechildren.org.au) at Rewrite the Future section
- Save the Children fights for children around the world who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence. We work with them to find lifelong answers to the problems they face.