

PRESS RELEASE

UN in Myanmar calls for urgent support to Education

(Yangon: 10 June 2009): More support is required for the Education sector in Myanmar. That was the key message in the donor meeting on Education, organized by the UN in Yangon Tuesday. Around 60 participants attended, including Heads of Diplomatic missions, UN Agencies and National and International Non-Governmental Organizations.

“The international community should increase its efforts, in cooperation with the Government of Myanmar and local organizations, in order to promote quality education for all children and youth in Myanmar. Active policy engagement with the Government is required and more resources should be directed to Education, in order to reach the Global Development Goal of completed primary education for all. Also, increased support and collaboration are required to enable more youth to accomplish higher education,” said the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Bishow Parajuli.

There are shortages of learning material and qualified teachers. Further education or vocational training opportunities for dropout students from general education are limited. Efforts should be made to reach all out-of-school children. In the meeting, local organizations spoke about their role in supplementing the Government and the international community’s activities.

“Encouraging community participation in Education is a key priority for local organizations in Myanmar. We have human resources and are growing. However, our efforts are limited by severe funding constraints and lack of technical capacity,” said representative from the local civil society, Aye Myat Thu.

The donor meeting was followed by a field visit to several villages in the Ayeyarwaddy delta Wednesday. The donor representatives witnessed the progress that have been done over the past year, in rebuilding Government and Monastic schools, training teachers, establishing community based Early Childhood Care and Development Centres and more. At the same time, they observed children in over filled class rooms in schools with nothing but plastic sheeting as walls.

“Over half a million of children in the affected areas have benefited from Education support, since Cyclone Nargis destroyed and damaged over 4000 schools of which 1255 completely collapsed. More efforts are required to increase education opportunities to children not only in the delta, but also in the rest of the country,” said UNICEF Deputy Representative, Juanita Vasquez, who accompanied the field mission.

So far, 1,400 schools in the delta have been repaired. The objective is to build back better all the destroyed schools with permanent structures designed to reduce the risk of possible future disasters, by April 2011. According to the Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness plan (PONREPP), US\$ 157 million is needed for the Education sector for the next three years.

*For further information, please contact Astrid Sehl, Communication Officer
Mob +95 1 (0)9507 4853 astrid.sehl@undp.org*