

**UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO Call on all factions and communities to take Peace day as an opportunity to renew their commitments and respect for Afghan children's rights to life and Education**

KABUL, 18 September 2008, - As the International Day of Peace, 21 September, approaches the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) are calling on all parties to the conflict to take a pause on the International Day of Peace to allow safe access for vaccinators to carry out polio immunization - a life saving activity. The sanctity of schools must be respected, the lives of students and teachers must be protected, and the schools must not be used by any parties to the conflict for operations or political reasons.

Polio and lack of access to education affect every family in Afghanistan.

WHO and UNICEF are urging the actors involved in the conflict not to harm the vaccinators and allow the peace polio immunizations to take place from 21-23 September in order to vaccinate 1.8 million newborns and children under the age of five.

In 2008 (January - 17 September), over 18 cases of polio have been reported mostly in Southern and Eastern regions where accessing vulnerable communities has been hindered due to the fighting on the ground. Polio is the target of a global eradication effort, and Afghanistan is one of only four countries left with endemic polio.

In safeguarding every child's rights to education, UNESCO and UNICEF are urging communities across Afghanistan to renew their commitments in protecting schools and literacy centres; students and teachers from attacks.

In 2008 (January -10 September) – total of 199 school attacks have taken place resulting in 37 deaths and 33 injured.

UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO are urging all factions and communities to take 21 September as an opportunity to renew their commitments and respect for children's rights to life through receiving essential health services including the life saving polio vaccine and in gaining safe access to education away from politics and conflict on the ground.

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