



UNICEF'S CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Child Friendly School Models (CFS) models as pathways toward quality education

UNICEF is contributing to education for sustainable development through quality education, gender mainstreaming and girls' empowerment initiatives within the Basic Education and Gender Equality programme.

Countries' development of quality education is promoted through Child Friendly Schools (CFS) models¹. Forty-seven countries that are adapting CFS standards have incorporated climate change and environmental education into their curricula.

These countries view CFS models as *pragmatic pathways towards quality education* that have evolved (and are still evolving), from the principle of education as a human right to a child-centered ideology. The pragmatic and flexible nature of CFS models has facilitated a comprehensive and whole child approach to CFS allowing for the inclusion of context specific and relevant climate change and environmental education elements into the curricula.

¹ The Child Friendly Schools initiative is also aligned with early childhood development and school readiness so that young children make a smooth transition from their homes, coming into schools better prepared, and schools are conducive to the transition by making the classroom environments more developmentally age appropriate and child centered.

Key Messages

- The CFS model is comprehensive enough to allow life skills education to incorporate skills building to address country-specific problems that are a barrier to sustainable development.
- The above mentioned life skills form a cluster of services that help to address the multiple threats to sustainable development by stimulating, enabling and assisting national governments to effectively address threats. By facilitating the mainstreaming of gender sensitive LSBE into education initiatives child-friendly national policies support families and communities in their direct efforts to be self-reliant and self-sufficient in the long term.
- Collaboration and coordination with other sectors and agencies is indispensable to identifying and delivering essential services and facilities in schools such as water and sanitation, school gardening and energy, such as solar power.

The CFS Model and Disaster Risk Reduction

Disasters of various nature can strike almost everywhere in the world. They are affecting increasing more people globally. Disasters destroy lives and livelihoods and erode development gains and disaster risk



reduction strategies at school are a way to protect the children. UNICEF's natural niche in promoting disaster risk reduction through education is evident in all regions and the Child Friendly Schools standards are an appropriate model to pursue this explicit strategy to prevent and mitigate disaster impacts on children, their schools and communities. Disaster Risk Reduction in Education is mainly ensuring that school buildings are safe, that emergency preparedness plans are in place, and that school curricula provide children and their families with some of the necessary skills to reduce their vulnerability to hazards. Explicit disaster risk reduction programmes in education have been developed at regional and country levels by UNICEF in the spirit of the CFS standards, to ensure that learning environment are protective and that children receive the appropriate skills.

The CFS Model and Life Skills Based Education

The comprehensive nature of the CFS model is proving to be an effective framework in the development of relevant life skills based education (LSBE). LSBE is the entry point for UNICEF in tackling problems related to sustainable development. Currently, the LSBE initiatives that UNICEF is supporting in countries are: gender equity and empowerment of girls; climate change and environmental education; disaster risk

reduction; peace-building and violence prevention; health and hygiene promotion; and HIV prevention, care and support.

Sustainable development is dependent on countries' resilience, expertise and ability to strengthen their human resources. To help this process, UNICEF continues to place strong emphasis on capacity development. UNICEF has developed a **Global Capacity Development Programme on Child Friendly Schools** which has now been rolled out in countries and regions. One of the major components is the CFS reference manual and the e-learning package. Critical issues referred to in the manual and e-learning package are being dealt with in depth through resource packs. Currently, the resource packs being prepared are on:

- life skills based education (LSBE)
- skills building for climate change and environmental education
- skills building for water, sanitation and hygiene
- skills building for gender equity

The climate change and environmental education resource pack is an inter-agency effort by UNICEF, UNEP, WHO, UNESCO, FAO, UN-HABITAT with each partner contributing based on their comparative advantage. It will be released the last quarter of 2009.