

To mark International Literacy Day the United Nations is proud to present:

## *Girl Rising*

### Her Royal Highness Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands



H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands has been committed to literacy for years, based on the conviction that literacy is a basic human right and a precondition for a healthy, strong and durable society. In 2003, she established the Reading & Writing Foundation (Stichting Lezen & Schrijven). The aims of the foundation are to raise awareness, bring together traditional and new stakeholders and develop pilot projects with a view to rolling out these practical solutions more broadly. Princess Laurentien is chair of the foundation. The princess chaired the High Level Expert Group on Literacy from its launch by the European Commission in 2011 until the presentation of the final report in 2012. She has been UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development since 2009.

### Kirsty Macdonald



Kirsty Macdonald is Director of Intel's Global Public Policy in Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA) and Head of Office in Brussels where she is responsible for Intel's engagement with governments, regulators and standards bodies and advising Intel's senior management on public policies in EMEA. Kirsty leads a team of senior policy professionals and technical specialists who work to establish favourable legal, regulatory, statutory and market rules and policies to enable Intel's continued global business success.

### Key Facts on Girl's Education

Gender parity and equality in education constitute a basic human right, as well as an important means of improving other social and economic outcomes. Gender inequality in education takes many forms depending on the context.

**Statistics from the UNESCO's institute for Statistics (UIS)** shows that the last years there have been an enormous growth in educational opportunities for boys and girls throughout the world. But despite all the efforts that were made, gender inequality is still a persistent problem. Upcoming UNESCO Education For All Global Monitoring Report (Which will be released in January 2014) shows that:

- If all children enjoyed equal access to education, per capita income would increase by 23% over 40 years.
- If all women had a primary education, child marriages and child mortality could fall by a sixth and maternal deaths by two-thirds.
- In sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, nearly three million girls are married by age 15 - below the legal age of marriage in most countries. If all young women completed primary education, the number of child brides would be reduced by almost half a million. Completing secondary education would reduce that number by two million.
- In these regions, 3.4 million young women give birth by the age of 17. If all young women completed primary schooling, this would result in 340,000 fewer early births, and if they all completed secondary education the total would fall by two million.
- If all children, regardless of their background and circumstances, had equal access to education, productivity gains would boost economic growth. Over 40 years, per capita income would be 23 per cent higher in a country with equality in education.
- The devastating impact of malnutrition on children's lives is preventable with the help of education. If all women had secondary school, they would know the nutrients that children need, the hygiene rules that they should follow and they also would have a stronger voice in the home to ensure proper care. This change would save more than 12 million children from being stunted - a sign of early childhood malnutrition.

## Reading & Writing Foundation



The Reading & Writing Foundation (in Dutch: Stichting Lezen & Schrijven) is an initiative of H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands. The foundation was launched in 2004, and devotes attention to the issue of illiteracy among children, adolescents and adults in the Netherlands, in Europe and beyond.

The vision of the Reading & Writing Foundation is that literacy is a basic requirement for a healthy and sustainable society. Each individual has the right to acquire good literacy skills, in order to increase participation within society. Societal players like municipalities, social services and public libraries play a crucial role in literacy development to facilitate connectivity, learning, employment and community engagement.

In order to help illiterate adults in the Netherlands upgrading their literacy skills, the Reading & Writing Foundation intensively cooperates with certified volunteers and professional teachers in an innovative pilot called 'Language for Life'. The foundation therewith teaches illiterate adults in a close-to-home setting, based on knowledge and international success stories from Ireland (Learning for Life) and the United Kingdom (Skills for Life).

In a European context, Princess Laurentien chaired the EU High Level Expert Group on Literacy, which published its final report in September 2012: *Act now!* Following the launch of the report, the EU council conclusions on literacy development and the presentation of the report in European Parliament, the Reading & Writing Foundation now investigates the possibilities for further follow-up, with among others its European partners and the European Commission.

Since 2009, Princess Laurentien has been UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development. In an international context, as the world progresses towards universal access to schooling, attention is focusing more and more towards learning and skills, inside and outside the school. Among others UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the Reading & Writing Foundation are now seeking suitable partners to kickstart initiatives; addressing issues of both supply and demand of reading materials as well as applying solutions to learning in both digital and printed form. All to make sure that reading and writing are used, mastered and liked by children and adults worldwide.

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