

## PRESS RELEASE

### Thirty-five UNICEF-Constructed Schools Inaugurated in Flood-Affected Districts of Southern Punjab

**Islamabad, January 4, 2012** – The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and partners today welcomed the opening of 35 new schools in Muzaffargah, Rajanpur and Rahimyar Khan in Southern Punjab, three districts hit by the 2010 monsoon floods. These schools have been constructed by the children’s agency at locations where schools were damaged or completely destroyed by the floods that devastated Pakistan from July to September 2010.

More than 4,500 children are now attending these schools which have been handed over to the Punjab Education Department.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has contributed US\$1.2 million for the construction of 24 schools and the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has contributed an additional US\$250,000 for the construction of seven schools. Funds for four schools have been provided by the governments of Italy, Hungary and Sweden.

The Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Hugo G. Scheltema, inaugurated 24 schools constructed with Dutch funding at a ceremony held recently, in the Peer Dargai Shah Government Primary School in Muzaffargarh district.

Speaking on the occasion, the Mr. Scheltema said, “There is no doubt that education is the key to progress for any nation. I feel delighted to see these beautiful schools that UNICEF has built to help the children in the flood-affected districts of Punjab. Increased enrollment after floods and the keenness of parents to send their children to school makes it very clear that there is need for more schools and more teachers. I am sure that UNICEF will manage to build more schools and the Punjab Education Department will provide more teachers to ensure that every child is educated.”

After the devastating floods of 2010, UNICEF initiated a schools reconstruction programme in the worst affected districts of southern Punjab – as well as other parts of the country – since most of the government school buildings were either damaged or completely destroyed. In order to bring children back to school and to prevent the loss of a full academic year, Temporary Learning Centres were established by UNICEF in camps and communities. With time, prefabricated school structures with all amenities have replaced these temporary learning centres. These new schools signify a new method of teaching and learning – the Child Friendly Schooling approach.

“The Child Friendly Schooling approach is interactive and makes learning fun for children. It has elements of health and hygiene through provision of safe drinking water and improved sanitation, Early Childhood and Development for preparing young children for school, playground and equipment for healthy physical activities, psychosocial support for rehabilitation of trauma-affected children, involvement of parents and community, and many other unique features that makes education attractive,” said Karen Allen, UNICEF Deputy Representative.

“Dutch funding has helped us achieve the objective of providing quality education to children who had suffered due to floods. This is an investment that not only fulfills their basic rights, but also contributes to the future of Pakistan. I urge all parents, teachers and community members to take ownership of these schools and ensure that every child of school going age is in school, especially girls”, she added.

#### About UNICEF

*UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. In Pakistan, it works with the government, NGOs and other partners to support child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. It has provided vital relief and reconstruction support to help individuals rebuild their lives after emergencies, such as the 2010 monsoon floods and the October 2005 earthquake. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.*

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