

## School for all

**Theme:** literacy and education

**Country focus:** Angola and Egypt

**Aim:** to understand why education and literacy are so important; to empathise with other young people who have struggled to go to school; to take action to help young people around the world access education.

**Materials/preparation:**

- a medicine box – remove enclosed instructions beforehand and replace with a sheet of paper with illegible scribbles
- a 'map' you have drawn – this should be random patterns on a piece of paper
- some small paper discs with a question mark drawn on them.

### Assembly presentation

**1. Welcome the students.** Show the first introductory slide on the *School for all* PowerPoint presentation. Ask them to greet and shake hands with the person sitting to the left of them, and then to shake hands with the person on the right. Ask them to share with their neighbours their favourite thing about school. Take a few suggestions – many will revolve around friendship. Acknowledge that friendship and socialising are a hugely important aspect of school life.

**2. Ask for five volunteers to come up to the front.** Give one a box of medicine. Tell them that they have to give this essential medicine to their four friends, but that if they don't administer it properly it could kill them, so they must follow the instructions on the box. They will find that they can't read these instructions, so tell them that they must take their friends to the doctor, following the instructions on the 'map' you give them. They will not be able to read this either. Tell them that they could get a bus to the local hospital, but for this they will need to be able to work out if they have enough money for the bus fare. Hand the volunteers the paper discs and ask them to add them up. They will not be able to do this either.

Ask them how it feels to not be able to do these things. Is it frustrating? Annoying? Frightening? Can they imagine how difficult life might be if they hadn't been able to learn to read, write and deal with numbers?

**3. Explain that school is important for many reasons.** It provides opportunities to make friends, to develop essential skills and knowledge that will help us in all aspects of our lives, and it also gives us a chance to develop our interests and nurture our talents in preparation for work and our future life.

*Unfortunately, the education that we all take for granted in this country is denied to millions of children – there are 75 million children around the world who do not/cannot go to school. Young people miss out on school for all sorts of reasons: in many countries, parents have to pay to send their children to school and might not be able to afford it; sometimes war and conflict prevent children attending school; and in some cases there might be no education opportunities available.*

**4. Show slide 2 on the PowerPoint presentation.** Explain that students are going to meet a boy from Angola. Angola was at war for many years – first for independence (1961-74) and then civil war (1975-2002). During that time 'normal' life was put on hold because many people had to flee from their homes and took refuge in the forests or lived in refugee camps.

**5. Show slide 3 on the PowerPoint presentation.** *Eduardo Chiwila, 12, feels very lucky to be in school. During the conflict he couldn't go to school because he had to hide in the forest with his family. 'We were always running and trying to escape from the war,' he explains. 'We didn't have any food, shelter, blankets, tents – nothing. We lived like that for one or two years and soldiers would chase us. One time we hid in the river to escape. I was so happy when the war finished because we could leave the forest.'*

*Christian Aid is an international development agency that is working with the people of Angola to help them rebuild their lives. Its partner organisation the Angolan Congregational Church (IECA) is helping communities to rebuild schools. In this picture, Eduardo is helping carry some of the materials needed for his school.*

He says, 'The first time I came to school was when we moved to this village. We used to meet outdoors under a tree. The sun made my eyes hurt and when it rained we either ran home or waited under the branches for it to stop. It's not very good when you and all your notebooks get wet. I prefer to study inside. All the people in my village worked together and we built a school because we really needed a roof and some shade. I was proud to get involved with building my school.'

**6. Show slide 4 on the PowerPoint presentation.**

Eduardo says: 'I hope to continue with my studies and eventually go to the secondary school in Mavinga [a nearby town]. When I finish school I'd like to be a teacher or a driver. Ask students how they think Eduardo must feel now he can go to school? What do they think of his efforts to overcome all the setbacks to his education?'

**7. Show slide 5 on the PowerPoint presentation.**

Explain that students are going to meet a girl from Egypt.

**8. Show slide 6 on the PowerPoint.**

This is Sheyma Ali Mohammed. She is 13 and, like Eduardo, she is determined to let nothing stand in the way of her education. When Sheyma was born, her parents (who cannot read or write) didn't know they had to register her birth. Then she was not allowed to attend state school as she had no birth certificate.

Christian Aid partner organisation Better Life runs literacy classes for young people who have missed out on schooling. Unlike state schools, these classes do not require people to have a birth certificate.

Sheyma fought hard to convince her parents to let her attend literacy classes. 'I decided I really wanted to attend the literacy classes, so I cried and cried until my parents allowed me to attend,' she explains.

Sheyma strongly feels that girls should be educated and not have men make all the decisions for them: 'I wanted to be educated, so I could read books, advertisements, magazines.' She says that getting an education is 'the happiest thing that has happened to me... My speech is stronger, I have opinions in the classroom, I can share things, I can understand the news on TV and what people are talking about. When I started learning to read I wanted to fly like a bird because I was so happy. I now want to be a teacher when I grow up, so I can teach all those who can't read or write, and who were like me in the beginning.'

Sheyma and Eduardo have shown great determination in their pursuit of education, understanding that it will provide them with choices and opportunities in the future. But for millions of children around the world who are not in school, such choices are a distant dream.

**7. In the year 2000, the United Nations agreed a list of goals, known as the millennium development goals, that aim to alleviate poverty and inequality in the 21st century.** One of these goals was to ensure that every child in the world could attend primary school by 2015. Although work has been done, it is estimated that at the current rate of progress 40 million children will still be out of school in 2015. The Send My Friend to School campaign, which is supported by charities such as Christian Aid, wants world leaders to take further action so that we can keep the promise to get every child into school.

[optional] Our school has been/will be getting involved with the Send My Friend to School campaign, and there will be lots of opportunities for you to tell world leaders, such as the UK prime minister, why you think that young people everywhere should have the right to education.

## Reflection

We have thought today about how difficult life must be if you are denied a basic education, and have been impressed by the stories of Eduardo in Angola and Sheyma in Egypt, who have done everything they can to pursue their studies. Let us be thankful for all the opportunities we have had to gain knowledge, skills and friendship in school, and let's determine to make the most of future opportunities. We will try to communicate how important education is through our words and actions, and by asking leaders and decision-makers to fulfil their commitment to provide universal primary education to all children across the world.

## Prayer

Dear God

Help us to get the most out of every day we spend in school. Let us make the most of this opportunity to learn and grow together, and let us pray for the 75 million children around the world who are not in school today.

Amen.

## Action

If your pupils have been inspired by this assembly, here are some suggestions to develop these ideas further:

- order the Send My Friend schools pack from [www.sendmyfriend.org](http://www.sendmyfriend.org)
- exercise citizenship skills by encouraging students to [contact their MP](#) and write to the prime minister to explain why education is so important for children around the world
- organise a 'Big Read' event in your school on or around 22 April
- you could raise money to help Christian Aid support children such as Eduardo and Sheyma: £13 / €13.87 would pay for a pair of school shoes for a child in Zambia, £45 / €48 would pay a teacher's salary for a month in India, and £430 / €458 would pay for a month's treatment for a child in a malnutrition ward in Guatemala. For more information see [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)

[www.christianaid.org.uk/learn](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/learn)

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