

Appleseed This Week

Mexico Appleseed Forms Partnership With UNICEF

August 22, 2008 - This year Mexico Appleseed and UNICEF will collaborate to research and advocate for the right of all children to identity - the right to civil registration of their name and nationality.

In the coming months Mexico Appleseed will be working with a team of 50 pro bono attorneys from General Electric, using the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child as a basis to advocate for policy change that will provide a universally accessible process of civil registration, including clauses on affordability and non-discriminatory practices.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child in the world has the right to an identity. However, an estimated one in six children in Mexico and throughout Latin America is never registered with the civil registry, and therefore cannot access public benefits such as healthcare, education and targeted welfare programs. Additionally, these individuals are at a higher risk to fall victim to illegal adoption and human trafficking.

According to UNICEF, there are political, economic, social and cultural barriers to making the right of registration universal -- and the most important barrier will be addressed by administrative and legislative reform -- Appleseed's niche.

"Often the laws governing the right to identity and the civil registry do not provide free birth registration, but set fees for registration and 'extra-official' fees, as well as fines for late registration," said Maru Cortazar, executive director of Mexico Appleseed. "This discourages families from registering their children, particularly the most marginalized populations in Mexico, leaving unregistered children even more vulnerable."

Fee scales could be adjusted to the economic status of families, eliminating fees for the poorest sectors and maintaining current fees for families who can afford them and for whom payment of registration fees is not a barrier.

Mexico, like many countries, does not yet have specific laws governing the civil registry and issues related to registration that are generally included in the civil code or other laws related to the family, personal identification, and the national statistical system. By correcting the barriers to registration, Appleseed's work will benefit poor and marginalized population by ensuring the opportunity to have an identity of public record from the time of birth, and in turn facilitate their inclusion in public benefit programs, job security, personal safety and education.

For more information on Appleseed, visit www.appleseednetwork.org. To support the work of Appleseed, donate [here](#).

Appleseed, a non-partisan and non-profit organization, is a network of public interest law Centers working to identify and address injustices in their communities. Appleseed works to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy expertise, addressing root causes and producing practical solutions. As one of the nation's largest legal pro bono networks, Appleseed Centers work both independently and collectively, bringing their own experiences to create local solutions that are nationally relevant. We connect the top private practice lawyers, corporate counsel, law schools, civic leaders, and other professionals to tackle problems locally, at their root cause.