

## **A defender of Afghan women's right to education – Safia Ama Jan (1941-2006).**

Every person has a right to education. And yet there are at least 77 million children worldwide who have never set foot in school and more than 780 million adults who are illiterate. “Education is a human right”. This is the theme of Global Action Week 2007. Every year, this campaign draws attention to the goals of Education for All (EFA) adopted in April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal.

Within this context, UNESCO presents thirty colour photographs with explanatory texts, to raise awareness with respect to a particularly serious problem – targeted attacks against teachers and educational staff in general.

On 25 September 2006, Afghan women's rights defender and leading advocate of education for girls, Safia Ama Jan, was shot and killed outside her home in Kandahar. The Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, vigorously condemned this murder: “Safia Ama Jan was assassinated because of her defence of women's rights and her fierce determination to provide education for the girls of Afghanistan”.

The Director-General added: “This intolerable act must be condemned as a crime against the people of Afghanistan – the parents, the children, and all those working to rebuild this great country and consolidate its future. Every effort must be made to bring the perpetrators of this cowardly attack to justice. Safia Ama Jan, a former teacher, risked her life during the reign of the Taliban by running an underground school for girls from her home. As the Director of Women's Affairs in Kandahar Province, she worked tirelessly to get all Afghan girls back into school and to provide professional and vocational training for women”.

This exhibit attempts to reflect Safia Ama Jan's impact on the teachers and students who knew her.

When he condemned Safia Ama Jan's murder, UNESCO's Director General announced that UNESCO would conduct a study on violence against education personnel. This study, devoted to the memory of Safia Ama Jan, aims at better understanding the scope of this violence, at identifying areas where educationalists are most at risk and at examining what can be done to improve their safety and security. It will be launched on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2007 during a press conference at UNESCO.