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Shakira: Education Is Not a Luxury, It's a Human Right

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“If we invest in a child from its earliest years, we’re investing in his or her development and future success, not only in school but later in life,” the Colombian singer said in an interview with EFE.

Shakira, a Unicef goodwill ambassador, visited United Nations headquarters Tuesday to call on governments and the private sector to pay more attention to the mental development of children during the very first stage of their lives.

The latest research shows that inadequate nutrition, a lack of stimuli and traumatic experiences have negative repercussions on brain development during those first years and have undeniable effects on adult life.

For that reason, Unicef wants the world to change the way it looks at early childhood development and multiply the investments in that stage of life.

“It’s a moral subject. From a human point of view, we should give the same chance to all children,” Shakira said, adding that education is key for eliminating poverty, inequality, and consequently the violence that results from a lack of opportunity.

“Education is not a luxury, it’s a human right. A right to be human from the cradle that no one can take away from us. We must demand it,” she said.

Shakira, who has worked for years in Colombia in education and in promoting early education,

acknowledged that since becoming a mother her interest in the matter has gone through the roof.

“If I was passionate about the subject before, I’m a lot more so now. I have the principal of Milan’s (her eldest son’s) school on my WhatsApp. So every day I ask her a question or I call her or write her and I make suggestions, like I give her ideas about how I think we can do better based on my experience,” she said.

“Really, I’m such a bore on the subject of education, it’s just that I’ve seen how beautiful it is to see little ones of that age, so tiny, how they begin to absorb everything with such amazing speed,” she said.

The singer recalled that in the first months of life the brain forms hundreds of neuronal connections every second, which means there is “a very small window of time” to aid a baby’s cerebral development.

“Now that I had a baby boy seven months ago, for me this information, from the viewpoint of neuroscience, is really revolutionary,” said Shakira, who had her second child, Sasha, in January.

The artist will perform next Friday for the world’s heads of state and government at the inauguration of the United Nations summit in New York aimed at establishing a strategy to substitute the Millennium Goals.

Shakira will sing for the occasion John Lennon’s “Imagine,” of which she vocalized a preview Tuesday during a press conference at UN headquarters.

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