



# ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW

## GLOBAL PREPARATORY MEETING

28 April 2011, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations, New York

### ISSUES NOTE

#### Considerations for increased access and enhanced quality

Chair	<b>H.E. Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe</b> , President of ECOSOC and Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations
Panelists	<b>Mr. Zhou Mansheng</b> , Deputy Director-General, National Centre for Education Development and Research, China <b>Ms. Maria do Pilar Lacerda</b> , National Basic Education Secretary, Ministry of Education, Brazil <b>Mr. Bobby Soobrayan</b> , Director-General, Basic Education, Ministry of Education, South Africa <b>Dr. Ellen Karoline Henriksen</b> , Associate Professor, University of Oslo <b>Ms. Kara Nichols</b> , Executive Director, Connect To Learn

### BACKGROUND

The 2011 ECOSOC Global Preparatory Meeting (GPM) creates an opportunity for discussions of cutting-edge innovation and action to increase equitable access to education for children. Initiatives will be explored from governments, private sector and social entrepreneurs in civil society and academia. These initiatives have enabled providers to enhance education quality, and empowered students and their communities to better pursue their education goals.

This GPM addresses some of the key issues affecting universal basic education, presenting an opportunity for Member States to discuss concerns, ideas and solutions from developing and developed countries and create new opportunities to engage and commit to reaching MDG 2. The dialogue will focus on different approaches and experiences that have been effective at national and sub-national levels in pursuit of *education for all* and MDG 2. Panelists will provide context, enabling factors and constraints, as well as approaches that have been successful, and will suggest ways in which those approaches can be adapted and adopted elsewhere. The implications for policies and strategies will be discussed, and recommendations for consideration at the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) meeting will be tabled.

## OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The main objective of the GPM will be to highlight common global challenges and solutions in providing equitable access to education of good quality, and to raise awareness about existing successful and innovative approaches to achieving MDG 2. The intended outcomes are:

- shared understanding of, and appreciation for, the global, common challenges and barriers to education for all;
- shared understanding of, and appreciation for, the utility of existing and innovative approaches to education for all;
- enhanced interaction among Member States for continued exchange of information and experiences in pursuing MDG 2, leading up to the AMR; and
- recommendations for possible inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted at the conclusion of the high-level segment.

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

In many developing countries, provision of education of good quality is very uneven. Access and quality vary by location, and among groups with differing incomes and demographic backgrounds. In some countries, access to the most basic education services is limited and, according to the 2011 Global Monitoring Report, some 67.5 million children of school age, 53 per cent of whom are girls, do not go to school. Twenty-eight million of these children live in countries affected by conflict, and among the least developed countries (LDCs), three have net enrolment rates below 50 per cent and only 17 have rates above 80 per cent. If current trends continue, an estimated 56 million children will still be out of school in 2015.

Many children who enroll in school drop out before completing the primary cycle, unprepared for life or livelihood, and without the foundation for life-long learning. For those who remain in school, in many instances, the quality of education is not good enough for them to develop much needed reading, writing and numerical skills, much less other areas, such as social studies, science and the arts.

## ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES

Solutions to the challenges facing education are grounded in national experiences. As part of the preparation for the AMR, the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), along with UNESCO, UNICEF and other partners have held a series of events and consultations designed to identify innovative ideas, approaches and experiences for Member States' consideration. The GPM will examine some of these, in order to inform the discussion through a reporting back on the outcome of those events and consultations.

### *Information, communication and computer technologies (ICTs)*

ICTs have become integral to education, and have enormous potential for increasing access, enhancing quality and reaching marginalized and excluded groups. The GPM will reflect on feedback from two e-discussions: the first discussion, mediated on Facebook, focused on "Building a future for today's youth"; the second discussion, mediated via the internet/email, focused on "Closing the gap", with sub-themes on quality, access and



innovation. Using social networking media is an innovative approach and it will be useful to examine the reach and impact of this medium. And, finally, the panel discussions will include a presentation on the use of broadband connectivity for empowering girls through secondary education.

### **Mathematics and science education for girls**

Globally, there is a large gender imbalance in the pursuit of science and mathematics education. This imbalance is evident at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and in developing and developed countries. Based on research in Norway, some of the experiences, priorities and attitudes that make many girls shun science will be examined, and suggestions as to how girls can be attracted into science and mathematics education will be discussed.

### **Incentives and rewards for action**

Experience and research indicate that progress is sustainable and sustained only when commitment and action are matched at all levels of government – local, regional and national – and by individuals and families. One example to be explored is the experience in the semi-arid region of Brazil, where hundreds of local municipalities invest their time and resources in social mobilization, monitoring and evaluation in pursuit of the MDGs in a national competition for the “Municipal Seal of Approval”, with a view to understanding how to mobilize commitment and action at local levels. Another is the use of cash transfers to attract and retain participation in education and other social services. The experience of such a programme in South Africa will be presented for discussion.

### **Systems, size and scale**

Many countries are not on track to meet MDG 2 and the other internationally agreed education goals. This is not just a matter of the level of financial investment, but the lack of robust systems that are responsive to specific contexts and prepared to withstand shocks/crises. In several countries, large child populations and large numbers of out-of-school children present enormous challenges in terms of reach, compounded by sub-par quality and limited number of years in school. The GPM examines lessons learned from China's experience in setting up systems that achieve both size and scale – what works, what doesn't and why, the legislative, policy, planning, financial, administrative and public education/social mobilization frameworks in place, and the ramifications of decentralization –deconcentration, devolution and delegation – in two/three-tiered government systems.