



Beyond MDG 2 – what's next?

Enhancing the quality of
education to achieve
gender equality and
development

Swedish side event CSW 55

- What are the key factors that enhance quality in education and promote gender equality and development?
- What actions should various stakeholders (governments, NGOs, UN bodies and other actors) take in order to achieve quality education for all, including a gender equality perspective?

Opening speech

Swedish Minister for Gender Equality, Deputy Minister for Education, **Ms Nyamko Sabuni**

Panel discussion

- **Ms Carol Bellamy**, Chair of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative
- **Ms Johanna Fogelström**, Head of Cabinet, The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
- **Ms Susan Durston**, Global Chief of Education, UNICEF
- **Mr Vernor Munôz**, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education 2004–2010

Moderator **Ms Åsa Regnér**, Secretary General, The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU)

Date and venue: 13.15–14.30, 22 February 2011, Conference Room B in the new part of the UN building (North Lawn Building)

Background

There is plenty of clear evidence that access to education leads to better health and reduced poverty. This is especially clear if one adopts a gender equality perspective. Educated women are less likely to die in childbirth, are less susceptible to disease, have children later and are better placed to get a paid job and therefore their own income.

But to achieve improved health and reduced poverty, it is not enough that all children receive education; the quality of this education is crucial. It is also important to note that schools play a central role in imparting not only knowledge and facts, but also values such as gender equality, human rights and democratic culture. Schools must also be a safe and secure place, where children's health and well-being is protected and promoted.

At the UN High-Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals last autumn, several countries reported that they had undertaken significant efforts to increase girls' access to basic education, which is positive. At the same time, a number of alarming reports show that the education systems in several countries have major shortcomings when it comes to quality.

Key factors that have a negative impact on the quality of education are poverty, gender inequality and living in rural areas. Research shows that a broad approach is necessary to tackle problems related to these factors, for example by addressing the needs of children with varying backgrounds and tackling the barriers preventing girls from attending school. These barriers may include teenage pregnancy, early marriage and sexual violence. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education has highlighted in particular the importance of sexuality education to promote gender equality and as a way of dealing with these problems.

Sexuality education from a gender equality perspective creates opportunities for girls and boys to make active choices about starting a family and fighting discrimination and gender-stereotyped roles. Knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and rights contributes to greater gender equality, reduced poverty and less violence against women.

More information

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