Parallel session:
Equity –reaching the most marginalised?

June 26 2014, 2h45 pm, Aquarium (The Egg, Brussels)

Co-organised by:
Burkina Faso Ministry of National Education and Literacy
Republic of Niger Ministry of Primary Education, Literacy, Promotion of National Languages and Civic Education
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Objectives of the session

The international community is unanimous that equity will be one of the major themes of the future goal of education in the post-2015 agenda. However, in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, children and young people excluded from formal schooling make up half of their age group. In the context of sustainable development and the right to education, this is a significant number of children and young people who should not slip through the cracks.
This session aims to raise awareness of this reality and to discuss ways of providing a (second) chance to these children and young people, enabling them to acquire basic skills for their life. Why does a large number of children and young people still not have access to gaining skills and knowledge? What challenges do we face in terms of quality and funding? What are the best practices and existing innovations? Who bears responsibility (the state, civil society, the international community)? The second part of the session will be devoted to the topic of nomadic education – nomads being a group largely excluded from the right to education– and to educational programmes and approaches for their benefit.
A high-level panel – including ministers of education, development agencies, civil society and the private sector – will join the audience in discussing the challenges and possible solutions for West Africa, drawing on comparisons with experiences from around the world.

Introduction to the topic

Education is a key driver and the basis for sustainable development and inclusive economic growth. In recent decades, the international community has made progress in terms of access to schools, but not all of its plans have been achieved and the objectives for quality and equity remain below par. This session will focus specifically on the issue of children and young people excluded from the education system. In many countries, these children and youth are not minority groups, but affect all segments of the population:
In sub-Saharan Africa almost 30 million children are excluded from primary school. More than 56 million young people aged 15-24 years have not completed primary school and need alternatives to the basic training that will lead to job opportunities and social inclusion. They represent a third of all young people living in the region, where the number of out-of-school youth actually tends to increase.
In the case of **Burkina Faso**, 4 in 10 children do not have access to primary school or do not complete it. After primary school, out of every 100 children less than 22 reach the last year of post-primary education. The youth literacy rate is 39%.[1]
Niger is experiencing rapid demographic growth with more than 50% of its population under 15 years of age. School completion rates have gone up from 21% in 2001 to 55.8% in 2012 – one of the fastest in the world – demonstrating the enormous progress Niger has made in school access. However, major disparities between the sexes, urban and rural areas, and in terms of socio-economic level, continue. Around 30% of children are not in school and a third of those who enter primary school do not complete it.
The education policies of the two countries illustrated here include non-formal education. Both countries are making great efforts to reach excluded populations such as through the offer of 'second chance provision', literacy classes and pathways into the formal education sector. Burkina Faso, for

[1] MENA

example, created in 2002 the National Fund for Literacy and Non-Formal Education (FONAENF) which aims to finance literacy providers.
However, the issue of equity and the need to integrate children and young people who are excluded or out-of-school into the education system is global and not limited to these regions. In **South and West Asia** where much progress has been made, a quarter of children are not in school and the completion rates from last year remain low in many countries. In 2007, 30 million young people were out of school, or 28% of young people of secondary school age.[2]
So not only do we have the **question of equity and justice, but also a question of rights**, whereby all international declarations and national laws concur in emphasising the need to educate all young people up to 12, 14 or even 16 years of age. Continuing illiteracy among young people also hampers social and economic development. Finally, the lack of equity puts pressure on social cohesion, insofar as the presence of a large number of young people without qualifications or job prospects may lead to social conflict. **Youth literacy and alternative programmes to develop skills** - known as non-formal education - lay the foundations of basic learning and ensure continuity. For many who have been excluded from the education system, including out-of-school children who will never go (back) to school, such programmes are often the first and only opportunity for them to gain access. Without sufficient recognition of these alternative programmes and adequate funding, these young people who have been left behind will continue to be denied the right to a quality education. Educational alternatives therefore play a crucial role and should be supported.

The second topic in this session is nomadic education: In West, Central and East Africa pastoralists frequently practice cross-border transhumance with their cattle and members of their families. This mobility severely penalises their ability to access to the education system. The unsuitability of the formal education systems in place – both in view of the sedentary organisation as well as the content that is taught – explains the degree of reluctance among pastoralist groups via-à-vis the school system. In Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Benin and Chad, pastoralists are an important part of society. They contribute significantly to the local, national and sub-regional economy, with the livestock sector accounting for 10 to 20% of GDP depending on the country. So, what provisions have been put in place by governments and their partners to ensure the right of these peoples to education, to an education suited to their way of life and culture?

Connection with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

The GPE's mission is "to galvanise and coordinate a global effort to deliver a good quality education to all children[3], girls and boys, prioritising the poorest and most vulnerable". In its strategic objectives, the organisation also specifies that "resources are focused on the most marginalised children...". Support for education policies and programmes that promote a variety of educational opportunities - both formal and non-formal - with a view to lifelong learning seems, therefore, to be inevitable.

Format

Panel discussion with high-level speakers and discussion with the audience in two parts:

1. How can we reach children and young people excluded from the system? Challenges, solutions and funding.
2. What specific educational opportunities do pastoralists need? Demand for learning opportunities and educational offers, approaches and experiences.

Speakers

Koumba Boly/Barry, Minister of National Education and Literacy, Burkina Faso
Ali Mariama Elhadji Ibrahim, Minister of Primary Education, Literacy, Promotion of National Languages and Civic Education, Republic of Niger
Hansjürg Ambühl, Head of West Africa and Education Department, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
David Archer, Head programme development ActionAid International
Hugh McLean, Director Education Support Program, Open Society Foundations

Moderation

Nicole Gantenbein, SDC (nicole.gantenbein@eda.admin.ch)

[2] EPT RMS 2010
[3] The term "child" refers to the UN definition which is up to 18 years of age.