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Statement submitted by Women's Board Educational Cooperation Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2011/100.



Statement*

Although other internationally agreed goals and commitments may have passed unnoticed by civil society, the Millennium Development Goals, agreed in 2000, are by now known by a good number of the citizens of the world.

Two out of the eight Goals refer to education: one is Goal 2 (“Achieve universal primary education”), concretized in its target of ensuring that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The other is Goal 4 (“Promote gender equality and empower women”), followed by its target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

While strides have been taken to achieve the Goals, with considerable progress being recorded in Asia (about 93 per cent primary enrolment ratio), the situation in sub-Saharan Africa continues to lag (73.6 per cent primary enrolment ratio). A striking disparity can be seen in the percentage of females aged 25 years and older, who have had secondary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is 23.9 per cent as opposed to the corresponding percentage of males which is 38.1 per cent (Human Development Report 2010). Foreign aid is not enough for the availability of quality education. The principal challenge to achievement of the Goals across the continent seems to be the leadership’s commitment to addressing the issues at hand.

We suggest, first of all, that Governments be forced to take ownership for achieving these Goals. It should not be enough for primary education to be free; rather, what quality of education is available? What efforts are being made to train and remunerate teachers adequately? International accountability should be asked from Governments that do not show results.

Recommendations

1. It should be imperative for Governments to launch nationwide awareness campaigns advocating for parents to send their children (with emphasis on the girl child) to school.
2. Governments should make it punishable by law — and ensure that the law is enforced — for minors to be seen hawking on the streets within school hours (7 a.m. to 4 p.m.).
3. Private sector participation should be encouraged with concessions and tax breaks. Companies should be invited to adopt a specific need in schools and to offer scholarships as rewards/incentives for children of school-going age.
4. Secondary schools should be encouraged to enter into “Big Brother” relationships with primary schools. Secondary school students should be able to earn credits by volunteering to mentor or tutor pupils from primary schools.

Insofar as education is concerned, the onus rests on Governments in power to provide the initial momentum for achieving these goals. A seriously committed leadership can channel and focus the efforts of individuals, private entities and non-governmental organizations into making sure that education is available to every boy and girl in the world.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.