

[Facilitator's Note: Welcome to the 5th Annual ECOSOC AMR E-Discussion on Education: Closing the Gap. The second phase focused on Access to Education. The moderator's message can be found [here](#) and background information can be found at the [2011 AMR E-discussion website](#). This is the final live online contribution to the first phase of the AMR E-discussion on Education. We want to thank all the contributors for their thoughtful and informative feedback. All further contributions will be included in the final digest and summary report of the e-discussion. Thank you]

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspectives on the issues affecting early childhood and girls' education I raised in my opening message. While our focus was access, concerns about quality surfaced – as well they should, since we are striving not just to 'get children to school' but to ensure that they participate fully and acquire the knowledge and skills needed for life, life-long learning and livelihood.

As I indicated last week, 68 million children are still excluded from school, half of them girls. These children have a right to education, and every effort must be made to provide them access to education of good quality.

In light of this, I want to underscore three key points you raised in our discussion:

- First, there are many useful approaches that you shared that can be adapted and adopted to respond to varying country contexts. For this to happen, we need to continue to evaluate what works, where and why/why not and share experiences. This forum has been particularly useful in this regard.
- Second, progress is being made although the pace is slow and still limited in scale. It is not enough for some children to have access to education – all children should have access, and from an equity perspective, special efforts must be deployed for those who are currently excluded from education, particularly children facing multiple deprivations. Overall, more strategic investment in education is needed and the next phase of the discussion will, I am sure, speak to the role of innovation, including information and communication technologies, in addressing issues of adaptation and adoption of successful approaches, and doing so at scale.
- Third, the fact that we know what the policy solutions are, that they are often well articulated on paper, suggests that the challenges lie in implementation, monitoring and evaluation. If this is so, then I want to suggest, and several of you have implicitly made the point, that a systems approach is very much needed for us to achieve education for all. Evidence of this is in the success that we see, though limited in size and scale, in those approaches that take a longer-term view and are not only focused on immediate delivery of services.

As I close this phase and hand over to Nicholas Burnett, let me say what you already know: as important as this discussion has been as a forum to exchange ideas, we are virtually of the same mind. To make a difference, therefore, let us continue the conversation within our own circles – with policy, thought, religious and traditional leaders, with corporate executives and sports heroes and celebrities, with the media and our own inner circle of family and friends – raising awareness of the issues and reshaping the policy agenda.

Let us continue to share.

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