PARTNERSHIP CLINIC
BREAKING BARRIERS: INNOVATIVE
PARTNERSHIPS CREATING EXPONENTIAL
CHANGE IN ACCESS TO QUALITY LEARNING

Wednesday, 24 April 2013
United Nations Headquarters, New York
3:00-5:00 pm

1. Background

For decades, innovations have enabled sustainable solutions to challenges in child survival and development and have facilitated major improvements in children's lives and well-being. For example, in the 1950s, the first midwifery kit was developed to help women in developing countries give birth in safer conditions; in the 1960s, the India Mark II was piloted as the first affordable water pump; in the 1970s, oral rehydration salts were introduced as the most cost-effective intervention to treat life-threatening diarrheal dehydration; in the 1990s, UNICEF School-in-a-Box kits were deployed to help Rwandan children get back to school after the genocide. Recently, Project Mwana has more than halved the turnaround time for delivering early infant HIV diagnosis results to rural and underserved communities in Zambia and Malawi through Rapid SMS.

Addressing the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ensuring that child rights and well-being remain a priority in the post-2015 global development agenda will require a different approach.

- An approach centered on innovation as a means to dismantling barriers and bottlenecks that limit the possibility for millions of children to reach their full human potential and impede access to information, services and systems necessary to realize the rights of all children, especially the most marginalized and excluded.

- An approach that can allow for a) scaling-up existing innovations, b) enhancing our ability to uptake and replicate successful pilots c) facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration among innovators in the north and south, d) creating an environment that fosters exploration and problem-solving and, e) developing the right partnerships and mechanisms for global, regional and national collaboration.

Drawing on recent experience in testing innovation processes and partnerships, UNICEF and partners are now exploring how technology and innovative approaches can increase access to quality education and learning. To do so, it is essential to pilot and scale up innovations that encourage a move away from rote learning to interactive teaching and learning that ensure all children develop basic literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and life skills.

The Government of Denmark and UNICEF will host an interactive discussion on "Breaking barriers: Innovative partnerships creating exponential change in access to quality learning" with the aim of bringing together government representatives, as well as leaders from the private sector, civil society and others to

explore how innovations can surmount the barriers for children and their families to fulfilling their rights to access to and quality learning.

2. The challenges in access to and quality learning

Learning ends generational cycles of poverty and disease and provides a foundation for sustainable development. It lays the foundation for equal opportunity, economic growth, employment creation and productivity. Despite progress, 61 million primary school age and 71 million children of lower secondary school age, mostly girls, remain out of school. [1] Moreover many children do not complete primary school or fail to learn. Estimates are that 120 million children do not reach the fourth year of primary school – and an additional 130 million in school are failing to acquire basic reading and numeracy skills. Across OECD countries, almost 1 in every 5 students does not reach a basic minimum level of skills. There is an increasing gap between education and the skills needed to thrive in communities and the job market.

People from war-torn zones, those suffering natural disasters, remote communities, and ethnic minorities face difficulties accessing relevant, quality education. 28 million of the 61 million out-of-school children reside in conflict-affected contexts.

Teacher quality also matters. In fact, it is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. Yet there is a shortage of 10.3 million teachers; more than half of them are needed in Sub-Saharan Africa. [2]

UNICEF and partners on the ground continue to support efforts to develop national capacities to improve quality learning for girls and boys everywhere, reduce gender and other disparities and discrimination in an effort to raise the percentage of children who stay in school and graduate with a quality education.

In a climate of dwindling resources, partnerships including a broad range of stakeholders are expanding outreach to the most vulnerable. The Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) are two innovative partnerships that are focused on improving access and quality education in a cost-effective manner and at scale, without compromising access to the most vulnerable.

The Government of Denmark and UNICEF are key partners in the GEFI launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2012 to give a global push towards achieving quality, relevant and transformative education. Similarly The Global Partnership for Education includes some 55 developing countries, donor governments, international organizations, the private sector, teachers, and civil society/NGO groups. GPE, which has become a model of international cooperation in education, supports partner countries in developing and implementing sound education plans.

3. The opportunities

Learning from years of experience on the ground, a successful formula has emerged for selecting, piloting, testing, evaluating and scaling innovations in a manner which translates ideas, technologies, and partnerships into products, services, and processes that bring about better, more equitable results for children. The formula includes:

   a. A comprehensive approach encompassing innovation in programmes, products, processes and partnerships;
   b. Underpinned by key principles: user-centered, addressing inequalities, built on experience, sustainable, open and inclusive and scalable;
   c. Allowing for failure and supporting learning from failure.

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[1] UIS http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/out-of-school-children.aspx

[2] UNESCO, 'The Global Demand for Primary Teachers- 2011 Update,' Information Sheet No. 6, Paris, 2011.

Considering the way technology is transforming global learning and education, it also has the potential to be applied in development contexts to improve learning, increase access and support teachers' professional development. To leverage these tech innovations UNICEF is proposing and testing five hypotheses:

a. Technology can increase access to learning especially for the most marginalized populations;
b. Innovations in teaching and learning can enhance the quality of the learning experience;
c. Social networks, communications leaps and technology can be used to incentivize adults/teachers, reduce their absenteeism and to   teach better;
d. Skills revolving around technology will be vital, hence the necessity for education to include the teaching of those skills; and
e. Real-time data streams are newly available and the ability to analyze them can further develop the capability to do programming and planning for innovative learning projects.

Over the next months, UNICEF will be working with national and global partners, education experts, innovators and venture capitalists to identify and test five or six innovations in the field, leading to a broader meeting on the subject in the last quarter of 2013.

4. The Partnership Clinic

a. Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The clinic will bring together a distinguished group of 60-80 representatives of Member States, corporate and non-corporate foundations, major private companies, philanthropic organizations, civil society organizations and academia in an informal and interactive setting to:

- Share experiences and identify potentially scalable interventions that help children have access to learning opportunities;
- Explore co-development to support the successful delivery of end-user driven and innovative services, products and systems;
- Discuss the barriers and solutions to scaling up innovations;
- Stimulate exchange and innovative thinking on new types of partnerships to enable scale.