



Commission on Population and Development Forty-fourth session

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Agenda item 6: General debate on the contribution of population and development issues to the theme of the annual ministerial review in 2011

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Mr. Chairperson

The topic of this year's Ministerial review allows us to draw attention to how important education is for reproductive health. The effect of women's education on maternal health is well documented. Women's education increases the use of family planning and of maternal-health services. Programs aimed at reducing maternal and infant mortality should be carried out in parallel with improved availability of education for women.

Continued attention must therefore be given to the girl child. This includes providing girls with safe learning environments free from violence, exploitation and discrimination. The benefits that education brings to a girl are many; educated girls are more likely to marry and have children when they are ready. The educated girl is less likely to suffer exploitation, and less likely to contract HIV/AIDS. She will have better economy, healthier children and contributes more to a stronger and thriving community.

Nonetheless, many girls are kept out of school, often to help care for siblings and manage household needs. For many families, the priority is educating boys. Adolescent girls who become pregnant are often forced to end their education either by their families or by school authorities.

(Check against delivery)

Access to family planning and other reproductive health services can help keep these girls in school who may otherwise be forced to leave.

Mr. Chairperson,

Young people's access to sexual and reproductive health information is essential to achieving the goals set out in Cairo 15 years ago;

Schools have an important role to play in providing sexuality education. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable because of their lack of information and access to relevant services in most countries. Comprehensive education on human sexuality, health, and on gender equality enables young people to deal positively with their sexuality. Lack of sexuality education, has the opposite effect. It makes young people more at risk to unwanted sexual behaviour that leads to sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

It is especially important that men and boys are informed and educated about their responsibilities. Norway encourages education that challenges traditional male roles and gives boys and men real opportunities to develop new roles, attitudes and behaviour based on respect and equality between the sexes.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is estimated that as many as 200 million children do not unleash their potential due to malnutrition, lack of proper care, stimulus and learning. Norway would therefore like to see a closer focus on the links between the MDG on education and the health related MDGs. We would like to see better integration of interventions in health, nutrition and education. We believe that so many children will benefit from the synergies between such interventions.

The last 10 years, there has been great progress in giving more children access to school. We have the possibility to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on education and we need to stay on track towards 2015.

But despite progress, millions of children are not given the opportunity to go to school. Norway is advocating for targeted policies to reach girls and marginalized groups- including children with disabilities. Furthermore, we must give more attention and resources to education in crisis and conflict situations.

We therefore urge governments and donors alike to invest in education also in times of financial difficulty. Education is the most cost effective investment for families and nations to prosper.

Thank you