

Australia, the Netherlands and United Kingdom
Sustainable Development Goals Open Working Group, 11th Session, May 2014
Constituency Statement

Education and life-long learning, health and population dynamics

We welcome the co-chairs latest draft; the draft provides a strong basis for standalone goals on both education and health, which our troika strongly supports. Delivering on these areas will be essential if we are to finish the job on the MDGs and achieve our overarching objective to eradicate extreme poverty. They are also universal issues, relevant in our countries as much as anywhere else.

Education is both an outcome in itself and a critical enabler of other goals. We should learn the lesson from the MDGs and focus on education outcomes as well as access. But this is not a criticism of the MDGs – it is thanks to the progress against the current MDG on education that highlighted the importance of focusing not just on quantity but also on quality of access.

Priority targets for an education goal from the co-chairs draft that we support:

- A) By 2030 ensure universal, free, equitable access to and completion of quality primary and secondary education for all girls and boys, leading to effective learning outcomes. We would, however, propose that these be split into two targets.
 - Ensure every girl and boy regardless of circumstance, completes primary education able to meet minimum learning standards;
 - Ensure every girl and boy, regardless of circumstance, completes lower secondary education to recognized and measurable learning outcomes.
- C) Increase the proportion of girls and boys, regardless of circumstance, who are able to access and complete pre-primary education and add “ready to learn”.
- D) Achieve an increase in youth and adult literacy, with particular attention to women and the most marginalized.
- We would propose expanding target E) ‘Increase the number of young and adult women and men with vocational training, technical, engineering, and scientific skills’ to ‘Increase the number of young and adult women and men with the skills, including upper-secondary, technical, vocational, and tertiary, that support employment and economic growth.’

In addition, we need to make sure we leave no one behind in education and ensure targets are met by all, including those from the lowest income quintile and other disadvantaged groups.

We consider it crucial that we reduce disparities in learning outcomes for persons with disabilities, either through target B in the co-chairs document, or by monitoring that targets are met by all, including persons with disabilities.

Building on the achievements in health under the current MDGs, our team strongly supports an outcome-focused health goal, for example “ensure healthy lives at all ages for all”. This should recognize that health is both an enabler and an outcome of eradicating poverty as well as sustainable development.

The co-chairs’ draft is a strong basis for this goal and we would like to highlight our support for the following targets:

- Decrease women's mortality ratio to less than x per 100,000 live births and reduce women's morbidity.
- End preventable neonatal, infant and under-5 deaths and reduce child morbidity.
- We would propose combining targets b and c into 'Reduce the burden of disease from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases and priority non-communicable diseases.'
- D) Ensure universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, with particular attention to the most marginalized.
- E) Ensure universal access to essential medicines, contraceptives and vaccines for all.
- Ensure effective immunization coverage of children and other vulnerable groups against priority diseases.
- F) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, **including modern methods of family planning.**

Under this final target, we wish to reiterate the importance of equitable and universal access to quality, comprehensive and integrated sexual and reproductive health services, information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and young people.

In addition, for both education and health, we need to make sure we leave no one behind. There are unacceptable inequalities in accessing education and health services and the most vulnerable and marginalized face social, legal and economic barriers that need to be removed. This requires a non-discriminatory approach that respects human rights of all. We need to and ensure targets are met by all, including the special circumstances of children with disabilities, those from the lowest income quintile and other disadvantaged groups.

Lastly, we would like express our appreciation for the recent session of the Commission on Population and Development which assessed the outcomes of the ICPD Global Review. This review highlights the importance of human rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights and addressing population dynamics, in achieving sustainable development. We would like to see these outcomes integrated in the post 2015 development agenda.