

Presentation by Anne Margareth Fagertun Stenhammer, State Secretary for International Development Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Presentation of the Soria Moria Declaration og International Policy Chapter 2.

“Education for all (EFA) – The Norwegian governments’ policy for reaching the Millennium goals”.

1. *The importance of education and Norway’s support to education for all*

- Education is a human right. Race, colour, sex, language, religion, political views, origin, property or other status must not preclude the right to education. It is particularly important that the right to education becomes a reality for discriminated and disadvantaged groups.
- Education is not only a fundamental human right, it is also a means by which people are able to fulfil their potential. Education is important for personal development of the individual and for a democratic development of society. Education is essential for people to be able to ask critical questions and make government accountable for its actions.
- Education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and lays the foundation for sustained economic growth. It is a key to attaining the Millennium Development Goals.
- The Norwegian governments “Soria Moria declaration” stresses that the objective of Norwegian development aid is to contribute to economic and sustainable development as well as the promotion of human rights. Education is fundamental in achieving these objectives. Norway’s white paper on development co-operation (St.meld.nr.35) indicates that we are committed to support good quality education with a rights-based perspective. Finally, Norway has an education strategy “Education job no. 1 “ which sets out how we will contribute to achieving the EFA goals and the education millennium goal on education.

- Norway supports education bilaterally in an increasing number of countries. This government is also increasing the support to the UN and especially UNICEF and UNESCOs education programmes.
- National ownership is one of the guiding principals of our development co-operation. For education reforms to succeed we believe it is essential that the government is in charge of developing and implementing education reforms. To reduce transaction costs to the government we seek to work in a harmonized fashion with other bilateral and multilateral donors. Civil society is also an important actor, but should, where possible, coordinate itself closely with the government. We must avoid creating unnecessary parallel structures.

2. *Holistic approach to education*

- Norway has a holistic approach to education sector development, We see the development of the whole education chain - from pre-primary education to higher education and research - as crucial for building a strong education system and economy. If one part in the education chain is weak, the rest of the system will be affected. With an underinvestment in teacher education, for instance, the quality in the rest of the system will suffer.
- The progress towards universal primary education creates strong unmet demand for secondary education. For example in a country like Tanzania where fortunately most children go to primary school (primary net enrolment rate is over 90 percent), there are little opportunities for children after finishing their primary education. Today there is only room for about 10 percent of the relevant age group in secondary school.
- Tanzania is just one out of many examples of underinvestment in secondary education. This is also unfortunate from a social mobility perspective and means that the universities may not be able to take advantage of important individuals and groups which could help build the society and the economy.

- Here, also Norway has to take a closer look at ourselves. As a share of our total bilateral support to education, only 2.5 percent benefited secondary education in 2004¹. This is clearly too low, and needs to be increased.

3. Exclusion of girls and marginalized groups

- We know that education continues to be a distant dream for 55 million girls around the world. Despite rapid progress in several poor countries with low enrolment ratios, the EFA 2005 gender parity goal was missed for over 90 countries around the world. This is particularly unfortunate as educating girls is among the most effective forms of development. It leads to health improvements and increased school enrolment as educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school. It is estimated that each year of education a girl receives will boost her eventual wage by 10-20 per cent².
- The “Soria Moria declaration” particularly stresses women’s right to education. In fact, girl’s education has for many years been one of Norway’s focus areas. One example is the African Girls’ Education Initiative, implemented by UNICEF and financed by Norway. This programme supported the education of girls in 34 African countries between 1996 and 2004. Norway is also an active partner in the United Nations Girl Education Initiative (UNGEI) and will be its’ co-chair from this summer.
- We know that a high percentage of the over 100 million children who do not go to school or don’t complete primary school are not only girls but typically children from marginalized groups, from ethnic minorities, refugees, orphans, children with disabilities and street children.
- The reasons for the exclusion are often complex and linked to the local context such as conflict situations, poverty, attitudes in the society and distance to school. Experiences from different countries shows that projects and special schools that aim at reaching the marginalized groups often only benefit a small number of children. There is also a danger in creating, unsustainable parallel structures. For education for all to be a

¹ About 42% of the bilateral support benefited primary education, 16% higher education, 15% vocational education and 25% ”general education” (unspecified education level).

² From: DFID ”Keeping our promises: delivering education for all”, April 2006. p. 5.

reality the government need to take responsibility for all its citizens and identify and remove systemic barriers to education such as language, curriculum, infrastructure and cost of education barriers.

- Non-participation in education is particularly high for people with disabilities. Norway sees it as important, in dialogue with the government and civil society, to work for policy changes as well as special programmes for inclusion of persons with disabilities in the education system. Norway has also worked internationally for the cause of disabled people by leading the EFA flagship on the right to education for persons with disabilities up until the end of 2005 and supporting the setting up of a section in the World Bank that focus on inclusion and disabilities.
- Norway has itself interesting experiences to build on with regards to creating an inclusive education system that cater for and take advantage of the different background, experiences and abilities of all children. Example of the latter is inclusion of the “the samis” the indigenous group in the north of Norway as well as people with disabilities into our education system.

4. Need to focus on the quality of education

- It is great to note that has been a rapid increase in the enrolment rates in all part of the education systems in recent years. However, this expansion might have had some negative tradeoffs on the quality of education as increasing class sizes and lack of teachers.
- The personnel crisis within the education system in Sub-Sahara Africa, and here I think both about teachers as well as headmasters, is a challenge to the EFA and MDGs goals that we have to take very seriously.
- An added problem is that many of the existing teachers die, mainly due to HIV/AIDS. In Zambia, the estimated number of primary school teacher who died from AIDS in 2000 was equal to 45% of all teachers trained that year. This is one of the reasons why Norway sees it as important to include HIV/AIDS on the education agenda.

- To improve the quality of education, Norway supports in-service teacher training in a number of countries such as Madagascar, Eritrea, Angola and The Palestinian Areas. We are concerned that the training should be relevant to the local context. In Angola and The Palestinian Areas we therefore support school-based training that includes crisis management.
- What is taught in school needs to be relevant for the local context in which the children live. In a world where education is influenced by the forces of globalization, this is often a difficult challenge. In this regard, we have much to learn from the Save the Children supported ABEK (Alternative Basic Education Karamoja) schools in Uganda, where the teaching content is rooted in the children's own culture and local environment. We generally view it as important to support and learn from the experience of non-governmental organizations in their implementation of pilot education programmes in the field.

5. *Higher education and research*

- The focus within the education sector has for the last 10-15 years been on primary education. This has been important because education is a right that more than 100 million children do not have.
- But this has led to the situation that little attention has been given to universities and higher education institutions.
- At the same time some countries have given a disproportionate share of their education budgets to higher education institutions, often reserved for a small elite, which have led to a over-simplified and negative focus on tertiary education institutions.
- The fact is that, in general, universities in the South have been neglected both by own authorities and donors. In addition, little has been done to secure a wider access to good quality tertiary education institutions from talented youth,

not at least from marginalised and minority groups. This is important for the individual, the community and the country.

- Any development strategy will require improved human resource capacity and skills. Higher education plays an important role in meeting human resources requirements which in turn support economic growth and the achievement of the MDGs.
- Quality tertiary education is particularly important for the developing countries, including countries in transition, because it represents one of their major means to bridge the gap separating them from the developed world and to face the challenges of globalization. There is a need to enhance their high level of training and research capacities massively and urgently, to avoid marginalization and exclusion.
- The report Task Force on Higher Education and Society, commissioned by the WB and UNESCO, concluded that higher education should not be considered a luxury good for developing countries in an era of globalise knowledge and commerce. Consequently, the report argues for “the need to embrace a more balanced, holistic approach to ... the entire lifelong education system, irrespective of a country’s income level”³. Considering the influential role of the WB and UNESCO, this change in approach has had an important effect of placing higher education back on the international community’s agenda.
- Universities and other institutions of higher learning have a responsibility to be responsive to societal challenges of our time, to be innovative, to make research relevant and to make the results of science and technology available. We know that access to knowledge makes ordinary citizens and civil society better equipped to have a critical voice and participate in their nation’s development actively and constructively.

³ World Bank 2004. Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education. Washington.

- Economic growth and capacity building are two important prerequisites for fighting poverty. In this context, relevant knowledge is at the core of any country's ability to combat inequalities and to grow and prosper. Yet, after several years with the capacity building-“mantra” at the back of our heads, and more attention given to the need for research and policy making in this area, we are still not very well coordinated internationally and much of what we do is in some way driven by the supply side.
- Higher education and broad based research are fundamental building blocks in capacity development providing necessary knowledge, professional qualifications, critical thinking and analysis as well as advising governments. Furthermore, it is essential for a vibrant private sector. In essence, institutions of higher learning play a crucial role in any society's development. They provide the capacity and competence to create, implement and monitor policies and strategies for poverty reduction and are corner stones in building democratic sustainable societies.
- A question we in Norway are particularly concerned about is: How can the international community's / development agencies' support to higher education and research contribute to capacity building in the South?
- Norway spends approximately 600 million NOK per year in development assistance to higher education and research. Of this, 170 mill were allocated to Africa. The main objective is to promote the development of knowledge production in the South and the countries' own ability to meet national teaching needs as well as to carry out own research.
- Norway is funding several development program to strengthen cooperation South- North and South-South–North in the HE sector as well as research. The well established NUFU Program, the new NOMA Program, the Teacher Education Program South-North (a pilot program we hope will form the basis for a more permanent program from 2008) are examples of this.

- I would like to use this occasion to present a few highlights from the newly launched NOMA Programme. The main objectives of NOMA are to support the development of Master programmes at higher education institutions in the South through close collaboration with higher education institutions in Norway. The programmes should respond to national development requirements.
- The aim is also to:
- increase capacities at institutions in the South
- stimulate South-South-North cooperation through support to the development of regional Master programmes
- provide the national work force with adequate qualifications within selected academic fields of study

- Another example of our higher education support is the above mentioned Teacher Education Program South-North. This program focuses on a combination of pre-service and in-service training. Depending on our experiences with the pilot-program we will consider making this program permanent and larger scale.

- Supporting “bridges of knowledge” requires strong institutions on both sides, and bridges that are built in such a way that they can carry a two-way traffic – not one direction of transfer of knowledge from North to South which most often has been the case. Such one-way traffic has for years been consolidated by donor driven approaches.

Issues for discussion:

1. How can we ensure that our development cooperation in the higher education sector contribute to the capacity-building needed in the South and, at the same time, minimize the problems related to brain drain?

2. In light of our focus on a holistic development of the education system: what would be the most constructive way for us to support the expansion and strengthening of secondary education in developing countries?

3. Norway is concerned about inclusion of all in the education system. How may we work for inclusion of people with disabilities when, due to competing priorities, the recipient government might be less concerned about this issue?

Thank you for the attention!