



Post 2015: development guided by the principle of human dignity

Position paper¹

Final Version 5. 4. 2013

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A. Policies that take a human rights-based approach as a point of departure.

1. There is consensus on the fundamental role education plays in development, when development is defined as economic growth. Indeed, knowledge and expertise are critical to economic development. However, we should be cautious when making this association, for development is not limited to economic growth. To distinguish it from mere growth, development has been called human and sustainable. These qualifiers place human beings at the center of development, and include in development everything that human beings need to live in a manner compatible with their dignity.
2. These considerations should guide us as we set new development goals and consider the role that education - as a right - should play in the creation of a new framework for development. It is our view, moreover, that education is not sufficiently taken into consideration in the report of the UN System Task Team.
3. The new framework should be more legible - more clearly conceived - than the MDGs. Moreover, it should not combine goals of a diverse scale, nor ones that are founded on different logical levels, such as the current inclusion of the very broad Goal 8 alongside more narrowly defined targets. In this regard, we note that the principles adopted by the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, namely human rights and sustainable and equitable

¹ Translated from French (original language) into English by Jennifer Lehe whom we thank.

development², fall into this trap, because human rights includes equity and sustainability. Indeed, equity is a general principle of rights, and sustainability is a precondition for the exercise of any true right.

4. The forthcoming development framework must take as its starting point a human rights-based approach in which development policies are evaluated in terms of respect for human beings and their dignity. Human rights comprise an arena of liberty and security for the fulfillment of self - the ultimate goal of development. Freedom from violence and need is the very purpose of human rights instruments as described in the Universal Declaration, *"the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want."*³
5. As underscored in a document from the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *" Human rights contribute to human development by guaranteeing a protected space where the elite cannot monopolize development processes, policies and programmes. The human rights framework also introduces the important idea that certain actors have duties to facilitate and foster development. For people to be enabled to assert a legally binding claim that specific duty-bearers provide free and compulsory primary education (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 13) is more empowering than it is to rely on "needs" alone or to observe the high economic returns on investments in education, for example."*⁴
6. The full development of each person is possible only in a context of freedom and security that guarantees the rule of law. Development is, in sum, the ability to choose a life in accordance with human dignity.⁵ Development is simply the creation of societies that allow the full development of the human person.
7. *"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood."* This is the conception of the human being laid out in the first article of the Universal Declaration. The full development of the person consists of the power to lead one's life in accordance with this vision of humanity.
8. This vision - universally shared - contains several elements: freedom, dignity, and a social framework that fosters the development of skills, knowledge, and rationality. This framework is founded on a common purpose, in which the debate of ideas allows us to find solutions to societal problems. This framework facilitates ethical training, which is indispensable for cultivating people who are capable of critical thinking and of assuming their responsibilities.

² Realizing the Future We Want for All, Report to the Secretary General, UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012

http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/untt_report.pdf

³ Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

⁴ Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation, (2006), p. 7

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FAQen.pdf>

⁵ See the writings of A. Sen

9. Education should not only be understood as one development goal among many, but as the paramount goal. Education is a component of all aspects of development: health, the economy, employment, housing, food, and democracy.
10. We can then conclude that the principles upon which a new development framework must be based are human rights and education. Indeed, it is only human rights, which can build societies based on law and justice, and it is only education that facilitates the empowerment of people.

B. The Key Role of Quality Education in Promoting the Fulfillment of the Individual

11. To understand development in terms of the full realization of the human being is nothing more than to reaffirm the educational goals of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration: "*Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.*" Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights expands on this definition and provides more precise language: "*education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity ... education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society ...*"
12. For this reason, we can clearly state that sustainable human development coincides with education as defined by international instruments. Indeed, if the reality of education fulfills the vision set out for it by international instruments, then development is guaranteed, for development comprises people living lives consistent with their dignity.
13. The major post-2015 challenge for education, as rightly indicated by the Secretary General's Education First initiative, is quality. In this context, we must develop "*a holistic conceptual framework for quality education.*"
14. This conceptual framework, as suggested by the Special Rapporteur, should include "*i) a minimum level of student acquisition of knowledge, values, skills, and competencies; ii) adequate school infrastructure, facilities, and environment; iii) a well-qualified teaching force; iv) a school that is open to the participation of all, particularly students, their parents, and the community.*"⁶
15. We agree with the Special Rapporteur when he asserts that "*Achieving knowledge and skills in mathematical and scientific literacy and languages should not be treated as being an exclusive reference to the quality of education. Universally recognized human rights values and democratic principles should be embedded in every education system. The acquisition of knowledge about human rights values should be at the forefront of any discourse on quality education.*"⁷

⁶ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education to the Human Rights Council, (2012), Doc A/HRC/20/21, par. 21.

⁷ Ibid, par. 18

16. We strongly support the vision of the recommendations from the Sixth Meeting of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All (Paris, October 2012), that the principles of equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination must comprise the foundation of the new agenda.⁸

C. Priority Areas

17. The first priority is the radical transformation of the education systems that play a decisive role in our increasingly knowledge-based economy. In the European Union, for example, *"the CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) forecasts predict that the proportion of jobs in the EU requiring tertiary level qualifications will increase from 29% in 2010 to 34% in 2020, while the proportion of low- skilled jobs will fall in the same period from 23% to 18%. Transversal skills such as the ability to think critically, take initiative, problem solve and work collaboratively will prepare individuals for today's varied and unpredictable career paths."*⁹
18. With the proliferation of information and communication technology (ICT), knowledge and values are becoming more diverse and accessible, extending beyond the traditional reach of education systems. Effective use of new technologies, and the guarantee of access to all groups and communities, should be a high priority.
19. The role of the teacher should evolve from that of "dispenser" of knowledge and information to that of "facilitator" of learning.¹⁰ The post-2015 agenda should give greater priority to the roles of educators and of teacher training in ensuring quality, so that they can become true educators, capable of not only teaching, but also living by these values. Moreover, the roles of families and communities must also be strengthened in order to improve educational quality.
20. Human rights education should be reconsidered and promoted in the post-2015 agenda. Similarly, education for global citizenship, as indicated in the **Education first** initiative, should be at the heart of the new goals, since, to reiterate Article 13 of the ICESCR, *"education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society."*¹¹ Human rights education as defined by the World Programme for Human Rights Education plays a key role in the reimagining of school systems because it connotes changes in the entire education system. Indeed, human rights education implies devolution of power, democratic governance, school autonomy, and the sharing of responsibilities.

⁸ Cf. Sixth Meeting of UNESCO's Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA), October 24-25, 2012, Paris, France. point 25.
http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED_new/pdf/FINAL_CCNGO_outcome_document.pdf

⁹ European Commission (2012), Rethinking Education, Doc COM 2012 (669) final, p. 3

¹⁰ Cf. UN System Task Team, Thematic Think Piece on Education and Skills for Inclusive and Sustainable Development Beyond 2015. UNESCO, 2012, p. 10.

¹¹ Cf. Human Rights Council (2013), Resolution HRC/22/L.6 rev. 1, Education as a tool to prevent racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

21. The State cannot remain the sole party responsible for education. Rather, the State must establish policy frameworks, implementation and enforcement mechanisms, evaluation instruments, and consistent policies that encourage collaboration with civil society.¹² As documented in Resolution A/HRC/20/L.12 of the Human Rights Council 2012, the State is urged to provide for the right to education by the *"putting in place of regular mechanisms for dialogue that will enable individuals, civil society organizations and all relevant stakeholders to contribute, where appropriate, to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the realization of the right to education."*
22. Adopting a participatory approach in the development and implementation of policies, as signaled in the Dakar Framework for Action, the State must grant schools autonomy to take into account cultural diversity, as well as the specific needs of male and female students, with particular consideration given to the latter.¹³
23. *"Quality in education cannot be achieved without provision of adequate resources to respond to quality imperatives"* as stated by the Special Rapporteur. Education cannot bear the brunt of economic, financial, and market crises. We support the petition expressed at the Global Meeting on Education for All (Paris, November 2012)¹⁴; a minimum allocation of 6% of GDP or 20% allocation of public expenditure to education in accordance with thresholds defined in 2011 at the High-level Group Meeting in Jomtien. We also ask that the allocation of funds take into account efficacy, efficiency, and equity.
24. We also support the proposed elevation of technical and vocational education, as it plays a key role in meeting the challenges of unemployment and underemployment in developed as well as developing countries.¹⁵ However, technical education should combine the development of specific skills with a humanist vision of education. Indeed, beyond facilitating the transition from school to working life, the learning process is a human one, and should contribute to the full development of the personality.

¹² World Programme for Human Rights Education (2006), First phase, part II, B and C
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PActionEducationen.pdf>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Cf. Global Education for All Meeting, Paris, November 21-23, 2012, point 19.

¹⁵ Cf. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education to the General Assembly, 2012, Doc A/67/310.