

DPI/NGO Relations invites you to a
Briefing

“Girls’ Education: An End to Poverty?”

Thursday, 1 April 2010
10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Conference Room 2, North Lawn Building

Background Information

“Investing in girls’ education delivers well-known returns. When girls are educated, they are more likely to earn higher wages and obtain better jobs, to have fewer and healthier children and to enjoy safer childbirth.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
World Population Day, 11 July 2009

Established as a human right over 60 years ago, education is unquestionably a valuable investment for countries in the development of their people, allowing them in turn to make better lives for themselves. Nowhere is this more important than in developing countries, and most specifically among the adolescent female population. According to an important study on the subject by the Center for Global Development, entitled *Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda*: “without adequate skills and training, and without access to economic self-sufficiency, many girls in developing countries enter into child marriages. One in seven girls in developing countries marry by age 15, and in 15 countries throughout South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, almost half of all girls are married before age 18.” There is also a very strong link between lack of education, gender inequality and poverty. This is underscored by the Girls Count study: “approximately one-sixth of the world’s young people live on less than two dollars a day.... This level of extreme poverty determines the lives and possibilities for many young women and girls, such as the 122 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa who live on less than one dollar a day.”

Indeed, for girls and women living in poverty, education is not only the key to a brighter future but the means for survival and a critical driver for economic growth

worldwide. Fortunately, considerable progress has been made towards shrinking the gender gap in education: overall female enrollment at the primary level in low-income countries has grown from 87% in 1990 to 94% in 2004, the result of governments among others, recognizing the centrality of girls' education to development.

This Briefing, organized with assistance from the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, will focus on the issue of girls' education. Specifically we will examine how the issue is being addressed in the sub-Saharan country of Benin, where significant strides have been made during the past decade to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary schools. Severe constraints and challenges nevertheless remain for the country to reach the goal of universal education, and adequate action is necessary to overcome obstacles that girls face in becoming productive women and citizens. To help us better understand the challenges of girls' education in Benin, we will also screen part of the documentary "Time for School," produced by Channel Thirteen and aired on their program "Wide Angle." The film follows seven children from around the world, including a young girl from Benin, Nanavi, in their struggles to receive an education.

As we continue to promote the goal of "Education for All" advocated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] we hope this Briefing will serve as a further motivation for NGOs who work in the arena of education for girls.

The Briefing begins promptly at 10:00 a.m. and we ask that our audience is seated by 9:45 a.m. sharp.

Moderator: María-Luisa Chávez; Chief, NGO Relations, Department of Public Information (DPI)

Speakers

H.E. Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of the Republic of Benin to the United Nations

Elizabeth Fordham, Education Programme Specialist, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in New York

Stephen Segaller [invited], PBS/Thirteen's Vice President of Content, Public Broadcasting Service/Thirteen

Winifred Doherty, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd representative to the United Nations in New York

The venue for the weekly Briefings will be provided as soon as the information is available. United Nations-produced videos relevant to the theme of the Briefing are sometimes screened during the session. For Briefing information please call the DPI/NGO Resource Centre at +1-212-963-7232 / 7233 / 7234 or e-mail dpingo.briefings@un.org. To receive the Briefing information electronically, please email dpingo.briefings@un.org. You may also visit the DPI/NGO Relations Cluster website at www.un.org/dpi/ngosection, where archived web casts and audio (both, when available) of the Briefing may also be accessed

Requests for guest passes should be faxed on organization letterhead to the DPI/NGO Resource Centre at +1 212-963-2819 or e-mailed to dpingo.briefings@un.org at least two days prior to the Briefing. [Please note that pass requests received at any other email address will not be processed.] All guest passes should be picked up at the DPI/NGO Resource Centre, Room GA-37, on the morning of the Briefing. NGOs are reminded that the Briefing starts promptly at 10:15 a.m.