

What I found particularly encouraging is the optimistic tone of our discussion and the “can do” mentality that underlined many of the interventions.

The education goals remain achievable, even in the poorest countries. Yes - our scorecard is mixed and Yes - we will need to redouble our efforts especially in increasing access to quality education for marginalized groups of society. But, as we heard from several speakers, we know what needs to be done, and there are many examples of interventions that work, like the Friendly School Initiative in Egypt, which provides mobile schools to reach out to street and working children, or the Literacy and Life Skills Development Programme in Iraq, which combines literacy training for girls and women with income-generation and life skills that will lead to job creation and self-confidence, and other initiatives in Jordan and several other Arab countries, just to mention a few.

While there are no ready made solutions, the different threads of our discussion suggest that countries which have integrated some of the following five policies have provided greater learning opportunities, leading to positive education outcomes.

Firstly, removal of financial barriers to education, whether direct or indirect costs of learning;

Secondly, provision of gender-friendly basic services in teaching and learning environments, such as food, water, sanitation, safety;

Thirdly, increased national and international funding for education, and better targeting of resources towards the most vulnerable;

Fourthly, eradication of gender stereotypes in curricula and teaching practices.

Last but not least, innovative use of information and communication technologies, especially for reaching the marginalized.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

At WISE opening session, His Excellency Dr. Abdulla bin Ali Al-Thani explained that the Qatar Foundation does not see WISE as a standalone event but rather as an effort to establish a network of education experts and innovators. Similarly, we see the work of ECOSOC on education not as a one time event, but as a continuous effort to support countries in achieving their education goals. We therefore hope that you will remain engaged with us beyond this regional meeting and will join us for the Ministerial Review in July 2011 in Geneva.

Mr. Minister, we look forward to your presentation in Geneva, where Qatar will share the highlights of today’s discussion with the Members of the Council.

Thank you very much.
