

Topic: Innovative sources to financing primary education in developing countries

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Session Summary:

Although all levels of education in developing countries need attention, primary education suffers the most due to lack of financial resources and incentives to invest in the infrastructure needed. Primary education investment has social returns that exceed the costs of investment, but often the private return is low in the short run. Investment in primary education can reduce gender inequalities, improve the HIV/AIDS epidemic, increase political participation, increase literacy, provide the opportunity for higher levels of education, provide for a more attractive investment climate for businesses, and can alleviate poverty through its outcomes. Innovative sources of financing are needed to fill the gaps in primary education investment that developing country states do not fill for a multitude of reasons. This can come from non-profits, private sources, and official development assistance. In this session, we explore problems of primary education and actions we can take to provide innovative means to finance it as well as projects that can further develop primary education in developing countries.

Major points/outcomes:

- Problems of primary education
 - Lack of schools in certain areas/access
 - Geographical exclusion
 - Transportation provision
 - Social exclusion
 - Gender equality (unequal access issues)
 - Views of education
 - Is it a right or a privilege? This creates differing legal contexts for necessities of education provision
 - Children often needed for work/income and so not given adequate opportunity for education because parents value their children's labor over education value
 - Possible public education campaign needed to change perceptions of the value of education
 - Subsidies could be given to parents per child for allowing them to forego labor income in exchange for time at school
 - Availability of school supplies is scarce

- Language barriers exist in school instruction
- Teachers must be held accountable for attendance and curriculum
- Ministries of education must consider teacher competence by ensuring they have the correct qualifications
- Must address lack of suitable school infrastructure by ensuring school buildings and supplies
- Potential sources of financing
 - Non-profits
 - Should have cultural and institutional relevance
 - Private sources
 - Private schools: Would base educational standards on the regulatory structure established by the state for its schooling system
 - Micro-finance projects to establish private schools
 - Private charitable foundations
 - Public-private partnerships

Ideas that need more discussion:

- Should a non-profit set up its own educational program without host government consultation?
- Integration of private schools into the provision of primary education
- How can schools become sustainable?
- What does the term “primary education” mean? Are there valid alternatives to western-style primary education systems?
- Can the imposition of western values of education be harmful to a developing country’s
- Could multinational enterprises contribute to primary education financing?
- The nature and effectiveness of public-private partnerships in education
- International regimes for education financing to give multinational enterprises more incentive to invest

Action points/suggestions:

- Address the need for communication in isolated areas. Evaluate the possibilities for increased funding for information technology (IT) centers whereby isolated areas can become connected to the global marketplace
- Must consider literacy as a prerequisite for these IT centers. Should literacy be addressed before implementing these centers?
- Advocate for public-private partnerships in education
- Micro-finance loans/grants for primary education development

Is there a person present willing to champion this topic? If yes, who?

Yes, Michael Klein the convener will be able to champion this topic.