

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser's Speech

Asian Leadership Address

May 19, 2015

Mrs. President, Distinguished Guests,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my personal experience in advocating for educational reform.

My involvement in education internationally grew out of my own experiences in Qatar. For years I worked mostly on my initiatives inside Qatar, instigating reforms in our educational system to ensure our country's citizens would be able to compete with strength and confidence in a competitive global market.

However, the more I looked to various countries for educational models from which we could learn, the more

aware I became of the sad state of the education of the world's children.

In this way, I became interested in education beyond my own borders.

In 2003 I was invited by UNESCO to serve as a Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education.

I participated in many meaningful and international discussions and was frustrated by the lack of results, especially when I was confronted with the devastating effects of war on the best educational system in the Middle East, that of Iraq.

I also learned that education is the key to recovery from conflict. This is a situation which Korea intimately understands.

So, my early work saw the launch of a project that supports the education system in Iraq.

Over the next years I became involved in advocacy for the protection of education in conflict zones, and on the ground projects to help rebuild Gaza.

In 2010 when the MDGs were reviewed, and Secretary General Ban Ki Moon decided to promote a “last push” to assist the world in meeting the MDGs, I was asked to be an advocate for MDG 2 for universal primary education.

I willingly undertook the challenge.

In 2000, the world made a promise that by 2015 all children would have access to quality primary education.

Yet we still have 58 million children out of school who need help. I am worried that governments alone cannot solve this problem.

So in 2012, I decided to launch Educate a Child to offer a pragmatic approach to retain the focus on these most marginalized and vulnerable children who continue to be denied access to primary education. And to bring the private sector to the table, together with NGOs, development agencies, and governments.

Educate A Child started working in 9 countries. Today, we are working in 38 countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America.

I am determined not to back away from our unfinished agenda.

Our approach focuses on five fundamental principles:

First, we go beyond our usual constituencies. We are working with a wide range of private philanthropists, foundations and international organizations, from the

business, energy, and finance sectors.

We encourage them to be involved in educational projects with grassroots NGOs that have a track record of successful solutions.

Secondly, we are breaking down assumptions that providing primary education is only the job of governments. So, we are bringing new expertise and new ways of thinking to our projects.

Third, we believe in robust analysis, monitoring, and evaluation in making sure we are efficiently using resources to get the job done. That is why we make all our data public, trusting our transparency will encourage others to join us.

Fourth, we have developed a system that is efficient and targeted. 100% of contributions go directly to programs. Administrative costs are covered by our Foundation.

Finally we work with the blessings of the host country's government and have a clear exit strategy for each and every program.

And our approach is succeeding. Since the program began in 2012, we and our partners, have made commitments to offer opportunities to 5 million children.

We have agreements with development agencies and private sector organisations across the world. We are advocating placing primary education as the first priority in global giving campaigns.

But we alone cannot reach the millions more children who deserve this chance. To reach our goals, we need like-minded partners, we need expertise, and we need more financial resources.

Korea is so often seen as a model of private and public investment in education, and in economic and social transformation.

Korea is the world's second biggest per capita spender on education, at 8 per cent of GDP.

Plus the average Korean family spends 10 per cent of its income on private tutoring. You are a nation which needs no convincing when it comes to the power of education.

We look to you to share this expertise and bring opportunities to those who need them most.

This afternoon's World Education Forum which has been organized here in Incheon will be a perfect opportunity for such an exchange.

Many of the CEOs present here today have grown up in the shadow of the Korean war which devastated the country.

Many of you struggled to rebuild your nation, sacrificing for an education.

Many school children depended on foreign food donations and studied in schoolrooms which lacked books, desks and chairs and had little heat in the winter.

Now these school children are the leaders of one of the world's largest economies and the heads of corporations known throughout the world.

We want you to share this success story with the rest of the world.

This experience, this transformation from deprivation to prosperity, is without doubt, related to Korea's admirable Confucian tradition.

This noble tradition of self-sufficiency and community cohesiveness has been at the core of national development and the catalyst for Korea to achieve unparalleled growth.

Confucius argued that the process of education is to instigate self-improvement for the sake of service to others, to produce the "noble men" - HYUN-IN.

Here, I am among many "noble men" HYUN-IN.

Your dedication to global service is demonstrated by Korea's leadership in development policy.

Korea has transformed its status from donor recipient to Development Assistance Committee member.

Korean aid in education accounts for over 17% of its official development assistance.

Today, in fact, we, at Educate a Child, will be signing a three year agreement to work on primary education with the Korean Development Agency. We are very much looking forward to learning from your expertise.

Corporate Social Responsibility is playing an important and growing role and again Korean corporations are providing an excellent example.

For instance, Samsung has placed education as a priority in its global citizenship efforts.

However, as we are speaking now millions of children are being added to the 58 million already out of school. They are children from countries such as Nepal, Myanmar, Yemen, and Syria - victims of natural disasters, war, poverty discrimination, and migration.

This is where your critical intervention is needed and also where your impact would be most measurable.

For every child to benefit from a quality basic education by 2030 there is an annual funding gap of \$22 billion dollars. This is the equivalent of 4.5 days of military spending. Can we not imagine a world without war for just 4 and half days?

Our goals are clear and our targets achievable. The costs of not educating out of school children far outweigh the investment needed. UNESCO estimates that every dollar invested in primary education generates \$10-\$15 in economic returns.

So, we must set quality universal primary education as our priority.

I ask you to join in our efforts to make primary education a focus of global giving.

Let us keep our promise to the world's children and finish what we started.

Camsa humnida.