

Statement by the Delegation of Thailand
H.E. Mr. Krerkpan Roekchamnong
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
at the CEDAW's General Discussion on Girls'
and Women's Right to Education
On 7 July 2014 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva

Madame Chairperson,

1. As we continue to debate over what should be the new goals and targets of development after 2015, new data suggest that we are still far from fulfilling one of the most basic commitments we made in the last millennium: to ensure that children, boys and girls alike, are able to complete primary schooling.
2. UNESCO's statistics, however, show that, school enrollments at the primary level and beyond, for "boys and girls" are not alike, resulting in a wide literacy gap between "men and women."
3. Despite recent progress, girls and women continue to face discrimination in accessing education and within educational systems. Over 58 million children of primary school age worldwide, including 35 million girls, are out of school. In developing countries, particularly in rural areas, adolescent girls are more likely to drop out of secondary school than boys. Two thirds of the world's 792 million illiterate adults are women.
4. Hindrance to effective implementation of CEDAW Article 10 mostly arises from our misconception of "equality." Traditionally understood as "the right to be equal to men," this notion can become problematic when it is extended to the understanding that women must be treated exactly like men, if they are to gain equality with men, and that women must be treated according to male standards.
5. The undeniable truth is, women are quite different from men. They are more vulnerable to poverty, marginalization, abuse and exploitation. To achieve a "real" equal right to education, we therefore need to compensate for or cater to such differences. We need to make sure that these differences are acknowledged and responded to.

6. In particular, stronger efforts should be made to ensure that education is widely available and more accessible to girls and women.

7. To improve the availability and access to education, there is a need to allocate national budgets, whether individually or in partnership with the private sector, to create new or improve the existing educational facilities for girls and women, which could be in the form of co-educational or single-sex institutions. Women with special needs also require facilities in educational institutions, such as on-site nurseries for female students with infants or young children. For women who cannot enroll in study programs full-time, part-time programs should be arranged and vocational trainings could be initiated for those who cannot enter mainstream academic programs. Moreover, access to education for disadvantaged groups of women and girls – such as those in rural areas, with disabilities, living with HIV/AIDS – should be facilitated.

8. Rights are related and often complement each other. Women and girls can fully enjoy their educational right only when they have other rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, implementation of CEDAW Article 10 must be done in tandem with other articles, and alongside other core international human rights instruments.

9. Most importantly, we must remember that CEDAW does not automatically confer on women equal right to education. Its promise can only be delivered with the true commitments and real actions from state parties.

Thank you Madame Chairperson.