



**Open-ended Intergovernmental Working
Group to explore the possibility of,
elaborating and submitting to the Human
Rights Council a draft optional protocol to the
Convention on the Rights of the Child**

General Debate

Make Mothers Matter welcomes this first session of the Open-Ended Working Group. From the outset, we want to express our strong support for a 4th optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as we are convinced that it will be instrumental in strengthening the right to education for all children, in particular for girls, the future mothers.

As an organisation focused on the rights of women who are mothers, we would like to highlight four key considerations.

1. Parents are central to their children's care and education. Mothers, in particular, play a pivotal role as primary caregivers and educators, shaping their children's educational journey, which begins even before birth.

Parents are especially crucial in Early Childhood Development, with mothers on the frontline during pregnancy and the early years. They are also non-formal educators, imparting values, life skills, and supporting socio-emotional development through everyday interactions. Moreover, parents serve as a critical support system for formal education by encouraging, coaching, and assisting with homework.

However, not all parents have the same capacity to engage, due to factors such as time constraints or lack of support. Failing to address these disparities of parental involvement perpetuates inequality in education.

Therefore, a 4th Protocol could not only acknowledge the central role and responsibility of parents in their children's educational journey but also recognize these disparities. This will help Member States create policies and legal frameworks that support families in all their diversity and actively engage all parents as partners in education.

2. **Investing in pre-primary education yields high returns—a fact that a 4th Protocol can help promote.** The evidence is clear: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) lays the foundation for social, emotional, and cognitive skills essential for lifelong learning and well-being. Early learning provides a solid framework for academic success, adaptability, and personal growth. Furthermore, providing free pre-primary education enables mothers to free up time and engage in income-generating activities, thereby also advancing women's rights.
3. **A 4th protocol is the opportunity to explicitly recognise and address the multiple and intersecting barriers that too many girls still face in accessing education,** in particular secondary education. These barriers include unpaid domestic and care responsibilities, safety concerns, or inadequacy of sanitation. Girls' education is absolutely critical for development: they are future workers and leaders, many of them future mothers— And we know that educated mothers have

healthier and better educated children. Educating girls also delays pregnancy and associated health risks. It reduces poverty, improves health outcomes, strengthens economies, and fosters more peaceful and stable societies.

4. **The 4th Protocol would also bridge the gap between education and care—two fundamental aspects of human development.** Education and care are the cornerstones of our societies, and we must recognize them as a collective responsibility. Advancing free pre-primary and secondary education is inseparable from recognizing and supporting care, particularly unpaid care. This is a matter of social and economic justice, equality, and ensuring that women and girls can fully realize their potential as rights-holders and contributors to society.

Strengthening the right to education is essential to combating poverty, reducing inequality—including gender inequality, as well as fostering democratic participation, sustainable development and peace. It is vital for building a better future for all.

We therefore urge governments to proceed with a 4th protocol to explicitly recognize the right to early childhood care and education, to free public pre-primary education and to free public secondary education for all children.

Thank you.

About Make Mothers Matter

Make Mothers Matter is an international NGO founded in 1947 to promote the recognition and support of the essential role of mothers in society. MMM envisions a world where women who are mothers are supported by society and can balance motherhood with their personal and professional aspirations, without being penalised. MMM brings the voices and lived realities of mothers to global platforms, including the EU, the UN (General Consultative Status), and UNESCO, ensuring they are heard, acknowledged and addressed.