

**Welcome to the conference 'H&E, strong together' (May 2018)**

Since this conference will promote life-long learning, let's start with a **little quiz**.



- ✓ What does this picture represent? It's called 'The Meeting of Waters': it is the confluence between the (blackwater) Rio Negro and (whitewater) the pale sandy-colored Amazon River or Rio Solimões near Manaus. The two rivers run side by side for 6 km without mixing. But finally they do to the benefit of the rain forest and bio-diversity downstream.

This is a **metaphor for the journey** of (the Belgian platforms) Educaid and Because Health the past months.

- ✓ Two platforms, two networks, two sectors each with own identity but discovering each other and gradually exchanging, mixing and working in synergy more intensively than before. By networking these networks we hope to prove today that Aristotle was right "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."
- ✓ In that perspective a special thanks to the Steering group who made this conference a reality. composed of member organizations of both platforms (whose names you see displayed on the slides. Also thanks to the coordination of Educaid and BCH for their professional support.
- ✓ We hope that this conference, this moment of 'co-creation' (buzz-word!) is a start of a fruitful future collaboration between Educaid & BCH around common issues. As you know, the after-care of annual conferences has been assured in the past and we are confident this will not be different this time.

**So far I have talked about dynamics around this conference, let's talk about content now.**

In times where the private for profit sector is the new donor darling in the world of international development,

- ✓ We hope that this conference will demonstrate the importance of continuing investing in social sectors such as education & health in today's international cooperation.

- ✓ As Amartya Sen, a famous Indian economist and philosopher, puts it: 'Economic development without investing in human development is unsustainable and unethical'. For Sen human development means 2 things:

1/ 'enabling human capabilities' meaning enabling people to make their own choices towards their individual and collective well-being: she decides and he decides and we decide.

2/ assuring human rights

- ✓ Both the education and health sector have an important role in these human capacities & assuring human rights. The private sector is surely welcome to join and contribute to these goals, as long as they are aware that we pursuing global public goods aiming at reducing inequalities and not pursuing private interests.

I also would like to take the opportunity to reinforce the message that

- ✓ in international development sectors are still the standard. Look at the OECD classification but also the way public services are organized in almost every country: we still talk about a min of education, min of H and that will still prevail for a while. Shouldn't we respect that organization and align to it when we are working with our partner countries, by principle but also for operational reasons?
- ✓ Of course, themes like human rights, digitalization, environment, gender.... are important. But they should remain transversal and could be entry points for working within sectors and also strengthen collaboration between sectors as we will see today.

The intersection between education and health is very large and some selection had to be made. The focus today will therefore be on 3 areas which are important for people to make their own choices :

- ✓ Firstly, at the community level: with on the one hand a focus on informing people and raising awareness about health and education and on the other hand a focus on enabling them to claim their rights and mobilize them.
- ✓ Secondly, at the school level: with a focus on safe and healthy school environments in particular regarding comprehensive SRHR, injuries and prevention of chronic D such as DM which are a time bomb in most continents.
- ✓ Thirdly, at the level of the health workforce, whether as an individual or as a team with a focus on life-long learning and how to do that. Peer-to-peer learning and e-learning will be part of this package.

**Welcome to Ellen De Geest** (Advisor of devco at the cabinet of Min. De Croo).

At the eve of Pentecost, it's always good to have De Geest (Spirit in Eng) amongst us for some inspiring words.