

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

REGIONAL SHARED LEARNING WORKSHOP ON VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN SCHOOL

As time draws towards 2015, the target year for Education For All (EFA) goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which, among other things, call for achieving universal primary education as well as achieving gender parity in primary and secondary schools, ActionAid organized with ANCEFA (Africa network campaign on education for all) and Plan (West Africa Regional Office – WARO), a regional shared learning workshop on the learning from 5 years implementation of a multi country project on violence against girls at school in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique.

The aim of the workshop was to share experience with organizations engaged on the same issue and to explore together with partners how to strategically engage in joint advocacy on girls education in the region.

During three days, 26 participants from Ghana, Liberia, Burkina, Togo, Mozambique, Kenya, Zambia and Senegal shared achievements, best practices, challenges, and lessons learnt in implementation of projects related to girls' education in general, and addressing violence against girls in particular. The following were noted in relation to girls' education:

- Organizations such as Action Aid, ANCEFA, Plan and others have registered achievements in the past 5 years in promoting girls' education and fighting violence against girls (VAG) which can be showcased at local, national and regional levels. Some of these successes include re-entry of pregnant girls, community mobilisation to address VAG, children, especially girls involvement in education campaigns, capacity strengthening for civil society organisations in advocacy for girls education, as well as policy engagement for education financing for more resource for girls education. These efforts have led to significant reductions in VAG and increased access to education for girls in areas targeted by girls' education projects..
- Although partners have made efforts to document their work on girls' education as individual organisations, through research publications, project reports and development of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials, there have not been sufficiently coordinated joint publications on the success stories for learning and replication.
- Whereas steady progress has been made in reducing violence against girls and ensuring increased access to girls' education in Africa, girls still represent the majority of the 31 million children who are out of school. In addition, in many societies girls continue to suffer from violence, and are often victims of early/child marriages, early pregnancies and negative cultural practices. The goal of achieving gender parity at primary education level and especially in higher levels of education is still far to come in most countries. As such the fight for girls' education is not yet over and there is need to enhance advocacy pre and post 2015.
- Although many civil society organisations are showing an interest in girls' education, there is weak coordination and harmonisation of partners programmes at local, national, and regional levels. This scenario poses high risks of duplication, competition and confusion.
- There is weak capacity of national education coalitions in terms of governance, leadership and partnership management, advocacy, as well as monitoring and evaluation skills. The capacity gaps have compromised the quality of programmes on girls' education, and thus led to limited results and impact where the coalitions are expected to lead the process.
- Fundraising for initiatives around girls' education –where change occurs very slowly- has been a challenge and this has negatively affected efforts for scaling up projects nationally and regionally.

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants made the following recommendations around four key areas:



Research and publication

- With regard to research, partners emphasised the need for promoting advocacy based on high quality research. In addition, partners also noted deficiencies in ensuring quality research on girls' education in general and VAGs in particular. As such they called for the creation of a documentation centre where all publications around girls education issues would be centralised. The meeting also noted that in some cases organisations carry out research on topics in which information was already available. To address this challenge, all partners were invited to share terms of reference (TORs) of new research and ensure that research reports are widely disseminated to avoid duplication and therefore, waste of resources.
- In relation to publication around girls' education it was recommended that civil society partners should, where possible, undertake joint documentation of success stories. Such stories should be available in both print and electronic publications on the internet and accessible to all
- There is need for partners to undertake a skills mapping exercise to identify gaps and develop capacity building strategies for national education coalitions.

Child participation

- Partners agreed to work at empowering girls in all countries. In line with the discussions on synergy and coordination participants agree to work on standard guidelines on operationalization of girls' clubs and on child participation with the process starting at local and national levels.
- Participants also agreed for the drafting of guidelines on child participation with the process to start at local and national levels
- Because this implies a lot of engagement with children both at community and national levels, ActionAid, Plan and other partners should support ANCEFA in the development of its child protection and gender policies in line with children welfare policies in the region. This will enable ANCEFA to monitor the work of local and national organizations and ensure that children rights are taken care of during implementation process. It will also ensure that ANCEFA mainstreams gender in its programmes

Policy engagement and advocacy

- The Memorandum of Understanding between ANCEFA and the African Union Commission signed in July 2013 should be utilised as an opportunity to increase civil society space in engagement with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union on girls' education agenda.
- Civil society organizations, platforms, etc should challenge the African union and other regional bodies by inviting them for discussions for them to report on progress and explore together ways of addressing gaps
- The Post 2015 agenda should take a rights based approach and especially put special emphasis in promoting girls education and addressing disparities especially at post primary school levels.
- National governments should increase funding for education and provide more resources for addressing VAG and ensuring girls' access to quality education for all at all levels.
- Partners should identify funding opportunities and conduct joint fundraising initiatives including establishing a basket fund for civil society projects on girls education
- Partners should ensure the participation of all colleagues in the celebration of 11th October, girl child day and all partners should integrate the GirlsNotBrides (GNB) platform where it

exists and initiate one where it does not exist for stronger engagement on early/forced/child marriage

- To accelerate behaviour and policy changes, organizations engaged on violence against girls and women should work with boys and men and bring teachers unions on board as a solution in spreading the message on violence against girls nationwide.

Partnership

- ANCEFA, AAI, and PLAN should facilitate implementation of the action plan developed during the workshop to promote girls education initiatives in areas of policy advocacy, child participation partnership and research in the run up to 2015. It is therefore their responsibility to bring on board other organizations engaged on this issue to reinforce synergy.
- Partners should scale up advocacy initiatives addressing gender based violence and promoting girls education in the various countries.
- There is need for strengthening partnerships, coordination, synergy and collaboration to ensure increased efficiency and effectiveness in the fight for girls education and that adequate policies and mechanisms are in place that address violence against girls
- For follow up, regional integration and consistency, the committee composed of ActionAid, Ancefa and Plan West Africa, should ensure that key recommendations and action points from the present workshop are shared widely within the region, especially with the organizers of the upcoming workshop on violence against girls at school in Burkina Faso in November 2013
- In line with the above, the committee should also work at the initiation of a regional working group on girls' education to enable systematic shared learning in parallel with the virtual documentation centre

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Because **I am a Girl**