



*UNGEI United Nations Girls' Education Initiative*

### **What is UNGEI?**

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a partnership of organizations committed to the goals of narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and ensuring that, by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to free, quality education.

UNGEI was launched in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal) by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The flagship of the Education for All (EFA) movement that focuses on girls' education, it embraces the United Nations system, governments, donor countries, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and communities and families. UNGEI provides stakeholders with a platform for action and galvanizes their efforts to get girls in school.

UNICEF is the lead agency and Secretariat for UNGEI. A Global Advisory Committee is composed of key partners who share in the planning, decision-making, guidance and accountability of UNGEI. UNGEI Focal Points in different regions facilitate the coordination of girls' education strategies and interventions at the country level.

To learn more about UNGEI, visit [www.ungei.org](http://www.ungei.org)

### **What UNGEI stands for**

The world community failed to meet the 2005 target for gender parity, and UNGEI is determinedly committed to accelerating action on girls' education and revitalizing the broad social mobilization and high-level political action that is needed to ensure that every girl, as well as every boy, goes to school. To achieve this, national citizens will need to pressure governments and key decision-makers to live up to their commitments and take concrete steps forward. Under the larger umbrella of promoting gender equality,

UNGEI works for the removal of barriers to learning, such as school fees and other education costs, and for access to education in emergency situations. It promotes strategies that give priority to the needs of the most disadvantaged, including girls and women, in education policies, plans and budgets. It advocates for a cross-sectoral holistic approach with balanced investment in education across the life cycle, addressing early childhood development and education for children of poor families, as well as literacy and the empowerment of women and young people.

### **Partners**

Current partners at the global level include UN agencies (ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, among others), the World Bank, donor agencies (Canadian International Development Agency, Danish International Development Assistance, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, UK Department for International Development, USAID, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, among others), non-governmental organizations (including CAMFED International, Campaign for Popular Education Bangladesh, Forum for African Women Educationalists, Global Campaign for Education and World Vision). Other partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Academy for Educational Development.

### **GirlsEd-Net**

*GirlsEd-Net* is an online knowledge network on girls' education that aims to facilitate dialogue and information-sharing among UNGEI partners and a broad range of constituencies at the global, regional and national levels. Some of this network's main activities include a monthly electronic newsletter, information sharing announcements and eDiscussions. To sign up, visit us at [www.ungei.org/listserve/index.html](http://www.ungei.org/listserve/index.html).

# Facts & Figures on Girls' Education

In addition to its benefits for girls and women, education is a uniquely positive force with a wide-ranging impact on society and human development. Educated girls can better protect themselves against HIV, trafficking and abuse, and are more likely to grow up to have healthier families and send their children to school.

## Out-of-school children\*

- There are 115 million children out of school, the majority of them (62 million) are girls
- In Western and Central Africa, 24 million children are out of primary school, 13 million of them girls
- In Eastern and Southern Africa, 21 million children are out of primary school, 10.9 million of them girls
- In South Asia, 42.8 million children are not in school, 23.5 million of them girls
- In the Middle East and North Africa, 10.3 million children are not in school, 5.8 million of them are girls.

## Mothers' education

- Children whose mothers have no education are more than twice as likely to be out of school as children whose mothers have some education
- In developing countries, 75 per cent of the children not in primary school have uneducated mothers
- One additional year of schooling for 1,000 women helps prevent two maternal deaths.

## Illiteracy

- There are 771 million illiterate adults, 64 per cent of them women, worldwide. Only 88 adult women are considered literate for every 100 adult men.

## Early childhood care

- The roots of discrimination against girls, of stereotyping male and female models of behaviour, and of violence against women are usually formed very early on within the family. These prejudices are often reinforced outside the family. Early childhood care and education provides an opportunity to change some of these deeply held value systems

- Children from poor households or excluded social groups may benefit more than their more privileged peers from early intervention programmes
- Children who receive early childhood care and education are more likely to start school at the right age and to perform better in school and less likely to drop out of school or repeat classes.

## HIV/AIDS

- Of the countries that are unlikely to achieve universal primary education by 2015, more than half are experiencing severe AIDS epidemics
- If all children received a complete primary education, around 700,000 cases of HIV in young adults could be prevented each year
- Women represent 62 per cent of the 15- to 24-year-olds living with HIV/AIDS globally
- Every day, 4,500 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are infected with HIV
- According to UNAIDS, sub-Saharan Africa is home to over 60 per cent of all young people living with HIV, 75 per cent of whom are girls and young women
- More educated women are more likely to seek treatment for sexually transmitted infections
- Girls are often more vulnerable to HIV infection due to societal norms frequently limiting their access to and utilization of prevention information and services
- The risk of becoming infected during unprotected sex is two to four times greater for women than for men, because they are physiologically more susceptible to HIV infection as the receptive partner. For young girls, the risk can be even higher.

\* as of 2002