Gender Equality in Education: Beyond Numbers
Child’s View – Girls play a game outdoors, in the north-western district of Chapainawabgonj in Rajshahi Division. The photograph was taken by Jinnatun Nesa, 17.
**Glossary of Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BANBIES</td>
<td>Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics</td>
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<td>BBS</td>
<td>Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td>BIDS</td>
<td>Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Constitutional Assembly</td>
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<td>CAMPE</td>
<td>Campaign for Popular Education</td>
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<td>CPN</td>
<td>Communist Party of Nepal</td>
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<td>DAM</td>
<td>Dhaka Ahsania Mission</td>
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<td>DG</td>
<td>Director General</td>
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<td>DSHE</td>
<td>Directorate of Secondary &amp; Higher Education</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<td>ELCG</td>
<td>Education Local Consultative Group</td>
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<td>GEM</td>
<td>Gender Empowerment Measure</td>
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<td>GIP</td>
<td>Girls Incentive Programme</td>
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<td>GoB</td>
<td>Government of Bangladesh</td>
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<td>GPI</td>
<td>Genuine Progress Index</td>
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<td>IER</td>
<td>Institute of Education and Research</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MoWCA</td>
<td>Ministry of Women and Children Affairs</td>
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<td>MoPME</td>
<td>Ministry of Primary and Mass Education</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Members of the Parliament</td>
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<td>MoEWOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment</td>
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<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Center</td>
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<td>NAEM</td>
<td>National Academy for Educational Management</td>
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<td>NAPE</td>
<td>National Academy for Primary Education</td>
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<td>NER</td>
<td>National Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PEDP</td>
<td>Primary Education Development Programme</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>ROSA</td>
<td>Regional Office for South Asia</td>
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<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
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<td>SWAN</td>
<td>South Asian Women’s Network</td>
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<td>TT</td>
<td>Teachers Training</td>
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<td>UCEP</td>
<td>Under-Privileged Children’s Education Programme</td>
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<td>UML</td>
<td>Unified Marxist Leninist</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNGEI</td>
<td>United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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1. Background

This report is on the proceedings of a day-long high level workshop on ‘Gender Equality in Education: Beyond Numbers’ involving Education Ministers and women parliamentarians of the two countries Bangladesh and Nepal. The event, held on 4 December 2010, was organised jointly by the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Bangladesh, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and UNICEF Bangladesh.

With a population of over 130 million, Bangladesh has nearly 20 million children between the ages of 6-10 years. Almost half of them are girls. The country has one of the largest primary education systems in the world. There are 81,508 primary level educational institutions in Bangladesh—not including non-formal education schools1. Since 1990, primary education has been free and compulsory for all children in the country. Since then, remarkable progress has been made in increasing primary enrolment improving from 60.5% in 1990 to 93.9% in 2009. In fact, the primary school net enrolment rate for girls (99.1%) is now higher than that for boys (89.1%)2.

However, enrolment ratios do not show what children are actually learning. Low attendance, low survival, high drop-out rates and low levels of achievement indicate a significant problem in terms of quality of education. In this country, there are still approximately 1.5 million primary age girls out of school3. Secondary education shares many of the problems of primary education, but the gender bias becomes increasingly obvious at this level.

The United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) was launched in Bangladesh in June 2006 with the goal of ensuring equality in education with particular emphasis on narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education to ensure that by 2015 all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to all levels of education. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is committed to promoting girls education and in this context it is expected that involvement of political leaders would provide a window of opportunity to raise the profile of girls’ education.

In 2009 a historical achievement was made in Bangladesh. For the first time since independence a notable number of female Members of the Parliament (MPs) were elected. There are 45 (33%) women members of the Constitutional Assembly (CA) representing different geographical region, caste, culture, ethnic groups and economic

1 DPE Annual Sector Performance Report 2010
2 Ibid
3 UNGEI Consultation Meeting Report, September 2008
classes focusing on inclusiveness. This inclusive representation of women in the CA has been a source of energy for enhancing girls’ education and stepping up efforts to eliminate social discrimination of women in the country. As role models and respected representatives of the people, MPs are in a position to mobilise support for girls’ education and ensure that gender equity and equality issues are included in the programmes of political parties.

"In a country like Bangladesh, as in other countries, public representatives can play an important role in promoting gender equality. MPs can be particularly effective in mobilising and motivating families and local communities to uphold the rights of women and girls with strong political commitment, pro people strategies and realistic goals, female MPs can really make a difference in promoting gender equality in education." – Rasheda K Choudhury, Executive Director CAMPE and Former Advisor to the Caretaker Government

"The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the Ministry of Education have instructed all educational institutions to incorporate gender equality principles into their policies and strategies. The purpose of this is advancement of women, introduction of good practices as well as promotion and ensuring of equal access, opportunity and treatment for boys and girls and men and women.." – Professor Taslima Begum, Dhaka TT College Principal

1.1 Workshop Objectives & Agenda

The workshop brought together MPs (all women MPs as well as MPs from Education and Women and Children’s Affairs Standing Committees), ministers for Education and Primary and Mass Education, Women and Children’s Affairs (MoWCA), as well as Secretaries, Joint Secretaries and high level government officials of the above-mentioned ministries. The event also brought together NGOs working in education, civil societies, UN agencies, development partners, academia, BBS, BANBIES, Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG), selected women MPs from Nepal, education expert from UNICEF headquarters and from India, and other educationalists from Bangladesh.
The specific objectives of bringing together such a gathering were:

1. To strengthen the national political commitment to improve the scenario of girls’ education and promote gender equality in education through policy changes and necessary advocacy; and

2. To strengthen networking of girls’ education watch groups at national and South Asian regional level.

The expected outcomes of the workshop included:

- Parliamentarians equipped with knowledge and motivation to advocate for increased resources for education in general and for girls’ education in particular;
- Parliamentarians motivated to use some of their Constituency Development Fund for education;
- Parliamentarians committed to contribute in their respective constituencies to mobilise public support for gender equality in education; and
- A set of recommendations for future action.

Divided into four sessions, the first half of the workshop was dedicated to setting the tone through an Introduction and Exposure Session. This was followed by an Inaugural Ceremony which progressed into a Planning Session that included open discussion and presentation of some proposed action points. The workshop was concluded through a late afternoon session.

In the introductory session, chaired by Al Haj Momtaz Begum, MP, Member Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, the key note paper ‘Gender Equality in Education in Bangladesh: Progress and Challenges’ was presented by Mr Samir R. Nath, Research Coordinator, BRAC. The participants were also given a contextual perspective through a ‘Regional Overview and Context on UNGEI’ by Ms Raka Rashid of the Regional UNGEI Secretariat, UNICEF, ROSA. The contextual perspective was further reinforced by the speech delivered by Mr. Shankar Pandey, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Nepal and sharing of the Nepal experience by Hon’ble Radha Gyawali, Constituent Assembly Member/ Member of Parliament, Central Committee Member, CPN (UML). Professor Veena Sikri of Jamia Millia Islamia University, India also spoke in this session, sharing some good practices in India related to girls’ education and giving valuable suggestions for strengthening the South-South cooperation.

Executive Director CAMPE and Former Advisor to the Caretaker Government. The session also had a number of panel speakers, namely Ms. Cheryl Gregory Faye, Senior Education Advisor, Head of UNGEI Secretariat, New York UNICEF headquarters, Hon'ble Suprava Ghimire, Constituent Assembly Member/Member of Parliament, Nepali Congress, and Carel De Rooy, Country Representative, UNICEF Bangladesh.

In the closing session, a way forward was presented in some action points by Ms Raka Rashid. The closing addresses were delivered by the Chief Guest Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid, MP, Hon'ble Minister for Education and the Chair Dr Shirin Sharmin Choudhury, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Women and Children Affairs.

The contents of this report, including all data quoted are from the workshop speeches, presentations and discussions.

What is UNGEI?

The United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a global endeavour to ensure that the right of all girls to basic quality education is fulfilled. UNGEI’s vision is a world where all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realize their full potential and contribute to transforming societies where gender equality becomes a reality. 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. A regional partnership supports country partnerships through, among others, evidence based advocacy and promotion of South-South initiatives.

UNGEI was launched in Bangladesh in June 2006 with 6 members only; presently the forum comprises around 20 organisations/agencies from relevant government Ministries/Directorate (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MoWCA) and implementing directorates; NGOs (CAMPE, BRAC, Action Aid, Step Towards Development, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Under-Privileged Children’s Education Programme (UCEP), CARE Bangladesh, Save the Children); civil society groups, academic/research institutions (Institute of Education and Research (IER), Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)) and UN agencies (UNFPA, ILO, UNESCO, and UNICEF).

Amongst these, six organisations are acting as the Core Group members: MoE and CAMPE (Chair and Co-Chair respectively for UNGEI Bangladesh), DSHE, UNICEF, UNESCO, UCEP, and CARE Bangladesh.
“We know that we have many problems in gender equality and education. The Government is addressing these hurdles through strategic planning, the PRSP and MDGs. Still, concerted efforts will be required to address the particular challenges of easing the transition of females from the secondary to the tertiary levels and thereafter to the workplace.” – Md. Abdul Hamid, Advocate, MP, Hon’ble Speaker, Bangladesh Parliament

“I can boldly say that the parliamentarians are very much concerned with minimizing disparity not only in gender but in other respects as well. Our members are very much concerned with their own constituencies. I invite the opposition party to work together in Parliament to minimize the gender discrimination and other issues I think we can do a lot for the people of Bangladesh.” – Vice Principal Md. Abdus Shahid, MP, Hon’ble Chief Whip, Bangladesh Parliament

“We believe that we must give equal opportunity to girls for higher studies as well as in all other spheres. We realize the necessity of bringing about a fundamental change in the education system, which will be done through qualitative improvement. With this end in sight the new Education Policy is being taken up. I am sure that my fellow parliamentarians will be motivated by the decision to set up an all party parliamentary group and will prompt them to become more active in this area. I assure you that we will give the group all our cooperation and stand beside them.” – Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid, MP, Hon’ble Minister for Education
2. Setting the Context

South Asia

In the 1990s when the total primary enrolment rate in South Asia was under 60%. Since then the region has made significant progress towards the goal of Education For All by 2015. The Maldives and Sri Lanka have full enrolment at primary education level while Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka (0.99) have achieved gender parity in primary school enrolment. On the other hand, boys in Bangladesh are slightly disadvantaged in relation to girls (as the GPI exceeds 1.0). However, even though the number of out of school children has decreased significantly in the region, the pace of progress is too slow. At the current rate 8 million children in South Asia will still be out of primary school in 2015.

The completion of at least four years of schooling is widely considered to be a pre-requisite for attaining a sustainable level of literacy. But while a high percentage of certified teachers implies that the majority of the teaching force is trained and have the necessary skills to teach and use the available teaching materials in an effective manner, many children in this region are leaving school without basic skills. The quality of education is a big issue here but the region is poorly covered by international assessments that measure disparities in student learning achievements among countries. Currently however, the indicator Survival Rate to Grade 5 is being used in the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report as a proxy indicator to measure the quality of education.

Compared to the high enrolment levels the pupil survival rate to Grade 5 is considerably lower, especially for Bangladesh (NER 89%). Interestingly, in all countries except India more girls than boys reach Grade 5. This indicates that once girls in South Asia have access to school, they often seem to do better than boys in the long term⁴. But huge challenges remain in increasing enrolment particularly of girls from the poorest families in the most remote areas or the most culturally conservative settings. In fact, multiple causes prevent children in South Asia from enrolling, completing or getting quality education. Moreover, in countries where gender parity in education has been largely

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⁴ There are no data available for Afghanistan and the Maldives in the EFA GMR 2010
achieved, such as in Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka, gender parity in basic education has not contributed to girls’ social and political empowerment\(^5\).

This can be illustrated by the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)—the dark blue lines—used in the Human Development Report, which looks at social, economic and political participation such as: seats held in parliament by women; female legislators, senior officials and managers; female professional and technical workers; ratio of estimated female to male earned income; year women received the right to vote and stand for election; year a woman became Presiding Officer of parliament or of one of its houses for the first time; and women in ministerial positions.


Compared to the high gender parity in primary education—illustrated by the light blue lines – the GEM shows the very low gender equality in society across the region.

**Bangladesh**

Substantial improvement has been achieved in the education sector since the independence of Bangladesh. The number of primary schools which was under 30000 is now over 82000, and the number of secondary schools has increased from over 5000 to over 18000. The number of primary school students has also risen from 5.2 million to as much as 16 million. There has also been a significant increase at secondary level—from

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\(^5\) Roshan Chitrakar (2009) *Overcoming Barriers to Girls’ Education in South Asia*, UNGEI, UNICEF ROSA
1.4 million in 1970 to the current 6.8 million. While four decades ago there were only five formal universities, there are 82 formal and 51 non-formal universities in the country today.

Participation of female students and teachers in primary education has also steadily increased. Fifty percent of primary school students are now girls and over 40% of teachers at this level are women. The percentage of girl students at secondary level is even higher at over 53%, however not even ¼th of teachers at this level is women.

The percentage of girl students in madrassas is also high at 49.2% but only 10% of teachers are women. At college level, it has not been possible yet to reach the 50% gender parity mark for students and teachers.

Nevertheless, overall female participation in enrolment and attendance in primary and secondary education has improved much. In the primary level with regard to completion rate girls are much ahead than boys, but lag behind at secondary level. From Grade 9 the proportion of girl students decreases from that of male students. Many students, particularly girls, also drop out of school. There are multiple reasons for this ranging from poverty, child labour and early marriage to poor quality of teaching, lack of care in school and at home, sexual harassment, etc. Some of the problems could be addressed by the
school management committee, but here too is a gap as the problems specific to girl students and women teachers are not discussed in the committee meetings.

Although the government’s stipend programme for girls has succeeded in enhancing enrolment and attendance, it has not been able to play a role in learning achievement. Learning achievement is more among boys due to a lack of expectation from girls in this regard. This has implications in the long run, for example, women lag much behind men in management and administrative positions. In vocational education also women have not been able to make much headway. In all of Bangladesh only 3% of those studying at secondary level are opting for vocational education. Girl student participation is very little—below 25%.

The situation is similar for professional education in which the 50% mark has not been reached yet in terms of female students and teachers. Although there has been some progress with regard to university education for women it is still less than 25% for both students and teachers. The proportion of female students has not reached 50% in any faculty; particularly the proportion in the science and commerce faculties is very little.
3. Good Practices in Gender Equality

The participants of the workshop from Nepal, India and Bangladesh shared some of the good practices that have contributed to advancing the cause of girls’ education and gender equality in their countries.

“We are not talking about education only for its own sake but for the sake of educating girl children so that they can become fully involved in the democratic processes. In this sense the purpose of education not only has a cultural connotation but a political connotation as well. The cultural connotation is equally important because the education process of every society has base of its own cultural traditions. All of us in South Asia have to make education specific to our own regions and countries so that it becomes really meaningful for our peoples. The best way to do this is to share experiences in South Asia, to learn from each other’s best practices and so to move ahead.” - Professor Veena Sikri, Jamia Millia Islamia University, India

Some examples of good practices in India:

- India became one of the 135 countries to make education a fundamental right when the Right to Education Act came into force in April 2010.

- In Bihar, the ‘Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojna’ is a scheme under which a schoolgirl gets a cheque of Rs 2,000 upon passing class VIII to buy a bicycle so that she can go to school every day. The scheme has helped check the dropout rate of schoolgirls to a great extent across the state.

- Since the 1960s India is implementing the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, the largest school-lunch programme in the world. The programme feeds students with a hot mid-day meal every day across the nation.

- A scheme called the ‘Delhi Ladli Scheme’ is implemented since 2008 for the protection of the girl child. The purpose is to enhance the status of girl children in the society as well as in the family, ensuring proper education to make them self-reliant. Periodic payments by the Government are made in the name of the girl child—when she is registered under the scheme at birth, when she enrolls in school, and when she graduates and enrolls in secondary school. By the time she completes school she already has a substantial amount saved.

- There is an educational TV channel in India called Gyan Darshan, set up by the national Telecaster Doordarshan and Indira Ghandi National Open University. The channel airs programmes for schools, teacher enrichment education, open and distance learning, vocational courses and courses for disadvantaged sections of India.
“Nepal has enjoyed a very cordial, friendly and good relationship with Bangladesh since its independence. Our relationship is very symbolic and important in South Asia. We share many common views in international forums including the SAARC forum. Our challenges and goals in girls education are very similar.” – Mr. Shankar Pandey, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Education

“We all women parliamentarians have started a movement for girls’ education and for inclusive representation of women in all spheres of life. We get one million rupees per year for the development of our constituencies. Most of us allocate portions of that money for the development of education, to repair school buildings, provide school furniture, computers etc. The women of Nepal have high expectations from us–we have to fulfill their expectations.” – Hon'ble Radha Gyawali, Constituent Assembly Member/ Member of Parliament, Central Committee Member, CPN (UML)

Some examples of good practices in Nepal:

- A Nepal Parliamentary Initiative:- advocacy for a gender perspective in national policies and processes: making the constitution and Education Act gender-friendly; budget more gender responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups—caste, class, ethnicity, language, geographic location; and 20% to 100% allocation to education from the Constituent Development Fund.
- Constituent Assembly members visit schools in remote areas where girl student enrollment and retention are poor. They offer suggestions and discuss with the Ministry of Education for effective policies.
- Scholarship programmes for all girls from grade 1 to grade 8, and scholarship up to higher education. A School Meals Programme that provides nutritious mid-day meals to primary school children living in Far-Western districts. A Girls Incentive Programme (GIP) distributes two liters of vegetable cooking oil to families.
- Nursing schools have been established for girls with full scholarships specially in Muslim areas. There is also a quota for higher learning for women such as in engineering and medicine.
- Legal provisions ensure at least one woman teacher in every school, and women representation in district education committees, school management committees, and parent teacher associations.
"We are committed to bring all children to school by 2011 and achieve an illiteracy free Bangladesh by 2014. We are proceeding with that goal. We have been able to bring enrolment to 97% this year which leaves only 3% to be covered. We firmly believe that we shall be able to achieve 99% if not 100% by the next year. I request my colleagues, public representatives, media representatives and NGO representatives to conduct random visits of schools, which will help improve our education system. …We are committed to achieve education for all and a digital Bangladesh so that our country no longer lags behind other countries on the map” – Motahar Hossain MP, Hon’ble State Minister, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

"We have achieved much progress in education since Primary Education was nationalised in our country by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Now, for the first time we have a National Education Policy which is comprehensive and touches upon all aspects including gender equality.” – Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Hon’ble State Minister for Women and Children Affairs

Some examples of good practices in Bangladesh:

- A list of the out-of-school children in each catchment area has been compiled with the aim of bringing those children to school in 2011.
- A mid-day meal programme for primary school children is being planned to be started from 2011.
- Under the new Education Policy of Bangladesh primary education is free for all and compulsory up to class-VIII.
- The stipend programme for girls is up to grade 12 and education for girls up to degree level is free. Free text books are also distributed to students up to class 12.
- Legal measures are in place to ensure punishment through mobile courts for sexual harassment of girl students.
- While a new curricula is being developed that incorporates issues such as gender equality, equal rights, respect for women etc. a booklet on violence against women, safety of girl students, and health awareness is ready for immediate teaching in classrooms.
- Many government officials/MPs are taking personal initiatives. Examples include one initiative of setting up schools in 38 tea gardens for the children of tea garden workers, and a few other initiatives to help disadvantaged children enroll in school.
4. Issues of Concern in Gender Equality

Common issues of concern in the area of girls’ education and gender equality emerged as country-specific information was shared and views were exchanged among the workshop participants. It was agreed that the reasons that girls were lagging behind in education and other areas were the same throughout South Asia. Some of the most common issues discussed included the traditional social perception of women, low self-esteem of girls, intra-household inequalities etc.

“Let us be clear that emphasis on girl’s education does not imply that boys are ignored. In fact, there is considerable evidence that emphasis on girls’ education is very good for boys as well. Indeed, the benefits of girls’ education ripple through families, communities, sectors, nations, and the whole world! That is why we must give the highest priority to delivering better education to girls, so that when they become women they deliver to humanity all the goodness that we treasure.” – Cheryl Gregory Faye, Senior Education Advisor, Head of UNGEI Secretariat

“There are very good policies in Nepal but implementation has always been difficult. So we have made it our duty to monitor whether the actions and policies are implemented or not. We intend to take a big leap by being active in Parliament as well as taking part in the family and at the different local levels.” Hon’ble Suprava Ghimire, Constituent Assembly Member/ Member of Parliament, Nepali Congress

“We all know that the shortest path to developing a nation is through development of females. Bangladesh simply cannot afford to have so many females growing up with no education. If a significantly higher stipend could be allocated to girls in rural areas after Grade 8 and above it might reduce early marriage providing multiple development externalities such as better educated females, reduced fertility rates, etc. So this could be a very strategic investment to consider.” – Carel De Rooy, Country Representative, UNICEF Bangladesh
The issues highlighted were:

- **Gender analysis of national curricula:** The focus should be on inculcating respect for women and women’s contribution as part of the educational process. For this purpose a gender analysis of the national curricula should be done on a South Asian basis. In this way, the South-South cooperation might also be extended in terms of inclusion of women in education.

- **Role model for girls:** One of the reasons that girl students drop out is that they do not see a world where they have a role to play. In the socialisation process girls are made to think that they have limited options in life. This low self-esteem could be changed gradually by presenting them with examples of high achieving women. To go beyond numbers the fundamental question has to be answered—whether women exist everywhere in society’s thoughts, challenges, decision-making, administration and politics. However, particularly in rural areas the role models in the teaching profession for example are men, specifically in math and science subjects. This has implications for girls, as the majority of them decide to study commerce or arts rather than science. Furthermore, all religious teachers are men in the secondary schools of the country. The implications of this for the education system as well as the society’s thinking process and morals need to be looked into.

- **Unity for a greater cause:** Unity for the cause of education and the cause of women would make it possible to work at a greater scale. It would be necessary to put aside differences in ideology and party programmes to overcome discrimination against women.

- **Family responsibility and civic awareness:** From the moment a girl child is born, the focus is on preparing for her marriage instead of preparing for her education and establishment in life. As she grows up she is treated more as a
‘girl’ than a human being and is made to feel that she has to tread carefully in a world designed for men. It is the responsibility of the family, society, educational institutions and the state to make the girl child aware of the importance of education, work and self-sufficiency.

- **Intra-household inequalities:** Efforts taking place at the national level need to be linked with what is happening at the family level. Intra-household inequalities exist in terms of education, health, nutrition and development opportunities. Mass awareness-raising is necessary here, but it will take place only when families can be made economically solvent and empowered. As families become smaller some examples appear in which both daughter and son get equal opportunities. But even then inequalities exist.

- **Challenge compromising attitude:** The society compromises with religion, class inequality and gender inequality. This attitude must change, as passive acceptance cannot move the country forward. The education process has to be developed in that line to transform the social mindset for eliminating discrimination between men and women, for giving respect to women and for challenging economic disparity. However, only gender sensitive education would not be enough to achieve this; the law on property rights has to change. As long as the bigger share goes to the male he will continue to consider himself superior to the female.

- **Decentralisation of education system:** The focus should be on the system as a whole. For primary education, an upazila-based, responsive adaptation plan needs to be drawn up with adequate resource allocation, addressing the multiple-disadvantages of girl children. MPs have a big role in their respective constituencies in terms of contributing in the allocation for education, as well as monitoring the system extending support so that girls have greater access to education.

- **Appropriate education and training:** In moving forward, it is important to create an environment for education skills and training appropriate for the person and for the 21st century without compromising on gender at any level.
5. Recommendations & Ideas for Action

The following recommendations were made for the purpose of achieving gender equality in education in Bangladesh:

1. Establish linkage through UNGEI with the education sub-network of SWAN—the Jamia Millia Islamia University initiative of a South Asian Women’s Network.

2. Establish linkage between micro-credit, livelihood & development activities and education. For example, giving incentive to parents for sending girl children to school through micro-credit programmes/rebates for every year the girl child stays at school, as well as empowering women through sustainable livelihoods.

3. Put in force time-bound target policies to encourage girls at all levels of education.

4. Include gender contents in PTIs, NAPE, TTs and NAEM.

5. Highlight female role models and gender sensitivity through curriculum and practice. In this connection, conduct a gender analysis of the national curriculum.
Proposed Ideas for Action

The following points of action were agreed upon in principle:

- Establishment of an all party parliamentary group on gender equality led by Speaker of Parliament
- Conduct advocacy to enhance national budgetary allocation for promoting gender equality and girls’ & boys’ education
- Active and supportive participation through school visits to suggest options to school management
- Increase the number of personal initiatives utilising resources allocated for each constituency
- Inter-district sharing of learning and experiences
- Greater South-South regional cooperation through regional network