

'LAST CALL FOR 2005'

CONSENSUS STATEMENT OF UNGEI TO THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP

The 2005 promise. The elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 in order to ensure that, by 2015, all children enjoy their right to a primary education, and that all countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The 2003 reality. Gender disparities in education are persistent and deep-rooted. Poverty is a major impediment to Education For All, and HIV/AIDS represents a severe threat. Increasingly, emergencies, from civil conflicts to natural disasters, are disrupting a country's progress and planning. With inadequate resources and a lack of disaggregated data, a country's capacity to deal with these challenges is often compromised, especially in the absence of good governance.

Last call for 2005. Nevertheless, the goal of gender parity in education by 2005 is still achievable and it is up to us to act now. Successful countries have combined political commitment with clear strategies and sound investments. They have engaged a wide range of partners across different sectors. Supported by civil society and international partners, they are delivering on their promises.

We must do more with what we know, urgently stepping up our efforts to accelerate progress. With governments taking the lead, the international community must better coordinate its support. Civil society, the private sector, families and children themselves must unite to achieve the 2005 goal.

UNICEF and all partner agencies concerned with supporting girls' education can take even greater advantage of the potential of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. The following key action points, developed through a consultative process of key stakeholders in the Initiative, are recommended as a way to accelerate progress towards the 2005 goal.

Scale up efforts by strengthening and expanding partnerships that ensure sustainable outcomes.

- Build strong networks at national, regional and global levels, including governments, multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector.
- Use integrated approaches that actively involve not only ministries of finance but ministries such as agriculture, health, social affairs, labour, and natural resources.
- Develop the capacity of communities to participate in education, including local government and civil authorities, parent/teachers associations, and children and adolescents.

Strengthen existing synergies that focus on gender equity goals.

- Put gender at the centre of all relevant policies, plans, programmes, budgets and initiatives.
- Intensify work on literacy and other programmes that empower women.
- Use the UNGEI network to strengthen girls' education within initiatives and processes such as FTI, the GE acceleration strategy, UN Decade for Literacy, and other frameworks for cooperation such as the UN Development Assistance Framework.

Reduce the direct and indirect costs of education, especially for poor households.

- Guarantee and support free and compulsory primary education as a policy of all states.
- Implement additional measures for the poorest and most disadvantaged groups such as scholarships and incentives, flexible uniform policies, provision of learning materials and supplies, provision of school lunches and take-home rations.
- Anchor educational interventions within broader strategies for poverty alleviation, such as community-based economic enhancement programmes that address issues of child labour and the opportunity costs of schooling girls.

Allocate resources to ensure both gender equity and efficiency.

- Mobilize and enhance the utilization of existing and additional resources for girls' education.
- Give priority to targeted interventions that help to eliminate gender disparity.
- Sharpen the focus on girls' education in national development plans and external development assistance.
- Ensure that resources for education reach the level of the school and build local and community capacity for their effective use and management.
- Increase short-term investments to support girls' education as a priority in order to avoid the higher costs of remedial measures in the future.

Ensure quality as well as access.

- Invest in early childhood development, especially for girls.
- Mainstream and scale up proven measures to promote learning in gender-sensitive, child-friendly environments with appropriate curriculum.
- Support innovative delivery models that involve flexible, girl friendly approaches that reach remote and marginalized groups including girls who are minorities, stateless, displaced, disabled, HIV/AIDS-affected, drop-outs, orphans, poor, working, living on the streets.
- Provide adequate infrastructure, including schools close to homes, adequate water and sanitation, safe and secure learning environments; and enough trained teachers, especially women, and their deployment to underserved areas.
- Integrate health and nutrition services and skills-based curriculum in education.

Confront HIV/AIDS with a gender-sensitive approach.

- Support appropriate life-skills based education that empowers girls to protect themselves.
- Secure the rights of children affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly girls, including those living with the disease, orphans and other vulnerable children, to complete a quality basic education.
- Reduce the damage done to education systems by the HIV/AIDS pandemic by more effective management of recruitment, training, deployment and support for teachers and administrators.

Secure and sustain education for all children in emergency and post-emergency situations, with a special focus on girls.

- Support education as a key response to humanitarian crises by providing safe and secure learning environments for all children and supporting a 'return to normalcy.'
- Use education as a key tool for national reconstruction efforts in post-conflict situations by promoting values of peace, tolerance and respect for human rights.

Use disaggregated data and local information for planning, monitoring and accountability.

- Strengthen use of sub-national, gender-disaggregated data to pinpoint disparities for targeted policies and programmes.
- Highlight gender analysis within other categories of disadvantage, such urban/rural residence, household poverty, ethnicity.
- Improve and/or establish regular monitoring systems that measure quality and achievement along with access.
- Promote the use of local knowledge and qualitative evidence and analysis to complement statistical data.
- Encourage the use of process indicators to measure political commitment and policy development.
- Document and disseminate lessons learned and good practices in girls' education.

END

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