

East Asia and Pacific United Nations Girls' Education Initiative Bi-monthly Newsletter Issue No. 1 July 2009



Welcome to the first issue of the East Asia and Pacific [United Nations Girls' Education Initiative \(UNGEI\)](#) Newsletter. UNGEI is a partnership of organizations dedicated to promoting girls' education and gender equality in education. The regional UNGEI was launched in May 2002 and since then is still driven and committed to accelerating action on girls' education and ensuring that every girl, and every boy, receives quality education. The East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI aims to place girls' education, and issues of gender in education on the regional agenda, to develop girls' education advocacy tools, to share best practices and information on girls' education, and to establish and strengthen new and existing linkages with other groups and networks working for education and gender issues. For more information regarding our work, click [here](#).

Through this bi-monthly Newsletter, you will receive updates on national, regional and global UNGEI, news about gender and education initiatives, announcements of workshops, seminars and meetings, and have opportunities to contribute your own personal and organizational experiences, research findings and resources/publications with others. We aim to better connect the region and hope that this initiative is successful to that end.

IN FOCUS – GENDER, EDUCATION AND HIV/AIDS



(Photo: UNICEF/HQ06-1478)

In Asia, an estimated 5 million people were living with HIV in 2007. That year, about 380,000 people were newly infected. The epidemic has affected this region on a varying scale – in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand, HIV prevalence has declined, while in Indonesia (especially in the Papua province) and Vietnam, they are growing. Still, this region is considered in overall to be of low prevalence compared to the rate it has impacted other regions in the world.

According to the Report of the Commission on AIDS in Asia (2008), the spread of HIV in Asia is predominantly driven by transmission among most at risk populations such as sex workers and their

clients, injecting drug users and men having sex with men. Although the percentage among men is still higher than among women in most populations in Asia-Pacific, this is beginning to change as the proportion of women living with HIV is climbing slowly (the percentage of HIV positive women has risen from 19% in 2000 to 24% in 2007¹).

National data gives a clearer picture of the spread of the HIV virus among women and girls. The 2007 AIDS Epidemic Update by UNAIDS reports that one third of people living with HIV in Vietnam were women in 2006. In Thailand, more than 4 in 10 (or 43%) new infections in 2005 were among women, the majority of whom probably acquired HIV from husbands or partners who had been infected either during unsafe paid sex or through injecting drug use². In the report titled “Women and Girls – Confronting HIV and AIDS in Malaysia”, it highlighted that by 2006, women and girls made up almost one fifth of newly infected persons. In the Pacific, the Ministry of Health in Fiji reports that since 2003, 47% of the new infections were among women.

The Commission on AIDS in Asia also estimates that up to 10 million Asian women sell sex and at least 75 million men buy it regularly, which in turn puts spouses and partners at more risk of the virus. In the context that men who have sex with men are either married or will get married, significant numbers of ostensibly “low-risk” women who only have sex with their husbands are also exposed to HIV.

Not only are women more vulnerable to HIV infection, they also largely bear the devastating impacts of HIV/AIDS. In addition to their existing workloads, women are burdened by the care giving responsibilities within the household. They often are unable to access prevention, treatment and care services for themselves, face extreme stigma and discrimination, and in many situations, are deprived of their property and inheritance rights³. Gender bias and discrimination, preference for sons, early marriage, sexual violence and human trafficking are key factors that increase this vulnerability to HIV.

To address these key issues, it is necessary to assess the role of gender inequalities in the epidemic and design policies and programmes that deal with the specific vulnerabilities that women face. Evidence has shown that girls’ schooling has been found to be associated with several factors linked to HIV reduction. Further, education has been shown to be a significant factor in delaying age at marriage. Therefore, facilitating community-based advocacy for promoting girls’ education, lobbying national and local governments to create incentives and decrease barriers to educating girls, ensuring that local administrations make sure that schools are safe and provide a conducive environment for girls to learn, and providing skills to increase economic opportunities are extremely important.

According to Karen Hardee of Population Action International, the lack of women’s access to education can be a major contributor to the spread of AIDS saying that for every year of education a woman receives, she has 7% decreased risk of HIV infection.

Below are links to a selection of recent articles and resources on gender, education and HIV/AIDS which we thought you might find informative and useful.

[“Women and Girls: Confronting HIV and AIDS in Malaysia”](#) – UNICEF Malaysia and Ministry of Health Malaysia, December 2008

[“Striving Towards Justice: Transforming the Dynamics of Human Interaction”](#) - statement by Bahai International, 28 February 2009

¹ Report of the Commission on AIDS in Asia, Redefining AIDS in Asia: Crafting an effective response, Oxford University Press, 2008

² UNAIDS/WHO (2007) AIDS Epidemic Update, Geneva: UNAIDS

³ UNDP 2008, Women and HIV in the Asia-Pacific Region, A Development Practitioner’s Guide

[“Gender Inequality, care and the AIDS pandemic”](#) - HIV and AIDS reporter, 21 April 2009

[“HIV Vulnerabilities Faced by Women Migrants: from Asia to the Arab States”](#) – UNDP, September 2008

[“Failing Women, Failing Children: HIV, Vertical Transmission and Women's Health”](#) – The International Treatment Preparedness Coalition, May 2009

[“Women Demand Political Commitment to Fight HIV/AIDS”](#) – ActionAid India, 30 June 2009

[“Gender Finally Moving to Forefront of AIDS Fight”](#) – IPS, 7 July 2009

[“Transforming the National AIDS Response: Gender Equality, Women's Rights and the ‘Three Ones’”](#) - Executive Summary of UNIFEM forthcoming report

The following is a list of organizations and resource hubs with information on HIV/AIDS and gender as one of its themes.

[UNGEI Resources on HIV/AIDS](#) – A list of resources produced by various partner organizations on girls' education and combating HIV/AIDS.

[The Global Coalition of Women and AIDS](#) – Launched by UNAIDS, the Coalition works at global and national levels to highlight the effects of AIDS on women and girls and to stimulate concrete and effective action to prevent the spread of HIV.

[HIV & AIDS Data Hub Asia and Pacific](#) – An online resource providing HIV/AIDS data and analysis of country-specific and regional trends for 24 countries in the Asia-Pacific. The Data Hub is a collaboration of partners including UNICEF, UNAIDS, Asian Development Bank and World Health Organization.

[UNESCO HIV/AIDS Education Databanks](#) - A valuable and interactive resource tool for the prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS through education.

[UNIFEM Gender and HIV/AIDS Web Portal](#) – Includes research, studies and surveys; training materials; multi-media advocacy tools; speeches and presentations; press releases and current news; best practices and personal stories; campaign actions and opinion pieces by leading commentators.

[Women, Children and HIV/AIDS](#) – Resource library on HIV, mother-to-child transmission of HIV (MTCT), and other related topics.

[ILO PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE AFFECTS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON GENDER](#)

The East Asia and Pacific UNGEI working group would like to share the summary of a recent media panel discussion on the affects of the financial crisis on the female work force in the Asia-Pacific region along with the group's recommendations on how to alleviate this issue and empower women to take action. [[read more](#)]

[EAP UNGEI CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS – DEADLINE JULY 17](#)

In an effort to better understand the impacts of the current financial crisis on the education system and to propose responses to those impacts, the East Asia and Pacific UNGEI working group invites proposals for commissioned papers. The theme of this initiative is: **National and sub-national studies on the gender-specific impacts of the financial crisis on education.** [[read more](#)]

[ABOUT THE EAP UNGEI GROUP](#)

The East Asia and Pacific UNGEI Working Group was launched in May 2002 and seeks to establish networks and partnerships among experts and organizations promoting education and gender rights. At country level, EAP UNGEI is active in Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Viet Nam. [[read more](#)]

[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST](#)

In an effort to become a potential resource for the region, we have endorsed a joint annual work plan for 2009 that includes activities to strengthen communication and information sharing functions. Sign up to be a part of our regional mailing list to receive and share updates and information on regional and global publications, resources and activities on girls' education and gender in education. Click [here](#) to read a note from the co-chairs of the regional working group. E-mail Kanitha (kkongrukreatiyos@unicef.org), our Communication Focal Point, with your name, affiliation, and contact details to join immediately.

[GENDER PHOTO CONTEST 2009 – UNESCO AND EAP/SA UNGEI](#)



As part of the initiative to promote gender equality in education, UNESCO Bangkok, along with East Asia and Pacific and South Asia UNGEI, is pleased to invite entries for the Photo Contest 2009 on the theme of **Reversing Realities: Seeking Gender Equality in Education.** All entries must be received at the UNESCO Bangkok office by **July 31.** [[read more](#)]

[REGIONAL NEWS](#)

Cook Islands – [Women Gain Better Understanding of the Science & Technology Field](#) by Matariki Wilson (Cook Island News, 10 June 2009)

East Timor – [Politics: Women Take the Plunge](#) by Matt Crook (IPS, 8 July 2009)

G8 – [‘Just Invest in Women’](#) by Sabina Zaccaro (IPS, 8 July 2009)

PARTNER PROFILES

The [Baha'i International Community](#) is an international faith-based organization with roots in over 180 countries. It promotes education for girls and women at the regional level, as well as human rights, and social and sustainable development. For 60 years, they have worked on women's advancement and gender equality through participation and contribution to the session of the Commission of the Status of Women, through strengthening the UN's gender mechanisms and through programme support and implementation efforts of its national affiliates.

[UNAIDS](#), is one of the UN agencies working on the AIDS response to help prevent new HIV infections, care for people living with HIV, and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. As gender is an integral factor in determining an individual's vulnerability to HIV infection, his or her ability to access care, support or treatment, and the ability to cope when infected or affected by HIV; UNAIDS seeks to address gender inequalities and to increase the capacity of women and girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV prevention.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Towards Inclusive Policy and Programmes on transmission of HIV in Intimate Partner Relationships by United Nations, ASEAN Foundation, APN+ and ICW. July 13-14. Bangkok, Thailand

- The meeting seeks to address the issue of HIV transmission in intimate partner relationships, or long term spouses or partners of men and women whose high risk behaviour puts them also at risk of HIV through a desk review of data from South/South East Asia, the relevance of these issues to the countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and the policies and programmes needed for these issues.

[9th International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific](#) by the Coordinating Ministry of People's Affair, AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific, International AIDS Society, UNAIDS and National AIDS Commission. August 9-13. Bali, Indonesia

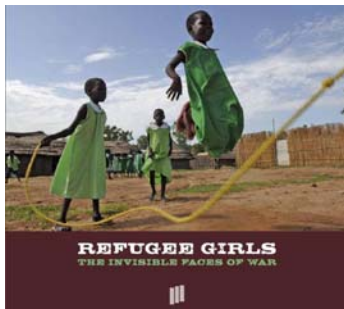
- Special Session at the 9th ICAAP: Enhancing HIV Prevention for Adolescents through Effective Health and Sexuality Education in Schools. August 9. Bali, Indonesia

The special session seeks to link health and sexuality education with HIV prevention programmes in schools to improve young people's knowledge and life skills.

Workshop on Evidence-based Advocacy for Gender by EAP UNGEI. September 7-11. Bangkok, Thailand

- The workshop seeks to provide support to the continued development of skills and experiences in utilizing gender and education data for advocacy.

FEATURED RESOURCE



Refugee Girls: The Invisible Faces of War (May 2009) is a comprehensive document by the [Women's Refugee Commission](#). It narrates untold stories of millions of girls displaced by conflicts and shows how with education these girls can emerge out of the crisis.

http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/refugee_girls_book.pdf

NEW RESOURCES

[Right to Education Project: Women and Girls](#)

- The website is an advocacy resource for sharing information and best practices on education rights, both for social mobilization and in support of legal accountability. It aims to explain the normative basis of the CRC and other conventions and to help operationalize what it means vis-a-vis working with governments and civil society.

[Girls' Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth](#) by World Bank, 2009

[A Matter of Magnitude: The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Women and Children in South Asia](#) by UNICEF, 2009

[Achieving Gender Equality in Education: Progress Towards 2015 East Asia and Pacific Snapshot](#) by UNICEF EAPRO, with EAP UNGEI, 2009

[Child-Friendly Schools Manual](#) by UNICEF, 2009

[World Day Against Child Labour 2009 - End Child Labour](#) by ILO

[Towards Gender Equality in Education: Progress and Challenges in Asia-Pacific Region](#) by UNGEI, 2009

[Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change](#) by UNDP, 2009

[Images of Girls' and Girls' Education: 'Reviewing' and Rethinking](#) by UNICEF, Dr. Jackie Kirk, Dr. Cathryn Magno, 2009

[Making Education Work: The Gender Dimension of the School to Work Transition](#) by EAP UNGEI, 2009