UNGEI GirlsEd-Net eDiscussion #4: Safety and security in and around schools: an integral component of access to education for girls

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UNGEI eDiscussion #4: Safety and security in and around schools: an integral component of access to education for girls

Moderator: Prof. Bagele Chilisa

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Welcome to the fourth eDiscussion of GirlsEd-Net on "Safety and security in and around schools: an integral component of access to education for girls" to be moderated by Prof. Bagele Chilisa. The outcome of the discussion will feed into the UNGEI panel at the "Women Deliver" conference that will be held from 18-20 October 2007 in London.

Today nearly 1 of every 5 girls who enroll in primary school in developing countries does not complete primary school. Worse still, UNICEF estimates that on average only 43 per cent of girls of the appropriate age in the developing world attend school. Reasons for dropping out of school include pregnancy, early marriages, HIV infections, hostile learning environments and societal attitudes towards girl’s education to mention a few. Most Governments are however committed to promoting full and equal access to and completion of education for girls. To enroll, participate in all school activities and complete school, girls require a safe and secure environment in and around the school. Girls are most likely to feel safe and protected in school environments where the infrastructure, that is, school buildings and sanitary facilities, teaching aids including textbooks, the physical environment that include playgrounds and every space in the school is conducive to their participation in all school activities.

The learning environment in schools is heavily influenced by attitudes, traditions, customs, behavior and practices that have a direct, largely negative, influence on girls’ development. A secure and safe environment requires that all forms of violence in the school and the communities serving the schools are forbidden and that the girls’ rights are respected. There is need for school policies, government protective legislations and their enforcement; open discussions and engagement with safety issues of girls in and around the school; monitoring and reporting of girls’ protection issues; services for recovery and reintegration of those violated and schools’, communities’ and governments’ commitment to make the school and the surrounding environments safe for the girls. This discussion will deliberate on the safety of girls in and around the school, document good practices by schools, communities and governments that make schools and the surroundings safe for girls and make further recommendations on what needs to be done.

The discussion will focus on what makes a school environment safe and secure for girls, and solicit examples of best practices and strategies to make schools safe for girls.

To start off the discussion, we would like to ask What makes a safe and secure school environment for girls? Are schools and their surrounding safe for girls? What are the factors that make schools and their surrounding unsafe for girls?

Please reply to ungei@lists.unicef.org and your contributions will be consolidated and disseminated to the rest of the group.