

UNGEI *GirlsEd-Net* eDiscussion #5: Renewing UNGEI's vision

Details of this eDiscussion can be found here: http://www.ungei.org/listserve/index_1733.html

UNGEI is delighted to continue to receive responses about the revision of its Vision. The latest participants in the e-discussion highlighted several issues that they would like to see the revised Vision of UNGEI encompass. Among the topics they would like for the UNGEI Vision to include are:

- Donor Coordination;
- Including Role Models in education;
- Working on the connections between education and the possibilities for youth after they finish their schooling;
- Keep focusing all stakeholders on achieving the goals set for 2015;
- Continue working on Parity and Equality;
- Addressing all the Gaps and not just one Gap.

You, our readers who are experts and stakeholders of education, especially of education with a gender lens, do you think the topics listed above capture all the major elements that the UNGEI vision should encompass? or do you think there are additional or other key issues that the revised UNGEI Vision should address. See below the responses of those who are participating in this important e-discussion.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

May Rihani, AED Senior Vice President and Director

Moderator of this eDiscussion

I would like to recommend two ways in which UNGEI's vision can be renewed so that it more fully captures the importance of the work it is already undertaking.

First, I recommend that, in their vision, UNGEI may need to make better connections both theoretically and practically between education and the possibilities for students after an education is acquired, both for young girls and boys. For example, UNGEI, in its advocacy role, can encourage the introduction of role models to students and parents, particularly female role models for girls, in order improve the aspirations that girls and boys have for themselves, and that parents have for their children.

Second, although UNGEI's partnership embraces many levels – 'the UN system, programme and donor countries, civil society organizations, the private sector, communities and families,' improving quality and access of education for boys and girls should be spearheaded at the family and community levels. With targeted attention and modest resources, it is truly extraordinary the extent to which parents, school and community leaders can be inspired and empowered to transform the situation of education for their children.

I look forward to the continued dialogue on this most interesting issue.

Thank you,

Andrea Bertone

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I wanted to first of all take a moment to thank everybody for giving the opportunity to donors, development practitioners, education specialists to reflect and make recommendations on this important issue. My recommendations are as follow:

1. Donor Coordination: UNGEI should ensure that all its partners work in synergy in order to avoid duplicating efforts and wasting resources. How does UNGEI ensure this among the donor community will be paramount to its success.
2. Staying Focused: most of the countries that have not reached universal enrolment will not be able to do so by 2015. Does that mean that this deadline of 2015 will be postponed? It will be good that UNGEI spearhead "a movement" or provide a forum that keeps all stakeholders focused to meet this important deadline so that this date does not get postponed one more time. Can UNGEI play this role or is UNGEI playing this role?

Thank you

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Gender parity and equality:

I will start my comments on this issue by recalling one of the key messages on gender parity and equality we called the 3M: " Mothers Matter Most", the gender parity goal will only be achieved when we give access to literacy to women, but we are far from this target because our governments are putting less than 1% of education budget to literacy and non-formal education

About the universal primary education (UPE) goal:

My question is: are we allowed as ANCEFA to narrow down UPE to only access; we cannot have dichotomy between Goal N°2 (UPE) and Goal N°6 (quality), but our concern as ANCEFA is that quality is more and more a result of personal investments (when your parents can afford access to private schools) and not a right to the poor.

"The hard to reach" is a generic and not yet a real target as governments usually don't know how many these people are? where they are? we will need reliable statistics about these groups, HIV/AIDS and conflicts make the budgeting task more complex!!

UPE cannot be achieved with this high teacher shortage in most of the southern countries and the quality imperative cannot be ensured without qualified teachers and sufficient learning materials for children

Funding and the use of funds:

Increased budgets for education does not mean positive impact in schools learning environment, a lot education budgets are mismanaged, the civil society does not have the capacity to track budgets in many countries, the example given by Honorable PSE Mr. Boye during the ANCEFA budget tracking workshop on how Gambia tracked the World Bank funded schools manuals should be applied in countries if we want to meet the 2015 targets with our tight education budgets

Happy to continue this chat with ANCEFA team (including Agnew) and partners

All the best

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I feel that one of the most important changes to the current UNGEI vision statement would be making the word 'gap' plural ("Its goal is to narrow the gender GAP in primary and secondary education ..."). As we all know, and as is acknowledged in the full Dakar statement, there are many gaps – such as gaps in participation, interactions, representations in curricula and texts, subject choice, use of spaces and facilities, achievements and outcomes. But where we are invited to consider only one type of gap - as has happened with both EFA goals and MDG 3 - the focus is on access and enrolment. This is further reinforced by the last sentence in the vision statement which talks of "efforts to get girls IN school".

Getting girls into school is an important first step, but unless more attention is paid to what happens once they get there, and what the outcome of their education is, 'education' can simply be a means of reinforcing the gendered inequalities. It seems that many have lost sight of the overall text of the Dakar Framework for action, focussing on only the six goals (and on some of those more than others). I'd like to draw attention to selected paragraphs from the full statement:

"8. To achieve these goals, we the governments, organizations, agencies, groups and associations represented at the World Education Forum pledge ourselves to:

...

(vi) implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education which recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices;

...

13. The importance of gathering and carefully analysing reliable gender-disaggregated data at national and sub-national levels is evident.

...

35. Young people, especially adolescent girls, face risks and threats that limit learning opportunities and challenge education systems. These include exploitative labour, the lack of employment, conflict and violence, drug abuse, school-age pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. Youth-friendly programmes must be made available which provide the information, skills, counselling and services needed to protect them from these risks.

...

41. International agreement has already been reached to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. This requires that gender issues be mainstreamed throughout the education system, supported by adequate resources and strong political commitment. Merely ensuring access to education for girls is not enough; unsafe school environments and biases in teacher behaviour and training, teaching and learning processes, and curricula and textbooks often lead to lower completion and achievement rates for girls. By creating safe and gender-sensitive learning environments, it should be possible to remove a major hurdle to girls' participation in education. Increasing levels of women's literacy is another crucial factor in promoting girl's education. Comprehensive efforts therefore need to be made at all levels and in all areas to eliminate gender discrimination and to promote mutual respect between girls and boys, women and men. To make this possible,

changes in attitudes, values and behaviour are required.

...

59. Achieving Education for All demands that high-level commitment and priority be given to gender equality. Schools, other learning environments and education systems usually mirror the larger society. Efforts in support of gender equality must include specific actions to address discrimination resulting from social attitudes and practices, economic status and culture.

...

60. Throughout the education system, there must be a commitment to the development of attitudes and behaviours that incorporate gender awareness and analysis. Education systems must also act explicitly to remove gender bias. This includes ensuring that policies and their implementation are supportive of girl's and boy's learning. Teaching and supervisory bodies must be fair and transparent, and rules and regulations, including promotion and disciplinary action, must have equal impact on girls and boys, women and men. Attention must be given to boys' needs in cases where they are disadvantaged.

...

61. In the learning environment, the content, processes, and context of education must be free of gender bias, and encourage and support equality and respect. This includes teachers' behaviours and attitudes, curriculum and textbooks, and student interactions. Efforts must be made to ensure personal security: Girls are often especially vulnerable to abuse and harassment on the journey to and from school and at school."

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(Extracts from World Education Forum (2000) The Dakar Framework for Action - Education For All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments. Text adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000 <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-leadup/dakfram.shtm>)

In addition, the EFA/UNGEI focus on only primary and secondary levels – though realistic given the timeframe - may limit aspirations and outcomes. Considering the indicators for MDG 3, which include the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, we need to view education as a vehicle that enables girls / women to reach more powerful positions in society, and help bring about the empowerment that is the goal of this MDG.

I would like to see UNGEI's vision statement broadened to capture the full spirit of the EFA Framework, and to link to the vision of MDG 3 – which is equality and empowerment.

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