

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

Dear Participants,

As one of you said this has been a very rich e-discussion, there are many thought provoking and interesting views. What is also marvelous is that the participants represent many countries in Africa, several in Asia, and many organizations and researchers from the US and Canada. The diversity of opinion, perspectives, and countries no doubt is an indication of the importance of this topic. Girls' Education, UNGEI and its revised vision, are topics that many want to be engaged in.

I will summarize the new input from the many participants. Some are calling for UNGEI to "limit its vision and mission statement to a select number of strategic measures that will bring about measurable demonstrated impact in the foreseeable future" and some are asking for ensuring that UNGEI to ensure the inclusion in its vision the integration of other very important topic that impact girls' education such as HIV and AIDS and the issue of corruption.

I will cite two quotations to represent these two different trends. Representing the first school of thought is the following quotation: "The work to be done is already too great. Taking on even more than what is in its mandate could weaken its capacity to leverage greater impact at a time when the global movement in support of girls' education needs to be renewed". Representing the second school is the following statement: "I would like to see that UNGEI's vision statement outline and show the linkage of education sector integrating HIV/AIDS.--- These and other social and economic impacts of HIV/AIDS, emphasize the need for HIV prevention, care, support and AIDS treatment to be strengthened at the education institutions at all levels, if the EFA goals and the MDG to be achieved".

Dear participants, the debate is very rich, it is your final chance to weigh in by participating in this last round of the e-discussion. After this round, UNGEI will take into consideration the voices of all the participants, and will revise its vision.

May Rihani, AED Senior Vice President and Director
Moderator of this eDiscussion

Dear e-discussion moderator

Thank you for the opportunity to express our ideas for UNGEI. For me, I would like to see that UNGEI's vision statement outline and show the linkage of education sector integrating HIV/AIDS.

One of the provisions of the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for all (EFA) draws attention to the urgent need to prevent HIV and AIDS if EFA goals are to be achieved. It stress that achievements made by Governments in increasing access to, and improving the quality of education, are threatened by the epidemic and its impact on the supply of and demand for education. The education sector plays an important role in facilitating and leading dialogue and engages parents as well as other partners to prevent HIV and AIDS.

One of the issues in Ethiopia, is the retention of girls in school, girls are the first to leave school to

care for their parents and siblings, as well as taking up the roles of head of household in the death of parents. Girls are also responsible not only for domestic work but also providing income for the family. These and other social and economic impacts of HIV/AIDS, emphasize the need for HIV prevention, care, support and AIDS treatment to be strengthened at the education institutions at all levels, if the EFA goals and the MDG to be achieved.

Like wise, in its declaration of commitment on HIV/AIDS in July 2002, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) set the global target of reducing HIV infections amongst 15-24 Year olds by 2010. Amongst other things, in this commitment, UNGASS called upon Governments to develop and implement by 2005, national strategies that provide a supportive environment to orphans and children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. Consequently it calls for increasing access to information and education, especially youth-specific HIV/AIDS education, necessary to develop the life skills required to reduce risks and vulnerability to HIV infections.

These declarations highlight the need to have the education sector play a key role both in preventing HIV/AIDS and in mitigating its effects on individuals, families, communities, and society at large. In recognition, for instance Ethiopia is in the process finalizing the education sector HIV/AIDS policy and strategy. Finally UNGEI can inspire and mobilize the international community by broadening its vision statement and captures emerging issues by linking education and HIV/AIDS in achieving EFA and the MDG goals.

I look forward to the continued discussion

Best Regards,

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Enjoyed reading the thought-provoking and interesting views of the participants in the e-discussion. Every one has put forth many bright ideas and useful suggestions which could definitely help UNGEI to renew the Vision.

Have a Happy Spring & best wishes,

MTP Fong

Independent Researcher

Canada

Dear Colleagues

The problem facing education in Africa is corruption and lack of stakeholders interest in addressing the real needs of the learners and the best strategy to achieved education for all by the year 2015, For EFA goals to be realized most of the organization should move from relief to advocacy based programmes with human rights and governance being the major focus, but more so civil society organization should design and implement social audit of education sector

resources, lot of public funds is wasting during procurement stages hence most of the organization need to focus on management and utilisation of the public funds for the benefit of the learners since most government has made commitment to provide resource to basic education hence civil society organization now need to play watchdog role.

Chris Owalla

Community initiative action group Kenya and regional host. Elimu Yetu Coalition.

Accept greetings from Pius Ngoeh. My quest for equality still goes on as the girl child – street commercial worker and the underprivileged and aids still lingers on. But are we going to fold our hands and see mankind perish when we can help? Absolutely No.

Culture and identify should be encourage

Pius Ngoeh

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I am pleased to contribute to the rich discussion around the issue of the renewal of UNGEI's vision.

I will not repeat what has already been contributed but would like to add that UNGEI is in a unique position to reinject new thinking into the debate regarding policy and practice on girls' education.

Despite the progress seen around the globe discriminatory practice affecting girls continue to prevail at the home and community levels, discrimination and stereotypes around girls and women's inferior status are entrenched at the national level, and governments' capability to reverse this situation remains weak. International legislation such as CEDRAW and the CRC which enshrine a number of rights for girls and boys including the right to quality education are not effectively implemented. This situation has been clearly depicted in recent publications put out by UNICEF (State of the World's Children) and Plan (Because I am a girl) in 2007 to name but a few.

I would like to see UNGEI promote an even more concerted, coordinated and evidence based global movement to address the key barriers to girls' education at the home, community and national levels including the adoption of measures that effectively hold governments accountable for their commitments both national and international. Such an effort could call for the adoption by states of time bound measures regarding universal access for girls in the same vain the ILO is working with its member states to have adopted time bound measures for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.

I would recommend limiting UNGEI's vision and mission statement to a select number of strategic measures that will bring about measurable demonstrated impact in the foreseeable future. This may entail reducing its scope of action in order to avoid being too dispersed.

The work to be done is already too great. Taking on even more than what is in its mandate could weaken its capacity to leverage greater impact at a time when the global movement in support of

girls' education needs to be renewed.

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Dear all,

The most important things that UNGEI new vision should focus should include; mainstreaming girls power in decision making as well as making the right choice. The issue should not be only on increasing the number of girls in secondary and primary school but also how are we retaining them into school? We have seen that most of member countries are focusing on increasing the girls into schools but they do not consider the how; I mean the provision of scholarships have been considered as the life time solution, while in the real sense it is more than a school fees or uniform to the girl need. It should be always remembered that girls from poor nations, countries with wars and political instabilities, girls are not at peace. Taking it globally it's almost the same in most of developing countries all over the world. It is my hope that, UNGEI vision can be stated more effectively to motivate, encourage and sensitize members to ensure the girls safeness, security and rights are enhanced and promoted at all levels world wide.

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I think there are a number of ways that UNGEI could think about renewing its vision. At the most general level I think it would be useful for it to consider the balance of its activity with regard to whether it emphasises interventions, eg quick impact programmes to get girls to school, institution building, eg supporting or lobbying donor organisations, governments, and NGOs to take gender seriously at all levels of the organisation, or what I have called in my work 'interactions' ie engaging in critical debate with a broader constituency than those only involved in the delivery of education, for example women's organisations.

My view is that the most effective strategy would be to work in all three areas.

Some very practical suggestions are:

- i) for UNGEI to co-ordinate ongoing and sustained technical support on gender to a number of key processes associated with EFA, particularly annual issues of the Global Monitoring Report, the FTI, etc
- ii) for UNGEI to lead a process of building partnerships with key women's networks like AWID
- iii) for UNGEI to actively lobby within and beyond the UN organisations on the need to keep together concern with MDG2 and MDG3 ie not lose the gender equality dynamic.

The question of gender parity, gender equality and the nature of equity has generated interesting academic and activist writing and any renewed vision for UNGEI should make a considered statement on these themes. My argument would be for a full vision of equality, with the recognition that parity is only one step toward that

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