

**“Equity, Gender and Quality in Education”**  
**Asia-Pacific Meeting of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee**  
**12 June 2008, Kathmandu, Nepal**  
**Closing Remarks by Mercy Tembon, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me singular pleasure as a member of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee (GAC) and representative of the lead agency of the Nepal Development Partners group, to make a few remarks at this closing session.

The deliberations and outcomes of this meeting are like a dream come true to the many to whom a couple of years ago, UNGEI was perceived as illusion which has gradually turned into reality.

What we witnessed over these two days is a demonstration that we are now beginning to see results of five years of relentless efforts and commitment to achieve gender equality in education through the work of UNGEI. The theme of the meeting “**Equity, Gender and Quality in Education**” the background paper prepared by Prof. Govinda, the presence of all the UNGEI Regional focal points except for our colleague of the Middle East region, participants from more than 14 countries from East and South Asia and a couple of countries from Africa have provided a rich context for diverse contributions.

This technical meeting has been unique in several ways and will be best remembered for (i) the participation of the girls themselves at the opening session to tell it as it is in the world they live in; (ii) for embedding civil society groups and journalists to participate in the meeting discussions of UNGEI in action from various parts of the world; (iii) for the recognition of the importance of reality of what goes on in schools and communities and the inclusion of field visits before the meeting to wet our appetite for the discussions we would be having during the actual meetings; (iv) for the recognition of good practices on the ground and the sharing of information through an interesting and valuable “share fair” event and (v) for providing the opportunity for participants to network and get to know each other more.

After two days of deliberations what key messages do we take away?

### **Ten Key Messages**

#### ***1. We need to stay the course***

The message that girls’ education and gender equality in education is a priority has to remain at the forefront of all development efforts. We have to consistently and persistently pass on that message where ever we are and in whatever we do. We have made much progress over the past decade and a half but we are not done yet. A lot more still needs to be done and we must stay the course.

#### ***2. Learning outcomes more important than enrolment:***

Girls’ education or gender equality is no longer about enrolments and numbers but about completion, learning outcomes and about transformation.

### ***3. Transitions and life-long learning make sense***

Transitions are very important for girls' education- transition from preschool to primary to secondary and to tertiary and most importantly transition from school to work and the labor market. Transition to secondary education and dealing with issues of the youth bulge especially after the successful implementation of the EFA movement since 1990 is extremely critical for most countries at this time and we have to pay attention to gender equality at this level.

### ***4. Locales for action:***

The classroom, the schools and the communities are important locales of action for achieving the objectives of gender equality in education. A conducive learning environment, a gender sensitive teaching and learning process and sensitization in the communities have been found to produce the results we expect. So action at all these locales is important for success.

### ***5. Teachers a key change agent:***

Teachers are the biggest facilitators and change agents in every country. So the training, support and professional development and deployment of teachers is extremely key to advancing the achievements of the gender equality in quality education goal.

### ***6. Data and Knowledge necessary components***

The collection and analysis of data are important for informing policy decisions in what we do and in monitoring our actions to achieve the gender equality goal. We also learnt a lot from documenting good practices and sharing the knowledge with others.

### ***7. Resources a must for success***

Mobilization of adequate resources at the country, regional and global levels are important for achieving the gender equality and quality in education goal. Without adequate budget allocations, without providing resources for learning and teaching materials, without resources for incentives we will not be able to achieve our goal.

### ***8. Partnerships are important for results***

Together we stand divided we fall. We heard from the country presentations from Afghanistan, Cambodia and Uganda how development agencies, civil society groups and governments are working in partnership to address gender issues in education.

### ***9. Research is the yeast for girls' education action***

We heard that girls are not a homogenous group. Some girls especially those from well to do families do not face the same issues as their friends from poor families. We constantly need to find out about girls. Where are they? What are the issues at different parts of a country? What can be done about the issues and what lessons can we learn about what works and how can we use this knowledge to inform future decisions?

### ***10. We have to move from good intentions to concrete actions:***

We have learnt that we have to rapidly transition from good intentions to concrete innovative action that produces results. We have to constantly think out of the box and come up with innovative ways of resolving the issues of girls' education. Several examples of such innovative

practices and actions have been presented. I was fascinated by the work that CARE is doing under the Udaan program in India, to provide lasting transformation to the lives of women, girls and the most marginalized groups through various education activities.

All of what we have witnessed here did not just happen. A lot of effort has been put in this over several months.

As my primary school teacher often told us **Success comes not by wishes but by hard work bravely done.**

On this note, I would like to thank the UNGEI Global and Regional Secretariats and other partners for their valuable contributions to the planning, organization and successful delivery of the presentations and the fruitful discussions that ensued from them. Thanks also go to all the participants for making this UNGEI Technical Meeting in Kathmandu a resounding success.

THANK YOU!