

**UNGEI Global Advisory Committee
Asia-Pacific Technical Meeting
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Equity, Gender and Quality in Education in Asia-Pacific

**Reflections by Ms Abigail C Lanceta, Programme Officer, Southeast Asian Ministers of
Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat**

at the Closing Session on 12 June 2008

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

It feels good to be in the midst of people who care so much about the power of education to make this world a better place to live in.

Education is a fundamental human right. This conference emphasizes this claim by indicating in the theme “Equity, Gender and Quality in Education in Asia-Pacific”.

I would like to congratulate the organizers of this conference and everyone who came to attend for its success. I am extremely grateful that I was given the opportunity to represent my organization, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat. I have two words to describe my participation in this two-day gathering: rich and stimulating.

This conference is not just about gender. It is not just about equality in enrolments and participation of male and female in schools and learning centers. To me, this meeting is about a whole lot of issues on education. And in the two-day meeting proceeding, we saw many challenges and gaps in education that need to be addressed if we are certain to attain the Education For All Goals by 2015.

For the last two days, I came to understand better what the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative or UNGEI is all about. I found out, too, that it is the flagship of the Education For All movement. Yes, we got the message clear -- women and girls should not be left out. Gender equality in education is a major concern and needs to be considered in all our development efforts. But in truly providing Education For All, there are the equity and quality factors as well. All these three should be addressed all at the same time to truly provide the fundamental human right to an individual, that is, education.

Reflecting on all these, I see the important role of my organization. SEAMEO was established in 1965 to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the Southeast Asian region. We work with the Ministries of Education in the eleven countries through the establishment of networks and partnerships, the provision of an intellectual forum for policy makers and experts, and the promotion of sustainable human resource development. SEAMEO has a network of 15 SEAMEO centers in the region, each focusing on a specific area of specialization.

I see many areas of possible collaboration of SEAMEO with UNGEI. I believe that gender equality and Education For All are crucial advocacies that must be integrated in almost all of the things that we do about education.

Foremost, we need to ensure stronger advocacy on UNGEI especially at the country level. I am happy that some SEAMEO Member Countries are represented in this meeting and reported significant accomplishments in ensuring gender equality in education in their respective countries.

In September this year, the SEAMEO Secretariat will convene a meeting of Southeast Asian countries to identify solutions to problems of the unreached population groups in Southeast Asia including women and girls. This was directed by the Ministers of Education that compose the SEAMEO Council, the organization's governing body. Certainly, this is in response to the call to attain the Education For All Goals by 2015.

In close coordination and collaboration with our partner organizations at the regional level, I am confident that SEAMEO can make a difference to forward the advocacy of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and the Education For All in Southeast Asia.

Thank you very much and good day.