

**“Equity, Gender and Quality in Education”
Asia-Pacific Technical Meeting of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee
Hotel Soaltee, Kathmandu, Nepal
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**Ms. Reshmi Chowdhary, Biratnagar Child Club: Remarks at the Opening Session, 11 June 2008
(translated from Nepali by Hima Rai, UNICEF ROSA)**

Namaste, and a warm welcome from the children of Nepal. I am grateful to the organizers for this opportunity to speak about children’s education.

I have come from Biratnagar where I work as a domestic helper. But I go to school at the same time, and belong to a Child Club.

Unfortunately, the situation of children’s education in Nepal is not good. The situation of girls’ education is even worse.

The low status of women and girls in our society is a major problem. Parents are ready to educate their sons but not their daughters. There are as many boys as girls in Nepal, but fewer girls are able to go to school. Being a girl, they have many household chores to do, and they are compelled to discontinue their education. We feel sad about this discrimination by our parents.

The lack of adequate facilities in schools also forces us to drop out from studies. Usually, there is no toilet at all, or if there is one, it is in very bad shape. We have examples of girls leaving school after having menstruation, because there is no proper toilet for menstruating girls.

Sexual abuse and harassment on the way to and from school, compel us to drop out of school.

Distance to school and the inability of our parents to arrange accommodation in a rented facility so that we can continue our schooling, are also problems.

In the Terai region, we have early marriage and the dowry system. If a girl is educated, she has to be married to an educated boy who will want more dowry. For this reason, parents don’t want to educate their daughters

We have the following recommendations, which we believe will contribute to our dream of equality in the “New Nepal:”

- Make secondary schooling free and compulsory
- Provide hostels and meal facilities to students who come from remote locations
- Ensure adequate toilets for girls within the school compound
- Punish fraud, exploitation, violence and misconduct by teachers
- Provide school uniforms, school supplies and meals to students from very poor families
- Child marriage should be made punishable by law and the dowry system should be completely abolished

If these steps are taken seriously, we, the girls of Nepal, shall be able to reach our potential, and take our place along with boys, as equal citizens. Thank you.