

“Equity, Gender and Quality in Education”
Asia-Pacific Meeting of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee
11 June, Kathmandu, Nepal
Opening Statement

Penina Mlama, UNGEI GAC Co-chair & Executive Director, Camfed Tanzania

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you on behalf of Global Advisory Committee of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and my fellow Co-Chair, Ms. Betsy Heen of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

The UNGEI partnership was launched by the former UN Secretary-General in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. UNICEF is the designated lead agency and serves as Secretariat.

UNGEI's mandate is broader than its name suggests. Its goal is to narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education and to ensure that, by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to all levels of education. The partnership is an integral part of the EFA movement, with the status of an EFA flagship.

Generally, the Global Advisory Committee meets at global level. However, recognizing that the MDGs and EFA goals will be achieved or missed, based on country-level performance, the Committee decided to hold its first regional-level meeting this year in support of countries. The Asia-Pacific region was selected for two reasons:

1. Because of the significant progress made here towards ensuring a quality education for all children, and
2. Because of the persistent gender gap in educational enrollment, retention and performance in a number of areas, as well as inequalities in the teaching and learning process and in education outcomes.

We hope to achieve two general objectives over the course of the next two days:

1. To accelerate the sharing of knowledge and experience related to gender in education among UNGEI partners and across regions through in-depth technical discussions and field visits, the latter for Committee members only, and
2. To strengthen regional- and country-level UNGEI networks, activities and impact through interaction with regional UNGEI partners, as well as through advocacy for stakeholders including education and other ministry officials and civil society.

This technical meeting will focus on teaching and learning processes and education and learning outcomes, areas that lack information and therefore call for knowledge and experience sharing. The overall theme of the meeting is “Equity, Gender and Quality”.

The participants here today represent 14 countries from South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific sub-regions, and include representatives of governments, civil society, academia, international agencies and the news media. We will use a mixture of methodologies today and tomorrow, including plenary presentations and discussions, working groups, a “share fair” where you can present your organizations' work, and opportunities for informal networking. We, therefore, invite the active participation of each and every one of you because we know that you are passionate about the education of all girls and boys. Together, our partnership will make a difference.

Thank you.