



**UNGEI Global Advisory Committee  
Asia-Pacific Technical Meeting  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
11-12 June 2008**

**Report of Meeting**

## A. Introduction

The goal of the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) 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. Having made notable progress at global level in partnership development, the decision of UNGEI's Global Advisory Committee (GAC) to enhance the regional and country level advocacy and partnership intends to will help boost current efforts towards gender equality in education and beyond at all levels.

### 1. Background of the meeting

The choice of the Asia-Pacific region for the first regional-level GAC meeting was not only based on the recognition of the tremendous strides that have been made there towards ensuring a quality education for all children, but also acknowledging a 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.

The meeting had two general objectives:

- 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, and
- 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.

The overall theme of the meeting was Equity, Gender and Quality with an intended focus on teaching and learning processes, education and learning outcomes and transitions (from primary to secondary school, from non-formal to formal education and from school to work). In spite of their importance, these were areas that lacked information and therefore called for knowledge and experience sharing.

The meeting was held during the week of 8 June 2008 in Kathmandu, Nepal. It consisted of a two-day technical meeting preceded by a two-day optional field visit for GAC members and members of the media, and followed by a one-day GAC business meeting.

In addition to GAC members, the participants included regional- and country-level UNGEI partners, country gender focal points, government officials, members of civil society organizations including representatives of women's networks, donors based in Kathmandu and involved in the education sector in the region, and academicians. In order to facilitate meaningful discussions, the total number of participants was limited with priority given to participation by countries where UNGEI is active. The following countries were represented: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Uganda and Viet Nam.

### 2. Opening events and commemorations

Welcome remarks were made by Ms. Penina Mlama, UNGEI GAC Co-Chair and Executive Director of CAMFED Tanzania, who chaired the day's proceedings. (See [full statement](#) in Annex 1.)

A statement was made on behalf of the children of Nepal by Ms. Reshmi Chowdhary, Biratnagar Child Club. She talked about the challenges facing girls and boys seeking an education in Nepal, such as discrimination, inadequate school facilities, abuse and harassment, school distances and early marriage.

Recommendations from Nepali children include making secondary schooling free and compulsory; ensuring adequate sanitation facilities; punishing fraud, exploitation and misconduct by teachers; providing school uniforms and supplies to disadvantaged students; making child marriages punishable by law and abolishing the dowry system. (See [full statement](#) in Annex 1.)

On behalf of UNICEF, Deputy Regional Director for South Asia Ms. Frances Turner welcomed the participants to the meeting. She stressed the importance of the meeting as it highlights the issue of girls' education and elaborated on the inter-related theme of the meeting: equity, gender and quality as it relates to education, especially for girls. She also noted that the meeting recognises the growing number of young people in the Asia-Pacific region. She challenged participants to use this forum and the UNGEI partnership not just to understand better where we are right now, and where we are headed, but also to look beyond the numbers. She also highlighted UNICEF's commitment to strengthening the UNGEI partnership by working together with all its partners to help make schooling a safer, enjoyable and more meaningful experience for both girls and boys. (See [full statement](#) in Annex 1.)

#### Screening of Girls Stars video from India – *Anita, the Beekeeper*

The 'Girl Stars' series focus on 15 young women age 17 to 30 from some of the most disadvantaged communities in India who, through education and personal initiative, have become successful, self-sufficient empowered role models for change. Anita Kumari is a beekeeper in Bihar, India. When Anita was young, her parents did not want her to go to school, but Anita persevered and found a way to pay for her education. (See [video](#) in Annex 1.)

Remarks were then made by Mr. Tony Burdon, Deputy Head of DFID Nepal, on the importance of education, especially for girls. "No-one is going to challenge the inherent power of education to transform our lives, and this is particularly the case for girls," he said. He noted the importance of investing in education and focused on the theme of the meeting: gender and the challenges in education, especially for girls. He presented the case of Nepal where there has been progress, but many obstacles remain, especially for excluded groups such as Dalit girls. Last July, the UK Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General launched a Call to Action to galvanize the international community to face up to the challenge of meeting the MDGs. Mr. Burdon stated, "Education is a key pillar of the UN Call to Action." A new government was being formed in Nepal and the need to make education, particularly for girls, a priority was stressed. He concluded that in our efforts, the leadership we provide needs to be innovative, based on evidence, and that we must be relentless if we are to succeed in changing things for the better. (See [full statement](#) in Annex 1.)

An opening statement was made by Mr. Balananda Paudel, Secretary of the Nepal Ministry of Education and Sports. He spoke about some of the gains that have been made in education, such as the narrowing gender gap, but stressed that more needs to be done. Challenges facing education include the lack of female teachers, quality textbooks and curricula, classrooms and infrastructure. He stated that achievements were not only about numbers and that responsive policy, planning and implementation were key to achieving equitable, gender sensitive and quality education. (See [full statement](#) in Annex 1)

On behalf of UNGEI, Ms. Cheryl Gregory Faye, Head of UNGEI Secretariat, gave a vote of thanks to the participants and in particular to key actors who generously contributed time and resources in support of the meeting. They were: the Government of Nepal, Members of Nepal UNGEI partnership and its Local Advisory Group, ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, and WFP. Special thanks were also extended to UNICEF (regional and country offices) and the Government of Norway. (See [full statement](#) in Annex 1).

### 3. Commemoration of World Day against Child Labour

On the occasion of the World Day against Child Labour, commemorated each year on 12 June, UNGEI Asia-Pacific partners from ILO, UNESCO and UNICEF made a presentation on the theme for 2008, namely “Education – the right response to child labour.”

The session began with an ILO multimedia presentation illustrating facts and figures about child labour and with a message on the challenges, successes and efforts needed to get children into school.

The presentation focused on the role of education in combating child labour, and particularly to improve access to school for girls. Presenters noted that South Asia has a huge problem with child labour, with girls often being invisible. Education is a right, and needed for working children. But for education to be a strategy for eliminating child labour, it needs to be flexible to children’s needs for good quality education relevant to both boys and girls. Education for working children needs to be a special strategy within a sector plan. (See [multimedia presentation](#) in Annex 2.)

## B. Technical issues in gender quality in education

### A. Keynote presentation based on the draft background paper, followed by panel of discussants and plenary discussion

#### Keynote presentation

The keynote [presentation](#) was made by Professor Rangachar Govinda of the National University of Education Planning and Administration of New Delhi and consultant to the technical meeting (see Annex 1). The basis of the [draft background paper](#), "Towards Gender Equality in Education: Progress and Challenges in Asia-Pacific Region", is two synthesis reports from South Asia and East Asia-Pacific as well as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the 2008 Global Monitoring Report (see Annex 2).

According to Mr. Govinda, there is a consensus that gender equality needs to be viewed as a crosscutting policy goal that applies to all sectors and institutions. He made reference to the United Nations Millennium Project’s three main dimensions for gender equality, namely: capabilities, access to resources and opportunities, and security. These dimensions, together, contribute to women’s individual well-being and enable women and girls to make strategic choices and decisions, that is, to be empowered.

The following are highlights from the presentation:

- a. Positive trends: There seems to be a heightened awareness among policy makers about gender. All countries recognize the importance of universal, free and compulsory education and almost all have adopted some form of legislation in this regard.
- b. Strategies: While gender issues are present in development planning and many countries have adopted a strategy for gender mainstreaming, challenges remain in gender budgeting and lack of institutional mechanisms. A “gender equality watch” is recommended. Many policies have been formulated in bits and pieces and incorporated as project initiatives. The challenge is to move to permanent feature of policy making and programme formulation.

- c. Progress toward the EFA goals and MDGs shows a reduction in gender disparities between 1999 and 2005. While examining a chart showing the gender parity achievement in primary and secondary education in Asian countries, Mr. Govinda stressed the need to pay particular attention to countries such as Pakistan, and others that seem to be on the right track, but could slip off if momentum and efforts wane.
- d. Indicators: Mr. Govinda raised the issue that while the gender parity index (GPI) tells a story to some extent, it is inadequate on its own and that attention should be paid to the overall participation level. He noted the example of Bangladesh, where the GPI is close to parity, but survival rates are low and the net enrolment rate is only around 85 per cent.

Key highlights from indicators of gender equality include:

- Female youth literacy – Unless we make significant progress, the proportion of illiterate women will remain high.
- Share of female teachers – While this is improving, challenges remain.
- Work participation – The participation of women in non-agricultural wage employment in East and Southeast Asia is relatively high, 40 per cent in 2005, but South Asia comes much lower with only 18 per cent.
- Political participation – This is uneven and difficult to assess.

e. Lessons learned and challenges:

- Strategies for enhancing participation in schools include: school mapping to determine if the distance is safe enough for girls to walk to school, building of residential schools, bridge programmes to mainstream out-of-school children, community involvement, expanding outreach through alternate modes of schooling, reducing costs, direct cash transfers and school feeding programmes.
- Some issues left unresolved include: indirect costs such as textbooks and school uniforms, domestic and child labour, sporadic and unconnected incentive measures that need to be made part of a social protection framework.
- On strategies for expansion, challenges include incomplete schools that are ill-equipped both physically and in terms of human and financial resources. There is a need to develop clear 'pathways' and linkages with the formal system so that these incomplete schools and non-formal centres effectively contribute to expanding quality educational opportunities for all.
- Governments are working towards quality education with gender equality by improving the curriculum and textbooks, making schools girl-friendly, enhancing teacher quality and more. Mr. Govinda stressed that a paradigm shift is needed to focus on teacher training, as training strategies and time spent are often insufficient to bring about fundamental changes in teaching and learning processes in the classroom. There is also a need to look beyond cognitive outcomes in measuring school quality.
- Other actions that need to be addressed beyond the school and education sector include child labour, which is a very serious concern in many countries in Asia, and the slow progress in expanding ECD programmes, a key factor in influencing school readiness and girls' education.
- Mr. Govinda briefly shared the trends and made recommendations by sub-region. He pointed out that in the E-9 countries even a small percentage of the population translates to several million excluded children.

In conclusion, Mr. Govinda noted that there is a groundswell where people value and demand quality education for girls and boys today, regardless of the economic and geographical background, and our collective efforts need to build on this trend.

**Panel of discussants:** Ms. May Rihani, Senior Vice President and Director, Global Learning Group and Director, Center for Gender Equity, AED, and member of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee (moderator); Ms. Urmila Sarkar, Child Labour and Education Specialist, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and member of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee; Ms. Jyotsna Jha, Advisor, Gender & Education and HIV/AIDS, Commonwealth Secretariat, and member of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee; Ms. Benjalug Namfa, Director of Academic Development and Educational Standards, Thailand Ministry of Education.

Panel participants discussed the findings of the draft background paper and highlighted that the key issues to focus on are: the need to move beyond gender parity to equality; the importance of ensuring post-primary education, i.e., secondary education and beyond; the need for education to be transformative; and teacher training on gender equality.

### **Ms. Urmila Sarkar, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**

Ms. Sarkar added the East Asian perspective to the draft background paper (for [discussant comments](#) see Annex 1). In East Asia and the Pacific (EAP), gender parity has been achieved by most countries at the primary level, but not in secondary and tertiary education.

Reducing gender disparities is not translating into equality between women and men in the wider society, such as equal employment opportunities, salaries and political representation. Some countries in EAP face reverse gender disparities, particularly at the secondary level, i.e., boys are participating and achieving less and there is a need to look at sex disaggregated data at the secondary level.

The rights-based approach to the paper was welcomed, as was the reference to the three main dimensions of gender equality: capabilities, access to resources/opportunities and security to empower girls and women. The paper described a number of strategies to reach excluded groups, but at the same time stressed that such non-formal or alternative education strategies need to be linked to the formal system for sustainability.

Key points missing in the paper or that could be further elaborated:

- On the overall structure, recommendation is to start with a brief synopsis of the status in EAP and South Asia (SA) along with a few detailed good practices, including detailed methodology/approach;
- The theme of the meeting is gender equality in education, and the focus needs to go beyond progress in girls' education;
- In the context of promoting gender equality, there is reference to gender mainstreaming approaches that have been adopted by several countries of East Asia, which could be further expanded. There are gender focal points (GFPs) from countries like Cambodia, who could provide first-hand information. This recognizes the differences in experiences and learning achievement among girls and boys and uses this recognition as a starting point for allocating and targeting resources to reach excluded groups;
- While the paper gives a comprehensive analysis that provides a sizable inventory of strategies/approaches to address gender equality in education, some prioritization could be made, perhaps by grouping of countries. The focus could possibly be on teaching and learning outcomes in preparation for the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2010.
- Demarcating countries for priority action requires further elaboration. There is an active civil society in some parts of the Mekong, so it would be inaccurate to state that there is not a vibrant movement in the entire Mekong; the Pacific Islands' challenge is about donor coordination; on E-

9, there should be more discussion on Indonesia considering its size, with challenges of retention in secondary education, child labour, youth unemployment, etc. There is no analysis of resource allocation in-country towards education or donor trends in EAP.

- It is crucial to analyze education/labour market linkages and the school-to-work transition, which is emphasized on the paper, but looking at the labour force participation rate is not enough. UNGEI EAP commissioned a study that for the first time links education with employment outcomes for females and males in Indonesia, Philippines and Viet Nam ([draft paper](#) was made available at the conference, see Annex 2).
- Females should not be limited to certain subject areas in their training and education by any constraint other than their own choice, and more emphasis should be placed on creating jobs that allow women to make the most of their education and skills.
- Indonesia experiences high school drop-out among females due to early marriage and child labour. While the country is making gains in gender parity in education, these gains are not yet translating into a smooth transition from school to work. Young women find it especially difficult to enter the formal labour market, and when they do so, they tend to occupy low-paying and low-skilled occupations. Historic gender biases in the community and at home fuel the view that 'domestic work' is 'women's work' and as such, female domestic child labour is a pressing concern in Indonesia. When engaged in manufacturing activities, women are overrepresented in the textile, garment and footwear industries and underrepresented in the civil service and formal sector jobs. Furthermore, the informalization of the labour market in Indonesia attracts an increasing number of females, particularly those of lower education, who tend to find it difficult to penetrate the formal labour market.
- Automotive, training pertaining to livestock, welding and electrical technology were primarily offered to and attended by males in the Philippines. Conversely, courses such as garment making, food processing technology, personal wellness, embroidery and cosmetology were solely given to and attended by females.
- While there are new opportunities for women, as in the service sector or in certain industrial sectors, women run the risk of being stuck in low value-added and labour intensive positions while men assume positions higher up along the value chain. All of these challenges are posed by engendered social attitudes that constrain the professional progress of women.
- Thus, while it is true that in some countries of the region girls' enrolment exceeds boys', linked to gender differences in learning outcomes, it is also true that young men often fare better than young women when it comes to salaries and seniority in the workplace.

#### Strategies and recommendations:

- The UNGEI EAP publication includes good practices from China, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines to overcome girls' exploitation in domestic work or trafficking and to reach marginalized groups. Evidence shows that parents, when faced with limited resources and competing financial demands, often prefer to invest in their sons' education and not lose their daughters' vital contribution to the household. For example, in Yunnan province in China, no life-skills education was available in remote areas, so girls do household work leaving them at risk of trafficking. Scholarship assistance is needed, along with including information about trafficking, gender equality, HIV, public health and life skills within the curriculum, as well as a girl-friendly participatory learning environment through education, arts and the media. These services are now adopted province-wide and linked to nine years of compulsory basic education.
- Linked to gender differences in learning outcomes and standards of training and watchkeeping, measures should be implemented to change social perceptions through advocacy such as eliminating the perpetuation of gender biases in education via textbooks and career counselling to better match the labour market.

- Continued progress towards gender parity at different levels of education must be paired with efforts to create more and better paid employment opportunities for women and to enhance their access to productive resources.

### **Ms. Jyotsna Jha, Commonwealth Secretariat**

Ms. Jha commented that the paper covers both education and gender issues well, and highlighted a few key messages (for discussant [comments](#) see Annex 1):

- Focus on completion and not only on enrolment, as the GPI can be misleading.
- Focus on secondary level, as it shows the importance of viewing education as a continuum. This is also an important facet for primary education.
- Incentives to be linked to completion and larger social issues.
- Demand for girls' schooling is more sensitive to quality: access alone is insufficient.
- Gender watch needs to become critical at all levels.
- Lack of mention of gender inequality issues in countries such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Recommendations of issues to further strengthen and elaborate:

- The continuum issue should get more prominence. Desire and understanding of the importance of education is not an issue; but demand backed by commitment to support continuation and completion of schooling is; areas remain where better engagement with the community is necessary to communicate the value of education. Enrolment drives are not sufficient, especially in terms of completion.
- Reforming teaching-learning processes, making teacher training experiential, and making the curriculum and the processes transformative are big challenges, but there is sufficient evidence from small programmes that this is possible, and these evidences should be included. To make the curriculum and schooling processes transformative is a universal challenge and not limited to countries where gender disparities are high. More information and deeper analysis of pre-service teacher training is needed in the paper. On the topic of female teachers there is a vicious cycle. How can we promote an increase of women teachers, also in remote and rural areas? One suggestion is to emphasise and promote secondary education, which integrates teacher training elements, especially for girls in rural areas.
- The increasingly visible trend of boys relatively under-achieving in terms of performance, especially in the East Asian countries and also in some regions in South Asia, needs to be discussed more elaborately. The notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' that creates pressures for boys to conform and treat 'education' as being feminine is one of the main reasons and has serious social and economic implications, especially in terms of youth violence.

### **Ms. Benjalug Namfa, Thailand Ministry of Education**

Ms. Namfa shared her personal experience of being raised in a female-dominated family. Prior to reading the draft background paper, her belief was that gender inequality was not an issue in Thailand, a country where gender parity has largely been achieved, but the paper prompted her to take a second look at the issues. She commended the paper for being government-friendly, useful in considering the issues surrounding gender equality in education, and particularly in drafting education plans. Ms. Namfa highlighted the need to think carefully about what to include in the curriculum, textbooks and learning contents in terms of removing gender bias and introduced the gender review of textbooks and teaching and learning process that the Ministry of Education undertook with support from UNICEF.

She recommended to further elaborate on the strengths and unique differences of boys and girls in research and practices, and emphasized the need to have an equal number of men and women in policy making. She also emphasized raising social expectations for girls as an important area of advocacy.

## **Plenary Discussion**

The plenary discussion raised further issues to be considered for the paper. Topics included education costing, infrastructure, quality, gender issues in emergency response and post-crisis transition, preparedness for natural disasters, teacher training and management, the labour market as it relates to education, and child participation and rights. Other questions revolved around partnerships between the government and civil society, ethics of the international community on sending children to schools that are inadequate, implication of the expansion of private schools, insufficient disaggregation of data, and donor commitment.

The moderator, Ms. Rihani, provided a summary of points from the presentations and plenary discussion:

Analytical points:

- The GPI is far from appropriate if we do not look at other indicators in addition to the gross enrolment rates. We also need to move beyond achieving gender parity to achieving gender equality.
- A focus on secondary education is critical as we need to view education as a continuum, and we need to understand the barriers for transition to secondary and beyond.
- Education has to be transformative to help achieve one's best potential in society.
- Teacher training tends to be inadequate, but when it has been successful, this needs to be recognized. Adequate numbers of quality female teachers are still a challenge, especially in remote and rural areas.
- Despite parity, challenges still exist with regard to equality, and these issues are more difficult and complex.

Strategies and recommendations:

- School mapping: expand the number of schools at a safe walking distance for girls and be attentive to the definition of an incomplete school.
- Bridging as a strategy: how to mainstream out-of-school children.
- Incentive measures linked to educational and social outcomes, including completion and learning outcomes.
- View education as a continuum from early childhood onwards.
- Further analyze school-to-work linkages.
- Find practices and strategies that allow us to engage with poorer and hard-to-reach groups.

## **B. Group work**

Working groups, organized according as mixed country groups, were asked to answer questions on key issues around gender inequalities in teaching and learning processes and learning outcomes. The following are some of the key priority issues and knowledge gaps identified by the participants, and the relevant recommendations (see Annex 1 for group presentations):

### Infrastructure and enabling environment

- Build schools, improve infrastructure, such as water and sanitation facilities;
- Create an enabling environment that is violence-free, with schools at a safe walking distance, establish parent-teacher associations (PTAs), resource centres, early childhood centres, etc.;

- Provide supporting role models for both girls and boys.

#### Access

- Conduct mapping exercise of excluded children at the community level and identify multiple barriers to learning to increase the participation of girls and hard-to-reach groups, such as HIV-affected children, street and working children, etc.;
- Invest in village education registers and birth registration;
- Abolish school fees and provide cash incentives.

#### Advocacy

- UNGEI should serve as a gender equality watchdog, and provide coordination of all stakeholders, with NGOs and CSOs playing a corrective role;
- Build an evidence-based approach, documenting and disseminating good practices;
- Sustain focused advocacy on gender mainstreaming, a concept that is not well understood by many;
- Further to gender issues, advocate for human rights issues and legislation;
- Communities, the family, and girls in particular, should be engaged and empowered as advocates.

#### Data collection, monitoring and evaluation

- Given the lack of sufficient qualitative research/gender analysis, and disaggregated data, data should be disaggregated by sex and other exclusionary factors and regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted.

#### Capacity building and participation

- Strengthen the role of teachers, communities, women's groups, parents and children to participate in promoting gender equality in education and act as key change agents;
- Build capacity of the community to question schools on quality parameters and hold them accountable;
- Work with civil society to revise curriculum and improve transition rates;
- Emphasize the important role of boys and men in promoting girls' education;
- Promote literacy of mothers to empower them to become change agents.

#### Quality:

- Clearly articulate what is meant by quality education;
- Systematically implement the child-friendly school model, which uses a holistic approach;
- Integrate life skills at all levels of education.

#### Teaching and learning processes:

- Gender sensitization: raise awareness on masculinity/femininity issues; adopt gender-sensitive school standards; ensure gender-sensitive teaching and learning in the classroom; facilitate civil society-led review and revision of curriculum to be gender-sensitive; "engender" educational managers and document best practices;
- Teacher training and management: Recruit and deploy more teachers, especially women teachers, to ensure appropriate teacher/student ratio; offer teachers pre- and in-service training and support, and promoting them as change agents;
- Curriculum and teaching/learning resources: The curriculum should be local, relevant, and gender sensitive, and the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue. There should be adequate teaching/learning resources, such as free textbooks. Teaching learning methods should be joyful;

- Transformative education: Understand the transformative notion of education. Transformative education should not be limited to education for children, but also should be applied to teacher education as well as adult education. Outcomes of a transformative education should include empowerment and leadership, competency and skills acquisition for meaningful opportunities in the labour market.

#### Policy, funding and governance:

- Secure consensus among partners and stakeholders at the policy level;
- Evidence-based policy linkage needs to be made;
- Utilize existing mechanisms, such as Mongolia's exercise of developing an education sector plan and the systematic application of gender analysis so programming is engendered in the Fast Track Initiative process;
- Enhance a rights-based approach: South Asia has conducted a three-country study on gender and equity in sector-wide approaches to ensure the inclusion of every child;
- Mainstream gender in school development planning;
- Funding to be ensured for education continuity at all levels, from early childhood to post-primary;
- Policies and legislation should be available regarding early marriage, abolition of school fees, re-entry policy, scholarships for students (particularly the hard-to-reach), school feeding programmes, scholarships for ethnic minority female teachers and immediate deployment.

## **C. Partnerships for results in promoting gender equality in education**

### **1. Panel discussion**

Moderated by Ms. Namtip Aksornkool, Senior Programme Specialist, UNESCO, and member of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee, the session on partnerships for results in promoting gender equality in education was an opportunity for panellists to share good practices at the country level, followed by a plenary discussion.

Ms. Cheryl Gregory Faye, Head of Global Secretariat, [UNGEI](#), provided an overview of UNGEI, the partnership for girls' education, and explained that it was created to promote synergy in advocacy through a common voice to promote policies and programmes related to girls' education and gender equality. She explained the composition of the partnership (governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, communities and families), and how it is structured at global, regional and country levels. She stressed the importance of the country-level partnerships as effective mechanisms for achieving the gender- and education-related MDGs and EFA goals. (See [full presentation](#) in Annex 1.)

Ms. Nhim Vanchankan, Deputy Inspector General and Gender Focal Point, Ministry of Education, [Cambodia](#), spoke about the strong collaboration in Cambodia among government structures and explained that a culture of gender mainstreaming has been well internalized. Notable achievements include a gender-sensitive national budget, a steering committee on gender mainstreaming under the National Committee on EFA, the use of gender tools and the ongoing assessment of gender mainstreaming at sub-national level. She noted upward trends in the enrolment of girls at primary and secondary levels and the number of female teachers at both levels. In conclusion, she noted lessons learned, challenges, and future plans to consolidate gains. (See [full presentation](#) in Annex 1.)

Ms. Susan Wardak, Director, Teacher Education Department, Ministry of Education, [Afghanistan](#), spoke of the tremendous barriers to girls' education in Afghanistan that the government has been working to overcome, and explained that the establishment last year of the Afghanistan Girls' Education Initiative

(AGEI) has provided a successful platform for addressing them. Made up of government, donors, national and international NGOs and the UN system, AGEI works at national level and has a number of active working groups. Basing its efforts on an analysis of the situation of girls' education, AGEI has helped develop a national ECD policy and is now working on the development of a communication strategy. AGEI has been particularly helpful in holding government more accountable and has been a strong force on behalf of girls in the short period since its inception. (See [full presentation](#) in Annex 1.)

Ms. Sheila Wamahiu, UNGEI Country Focal Point and UNICEF Chief of Education, [Uganda](#), described a dynamic multi-sectoral, multi-level partnership for girls' education in Uganda that works at national, district, community and camp levels. She explained the post-conflict country context where the education of many girls was interrupted during the conflict period, and the establishment of the partnership. At national level, the partnership has developed gender tools, provided inputs to national education and gender policies, and developed modules for training communities. Working in conjunction with a young peoples' organisation, the Girls' Education Movement, UNGEI in Uganda has managed to reenrol many girls in school who had dropped out and impact on policy-, community- and school-level decisions regarding girls' education. Future plans include strengthening the partnership to monitor results and the introduction of males as role models to work alongside the current female role models. (See [full presentation](#) in Annex 1.)

In summary, Ms. Aksornkool highlighted the key features of good partnerships, the challenges and recommendations for the way forward raised by the panellists:

Features of good partnerships:

- Commitment of government
- Willingness of partners to work with others
- Coming together to speak as one voice
- Dynamic structure but avoid duplication
- Go beyond national level to district and community levels

Challenges:

- Diversity of membership makes consensus difficult
- Transparency
- How to ensure effective partnerships
- Resource constraints
- Utilizing technology and media

Way forward for national partnerships:

- Establish and formalize partnership through developing terms of reference
- Learn from good practices in other countries
- Take advantage of ongoing EFA and MDG processes
- Develop annual work plans to set priorities

## **2. Group work**

In country-based groupings, participants discussed strengthening UNGEI's role at regional and country levels and how to better advocate for gender equality in education through partnerships in Asia-Pacific region (see Annex 1 for group presentations). Responses to the three questions posed to participants are summarized below.

### **What is the added value of UNGEI regionally and in your country?**

- It can bring focus on the issue of gender in education at all levels.
- UNGEI can use its convening and advocacy role to mainstream gender into all aspects of society. It can act as an honest broker between the national and local levels, and between donors and governments, by monitoring the implementation of girls' education within the context of EFA and MDGs.
- UNGEI can develop and disseminate analytical tools, such as the inclusion framework, and test them in a number of countries. The collected data then build a knowledge base for evidence-based advocacy and interventions.
- UNGEI can harness the synergies of various partners, unite them, exchange experiences and help in capacity development.
- Gender is an entry point for other disparity issues; UNGEI can incorporate issues such as HIV/AIDS and violence.
- UNGEI can be a vehicle for promoting human rights, especially for girls.
- It can support country level advocacy, including reaching families in rural areas, and motivate parents to send their girls to school.

**Who are the partners in my country and what steps are needed to establish an effective partnership?**

- Some countries do not have formal UNGEI networks, but most are working in partnership with various groups working on girls' education, including faith-based organizations, NGOs, the private sector, girls, communities, media, schools, parents, teachers, research agencies, academia, school management committees (SMC), bilateral and multilateral organizations, other UN agencies, EFA partners.
- When working with governments, UNGEI should take on an advisory role, such as through an advisory committee to the Government, with the Ministry of Education proving a Secretariat for this committee.
- Partners should be clearly identified on national, regional and local levels.

**How do we enable UNGEI partnerships in individual countries to play an effective role within the EFA framework?**

- Work through existing structures and mechanisms, such as the EFA mid-term review, link with Global Campaign for Education and other events, and strengthen the synergy between UNGEI and GENIA
- Build upon the comparative advantage of its partners, coordinate efforts on gender and education to avoid duplication, such as through mapping network activities, gaps, strengths and resources.
- Clarify role of UNGEI at national level and relationship with national policy and priorities.
- Clear TOR and work plan for regional UNGEI to be shared with country members and partners. Steps needed include: gender policy, strategy, action plan with costing and budget, staff buy-in, mechanisms for monitoring and following up.
- Raise visibility of UNGEI as part of the EFA movement while raising awareness on EFA Dakar and national gender goals.
- Influence donor policy and budgeting on girls' education.
- Ensure the involvement of girls as a reference group.
- See the work of the partnership as a shared product, and share resources as needed.

**Feedback from evaluation of technical meeting**

Participants in the technical meeting completed an evaluation questionnaire, the responses to which were compiled in a document [see Annex 2]. A summary of the completed evaluations and ratings of the

technical meeting and field visits was prepared by Mr. Parimal Jha. The summary was presented and discussed during the business meeting on 13 June.

Overall, the feedback was very positive, with high ratings for the field trips, group work and interaction with fellow participants. The two main areas where improvement was needed were the share fair and security briefing. In discussion, suggestions were made to schedule future share fairs between sessions and allow participants to present key documents/materials, so as to encourage interaction. Regarding the security briefing, feedback was provided to the relevant authorities.

## **D. Conclusion and Way Forward**

Closing remarks and statements were made by Ms. Abigail C. Lanceta, Programme Officer, SEAMEO; Ms. Mercy Tembon, Sr. Education Specialist, World Bank and member of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee; Mr. Arjun Bhandari, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports, Government of Nepal; and Ms. Elizabeth Heen, Senior Education Advisor, Norad, and UNGEI Global Advisory Committee Co-Chair.

Ms Lanceta reflected on how the meeting provided greater depth in understanding the important work being done by UNGEI as the EFA flagship around education and gender. She remarked on the many areas of possible collaboration of SEAMEO and UNGEI to help ensure stronger advocacy at regional and country levels.

Ms. Tembon noted that over the two days of discussions, the results of five years of relentless efforts and commitment to achieve gender equality in education through the work of UNGEI are beginning to be seen (see Annex 1 for [closing remarks](#)). The theme of the meeting ‘Equity, Gender and Quality in Education’, the draft background paper prepared by Mr. Govinda, the presence of UNGEI Regional focal points, and participants from more than 14 countries from East and South Asia and the Pacific and one country from Africa have provided a rich context for the diverse contributions.

The participation of girls at the opening session, of civil society groups and journalists in the meeting discussions, the inclusion of field visits before the meeting, the sharing of information through an “share fair”, and the opportunity for participants to network and get to know each other, were some of the factors mentioned as unique for the meeting.

The meeting was viewed as a milestone for the attainment of the EFA goals, and an auspicious opportunity to share experiences between the participating countries and the various stakeholders. The discussions were seen as a step to open ways for continuous discourse and the establishment of more effective networks at country, regional and global levels.

Mr. Bhandari added that the deliberations have helped identify appropriate policy responses and strategic interventions relevant to the local needs and situation, and that the main challenge now is to seek local solutions from the global and regional perspectives developed from these deliberations.

Ms. Tembon highlighted ten key messages to summarize the two days of deliberations:

### **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

wherever 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 are 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 labour 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 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 is important for achieving the gender equality and quality in education goals. 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 catalyst 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 in 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.

Mr. Bhandari from the Ministry of Education and Sports noted that it was a great opportunity to learn from the participants' experiences and to share the challenges facing Nepal. He also remarked on having succeeded in identifying appropriate policy responses and strategic interventions relevant to local needs and situation and the challenge now to implement them. Ms. Chaudhary and Mr. Govinda were lauded for providing inspirational and insightful perspectives to the meeting (see Annex 1 for [closing remarks](#)).

Ms. Heen, speaking on behalf of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee, expressed her satisfaction with the outcome of the Technical Meeting. Based on the stated objectives (see Section 1, above), she felt that the meeting served to accelerate the sharing of knowledge and experience related to gender in education among UNGEI partners and across East Asia, the Pacific and South Asia, with an important experience from East Africa, and that the technical discussions were both in-depth and of excellent quality. Further, it helped to strengthen regional- and country-level UNGEI networks, activities and impact across Asia-Pacific through interaction with global and regional UNGEI partners, as well as through advocacy for stakeholders including education and other ministry officials and civil society from 13 countries. She explained that the results of the participants' evaluation of the meeting, being compiled by the lead facilitator, would be used in the planning of future meetings and would be shared with participants along with the final report.

She took the opportunity to express the appreciation of the Committee to the Government of Nepal for its leadership in preparing the meeting and its hospitality as host. She also extended her thanks to the members of the local Advisory Group, led by the Ministry of Education and Sports, and made up of government ministries, the UN family, bilateral agencies and civil society partners. Special thanks went to the members of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee sub-group that elaborated the original concept of the meeting and to the UNICEF Regional Office and the Global Secretariat for its organization. And finally, Ms. Heen expressed her appreciation for everyone's active participation and contributions to the rich discussion. On that note, she concluded the meeting.

## Annex 1 – Statements and Presentations

### Statements

Opening statement by Ms. Penina Mlama, UNGEI GAC Co-chair & Executive Director, Camfed Tanzania

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Talking%20points%20for%20Co-Chair,%20Penina%20Mlama.pdf>

Statement by Ms. Reshmi Chowdhary, Biratnagar Child Club, made on behalf of the children of Nepal.

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Statement%20on%20Girls%20Education.pdf>

Welcome statement by Ms. Frances Turner, UNICEF Deputy Regional Director for South Asia and member of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Statement%20by%20Frances%20Turner.pdf>

Screening of Girls Stars video from UNICEF India – *Anita, the Beekeeper*

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9a\\_T0uAu70&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9a_T0uAu70&feature=related)

Remarks by Mr. Tony Burdon, Deputy Head of DFID and member of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee, on the importance of education, especially for girls

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Tony%20Burdon%20UNGEI%20speech%2011%2006%202008.pdf>

Opening statement by Mr. Balananda Paudel, Secretary of the Nepal Ministry of Education and Sports

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Opening%20Statement%20by%20Mr.%20Balananda%20Paudel.%20MOES%20Nepal.pdf>

Vote of Thanks by Ms. Cheryl Gregory Faye, Head of UNGEI Secretariat

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Vote%20of%20Thanks,%20CGF.pdf>

Closing remarks by Ms. Abigail C. Lanceta, Programme Officer, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat

[http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/SEAMEO\\_Closing%20Remarks\\_12June2008.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/SEAMEO_Closing%20Remarks_12June2008.pdf)

Closing remarks by Ms. Mercy Tembon, Sr. Education Specialist, World Bank, and member of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Closing%20Remarks,%20World%20Bank.pdf>

Closing remarks by Mr. Arjun Bahhadur Bhandari, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports, Government of Nepal

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Closing%20Remarks,%20Nepal%20MOES.pdf>

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### Presentations

Keynote presentation by Mr. R. Govinda on background paper "Towards Gender Equality in Education: Progress and Challenges in Asia-Pacific Region" prepared for the meeting

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Towards%20Gender%20Equality%20and.ppt>

Discussant comments on background paper presented by Ms. Urmila Sarkar, ILO, and member of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/urmilasarkar.pdf>

Discussant comments on background paper presented by Ms. Jyotsna Jha, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and member of UNGEI Global Advisory Committee <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/jyotsnajha.pdf>

Presentation by Ms. Cheryl Gregory Faye, Head of UNGEI Global Secretariat, on UNGEI, its objectives, composition and structure <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/What%20is%20UNGEI.ppt>

Presentation by Ms. Nhim Vanchankan, Deputy Inspector General and Gender Focal Point, Ministry of Education, Cambodia, on the local partnership, notable achievements and trends in girls' enrolment and number of female teachers  
[http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Cambodia%20presentation%20on%20equity,%20gender,%20and%20quality%20in%20education\\_Nepal%2011-12%20June%2008.ppt](http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Cambodia%20presentation%20on%20equity,%20gender,%20and%20quality%20in%20education_Nepal%2011-12%20June%2008.ppt)

Presentation by Ms. Susan Wardak, Director, Teacher Education Department, Ministry of Education, Afghanistan, on the Afghanistan Girls' Education Initiative (AGEI)  
<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Afghanistan%20Girls'%20Education%20Initiative.ppt>

Presentation by Ms. Sheila Wamahiu, UNGEI Country Focal Point and UNICEF Chief of Education, Uganda, on the multi-sectoral, multi-level partnership for girls' education in Uganda working at national and district levels <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Uganda%20presentation%20no%20photos.ppt>

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## **Group work presentations**

Session on 'Technical issues in educating girls'

Group 1 – examples from Mongolia and Thailand <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Group%201.ppt>

Group 2 – examples from Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea and Nepal

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Group%202.ppt>

Group 3 – <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Group%203.ppt>

Group 4 – examples from Bangladesh and Nepal <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Group%204.ppt>

Group 5 – examples from Bhutan, India and Nepal <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Group%205.ppt>

Group 6 – examples from Pakistan and Bangladesh <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Group%206.pdf>

Session on 'Partnership for results'

Group 1 <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/afternoon/Group%201.pdf>

Group 2 <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/afternoon/Group%202.ppt>

Group 3 <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/afternoon/Group%203.ppt>

Group 4 <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/afternoon/Group%204.ppt>

Group 5 <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/afternoon/Group%205.ppt>

Group 6 <http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/afternoon/Group%206.ppt>

## Annex 2 – Key Documents

Agenda of the Technical Meeting

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Agenda%20technical%20meeting,%20final%2010-6-08.pdf>

Concept Note

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Concept%20Note%20Regional%20GAC,%20technical%20meeting,%20020-5-08.pdf>

Participants List

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Participants%20List,%20technical%20mtg,%20final.xls>

Background paper "Towards Gender Equality in Education: Progress and Challenges in Asia-Pacific Region", by Mr. R. Govinda, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi

[http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Towards%20Gender%20Equality%20in%20Education\\_03Jun2008.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Towards%20Gender%20Equality%20in%20Education_03Jun2008.pdf)

ILO multimedia presentation illustrating facts and figures about child labour and with a message on the challenges, successes and efforts needed to get children into school

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/wdacl/index.htm>

Draft paper "The Gender Dimension of School to Work Transition", by the East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/UNGEI%20Study%20-%20GAC%20meeting%20version-05-06-08.pdf>

Final Communiqué of Technical Meeting: recommendations and consensus on way forward

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Final%20communiqué%20UNGEI%20Regional%20Seminar%20june%202008.pdf>

Evaluation: Full summary of the completed evaluations and ratings of the technical meeting and field visits, prepared by Mr. Parimal Jha

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/business/docs/UNGEI%20Evaluation%2013%20June%5b1%5d.pdf>

## Annex 3 – Observations from field visits

Chitwan (8-10 June)

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/business/docs/Field%20visit%20observations,%20Chitwan%20District.pdf>

Kapilvastu and Rupandehi (8-10 June)

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/business/docs/Field%20visit%20observations,%20Kapilvastu%20Rupandehi%20District.pdf>

Kaski (8-10 June)

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/business/docs/Field%20visit%20observations,%20Kaski%20District.pdf>

Lalitpur (10 June)

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/business/docs/Field%20visit%20observations,%20Lalitpur%20District.pdf>

## Annex 4 – Media and stories

Final Communiqué of Technical Meeting: recommendations and consensus on way forward

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/docs/Final%20communiqué%20UNGEI%20Regional%20Seminar%20june%202008.pdf>

Press release ‘World experts on girls’ education meet in Kathmandu’

[http://www.ungei.org/news/index\\_1819.html](http://www.ungei.org/news/index_1819.html)

### Online media coverage by national and international media:

"Gender equality policy in education stressed", *The Rising Nepal*, 13 June 2008

<http://www.ungei.org/nepal/press/UNGEI%20JUNE%2013.pdf>

"NEPAL: Education Far More than ABCs – Experts", *IPS*, 13 June 2008

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=42788>

"NEPAL: Gender Inequality in Education Has Deep Roots", *IPS*, 13 June 2008

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=42785>

"World experts on girls’ education meet in Kathmandu", *WebWire*, 13 June 2008

<http://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aId=67852>

"EDUCATION-ASIA: Girls Should Go to School, Stay There", *IPS*, 12 June 2008

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=42757>

"Girls' Access To Ed. Focus Of Asia-Pacific Meeting", United Nations Press Release, 12 June 2008

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0806/S00206.htm>

"Quality Not Quantity", *AsiaNews*, 27 June - 3 July 2008

[http://www.ungei.org/nepal/press/AsiaNews\\_June27July3\\_p15\\_17.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/nepal/press/AsiaNews_June27July3_p15_17.pdf)

### Web stories

“Improving Islamic schools, increasing possibilities for Nepalese girls,” UNICEF, 5 August 2008

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nepal\\_45048.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nepal_45048.html)

“UNGEI meeting in Kathmandu calls for equity, gender and quality in education”, UNGEI, 11 June 2008

[http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/nepal\\_1818.html](http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/nepal_1818.html)