

PRESS RELEASE

Business Partnership for Girls' Education Launches the Summer Campaign "Let Me Learn"



Notebooks distribution during the campaign of 2006 resulted on an increase of around 40% in girls' enrollment

Yemen, May 26th (Press Release): The summer campaign for "Let me Learn" initiative spearheaded by Business Partnership for acceleration of Girls' Education (BPGE) was launched yesterday. The campaign aims at raising awareness on the importance of Girls' Education to increase girls' enrollment with motivational messages to encourage parents to send girls to school during the coming academic year.

The launching ceremony was jointly organized by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, and members of the private sector in the BPGE. It was largely attended by a good mix of over 100 participants drawn from Government, private sector, NGOs, civil society representatives and development partners.

Launching the Summer Campaign, Dr. Abdulsalam Al-Joufi Minister of Education, lauded the private sector's important role for accelerating girls' education. He reaffirmed the Ministry's resolve to give special attention to the education of girls, particularly in rural and remote areas. In particular demonstration of the Government's commitment, he referred to abolishing of school fees for girls from grade 1-6 and distribution of food aid for schools needing help as a proven methods to reduce the gender gap. He also acknowledged the role played by the private sector and UNICEF in this campaign that represent a positive step in the mobilization of efforts of the different sectors and local communities to address one of the major challenges facing Yemen.

Dr. Kamel Ben Abdallah, UNICEF Acting Deputy Representative, stressed that the challenge of bridging the gap in girls' enrollment and retaining them in schools cannot be achieved unless there is mobilization of diverse resources and collaborative work. He stated that "This Summer Campaign of the Business Partnership for Girls' Education will add vigor and energy and bring dividends for enrollment and retention of girls in schools."

Additionally, the BPGE Website (www.letmelearn-yemen.com) was launched during the ceremony. It includes information on the Business Partnership on Girls' Education and how to join the partnership in advocating for the promotion of Girls' Education in Yemen and reducing the gender gap.

The launching ceremony was also addressed by Dr. Mutahar Al-Abbassy, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Ms. Faozia Noman, Deputy Minister of Girls' Education in MoE, representatives of the BPGE from Universal Group, MTN Yemen, and Fast Print.

The certificates were handed over by Dr. Al-Joufi to Mr. Alwan Al-Shaibani, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Universal Group, Mr. Malek El-Koussa – Communication and Public Relations Senior Officer of MTN Yemen, Mr. Jameel Murshid – General Manager of Arwa Mineral Water Company (Shamlan), and Mr. Sanad Huraibi – General Manager of Fast Print.

During the Ceremony, partner companies of the private sector were honored and given acknowledgement certificates for their major role played in the partnership and in recognition of their leadership role for promoting girls' education.

The emerging Public/Private partnership stimulated by UNICEF augurs well for accelerating efforts to face a serious challenge to bridge the gender gap with 63 girls per 100 boys in primary schools. Beyond the national average, urban/rural differences are marked and rise to a high gender gap of 55 points meaning that there are 45 girls are enrolled per 100 boys—making the gender gap one of the highest in the region.

The campaign carries a message for parents urging them to support “Let Me Learn” theme that symbolizes the voices of girl children. The campaign will include advocating for the issue through targeted distribution of advocacy messages through different means including posters, flyers, and mobiz in the governorates of Al-Dale'e, Lahj, Taiz, Ibb, Hodiada, Sana'a, Aden, Mareb, Shabwa, Hadramout, Amran, Dhamar, and Hajjah. Additionally, the campaign will extend to the beginning of the academic year. Let Me Learn Campaign is set to disseminate 1.5 million text messages (sms) to MTN subscribers covering urban and rural areas. The campaign will also reinforce the message by prominently carrying the campaign message on 10 million Shamlan mineral water bottles. Along with mobilizing its marketing channels to support girls' education initiative, the BPGE have secured 50,000 notebooks to be given to the children at the beginning of the academic year.
