ACTION should start now for Girls Edu.!

by @VandVictors

With the FAWE Conference on Girls’ Education in Africa coming to an end, Prof. Christine Dranzoa, Chairperson of FAWE, said “Africa’s future belongs to the youth – the journey started a long time ago but the action should start now! This is a social newsletter summarizing the key discussions during the 2-day Girls Conference.

ENHANCING EDUCATION FINANCING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Mr. Roland Angerer, Regional Director, Plan International Region of East and Southern Africa, chaired the first plenary session for day 2 of the FAWE Conference on Girls' Education in Africa. The session’s purpose was to appreciate available financing options and enable FAWE identify opportunities from potential funding partners for its programme ideas.

Domestic Financing for Education: Prospects and Challenges

Ms. Victoria Abioseh Egbetayo of Global Partnership for Education (GPE), said the means to unleash the full potential of an African youth is through education and to achieve it, domestic funding is most be sustainable. This is important (and not negotiable) when it comes to prioritising education. Education has multiple and significant benefits especially to the future of youth and national development. This makes the crisis of educational funding, especially in Africa an urgent matter to be addressed. GPE negotiates with countries to finance education; advocates for political will; addresses GBV; negotiates with donors to increase funding in education and for Governments to pledge more domestic funding.

Declining Financing for Education Demands Global Pressure

Ms. Matildah Mwamba of GCE reported that, "enough funding guarantees good quality education". According to a UNESCO report, “donors are giving education a lower priority in their budgets”. This reflects a low level of political will. There has not been enough support to advocate for good quality education in terms of pressure on world leaders to fund education. More children are missing out on education and the girl child is most affected. More engagement with stakeholders and...
partners should be undertaken to petition Ministries and governments to increase financing for education. It is also important to continuously research on educational funding gaps to and help increase financing through domestic taxation. Through innovative educational financing governments and stakeholders can raise resources to fund education.

Innovative Approaches to Financing Education with a Particular Focus on Girls Education

Plan Zambia’s Ms. Winnie Mabhenza, said the increasing number of poor families, the chances of educating children, especially girl children have diminished. Educational budgets have not been sufficient and have not met the real needs in the educational systems. Delays in budget allocations for the educational sector as well as inadequate infrastructure have made the situation even worse. The question of equitable distribution of resources remains a challenge and if good quality education is to be delivered, there is great need to prioritise educational funding.

It was recommended that, funds allocated to the educational sector must be release on time and consistently. Countries should consider innovative ways to cut expenditure on emoluments while increasing provisions for learning materials and infrastructure investments. Skills education must be prioritised. Overall, countries must address issues affecting girls and educate them to be functionally literate.

The Director of Projects at the Ministry of Education (MoE), Zambia, Mr. Joseph Mudere, said Zambia’s GDP has been increasing and thus, more should be contributed towards the educational sector. The three main pillars in education are teachers, functional infrastructure, and learning and teaching materials. The MoE is in a process for constructing more than 100 secondary schools and 10 of them are specifically for girls alone.

Country Experiences

In 2015 the pay bill towards education was 3.9% of national expenditure in Burkina Faso. Educational funding is however 19.3% of GDP and the need to continue mobilising resources and learn how to manage these resources have been recognised. Burkina Faso needs to take into account other sectors at different levels of education to balance primary and secondary education needs. The gap between boys and girls also needs to be bridged. A programme starting soon has been set for scholarships and 80% of this is reserved for girls to balance the gap between boys and girls. More attention will also be paid to rural areas to reach the country’s ambitious targets.

Education in Namibia is a priority and is being funded at 27% of the GDP. There are two ministries of education - Ministry of Basic Education and Ministry of Training and Higher Education. The higher education ministry funds 80% of all tertiary education in the country. Enrolment in Namibia stands at 94% of school going children and 70% of graduates every year are girls. The gender gap is being addressed effectively with more focus on encouraging boys to go to school. The Global Fund as well as Banks in Namibia are specifically supporting girls education through a number of initiatives.

The percentage of household expenditure that goes towards education in Kenya is estimated at 5.5% while and a quarter of the national budget goes towards education. This, according to Kenya’s representative, shows the placement of a high priority on education. Textbook policy review at all levels and an educational reform policy that is cutting primary education from 8 years to 6 years have been introduced. Accountability is however critical especially at university levels to ensure correct and consistent use of resources allocated.

Malala Fund is advocating for 12 years of free and safe girl child education. The organisation’s appeal is for more stakeholders to invest in girl education. Three key recommendations were raised: (1) count the girls - if efforts are not measured then it does not count; (2) invest in girls through good quality basic and secondary education; and (3) reach the most vulnerable girls and advocate for the elimination of school fees.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

1: INNOVATIONS AND PROGRAMMES THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The session was structured to underscore the urgency for all education and training institutions to enshrine gender equality principles in their preparation of learners to contribute to attaining other sustainable development Goals. It was moderated by Ms. Tizzie Maphalala, of UNICEF ESARO.

Making Ghanaian Girls Great!

Ms. Leonora Dowley, Country Director, Varkey Foundation, Ghana, said Varkey aims to address teacher quality, teacher
opportunities for adolescents

Promote Lifelong Learning

A Pan-African Campaign to Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for Adolescents

Mr. Benson Mutuku and Mr. Gilbert Phiri, CARE International, said women and girls are disadvantaged in the society as they are seen to continue occupying the lower roles in life. Kenya is implementing a program with a focus on ending FGM, unintended pregnancies and early marriages. While they affect girls more, CARE is addressing and educating boys as well on these issues.

Projects to teach learners at an early stage on strategies to be self-reliable and savings have been introduced in schools. Sexual health dialogues have also been encouraged especially for girls to be comfortable to discuss issues around sexual health. ICTs have played a crucial role and platforms have been created for girls to share their experiences and learn from each other, even across the borders. There have been positive results in Kenya and even in Mali as the poorest regions have been targeted and the responses positive.

Similar programs have been introduced with a goal to have youth empowered as they leave the educational system. The focus is on self-sustainability and Guidance and Counselling that is more student-centred has been introduced in pilot schools. Apart from a curriculum review, teacher training is being reviewed to meet the modern requirements of learners, especially girl children.

Transforming lives: FAWE’s Comprehensive Scholarship Programme

Ms. Christine Semambo, Executive Director of Sempebwa, FAWE Uganda said FAWE’s Comprehensive Scholarship Program has touched the lives of more than 100,000 girls and boys in Uganda. Unfortunately, for girls, there are more learners in primary schools than are in secondary and tertiary schools. Some of the drivers towards failure for girls to be in the educational sector. Involvement of governments should continue promoting gender equality and building capacity to measure improvements in the educational sector. Involvement of young people in interventions is also critical to success.

Continental Campaign on Ending Child Marriage through Girls’ Education

Ms. Ellen Travers, Head of Learning, Girls Not Brides said there are 800 organisations working across 90 countries to curb child marriages. Child marriage is one of the key obstacles to girl education. The number of girls married as children will double by 2050 if action is not taken now. This means an end to formal education for girls. The same reasons pushing girls out of schools are more or less the same that will push them into marriage. Some ways to ensure a better future for girls involve empowering, supporting, and providing economic support to girls and their families. This requires coherent policy formulation and educating parents on the importance of girl child education.

Towards Gender Equality: An Integrated Approach to Keeping Girls in School and Learning

Ms. Jonna Karlsson, UNICEF, ESARO said improved and universal access to early learning should be a result of sustainable investments in girl education. The protection of all children, particularly the girl child is of paramount importance. Thirteen countries have so far reported gender parity but 67% of the countries have more girls out of school at lower schooling levels. Some challenges for school dropout still remain. These include pregnancy, violence, poverty, distance, and domestic work. Other challenges are fewer teachers in schools, less training of teachers, and parental attitudes. Perceptions on the relevance of education, violence and abuse in and around schools also contribute to dropout of girls. A strategy document - Communication for Development - is at the centre of UNICEF’s work in addressing the barriers to girl education.
2: REPOSITIONING THE RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WORLD OF WORK TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY

The Moderator, Dr. Barbara Read of University of Glasgow described the Examining Gender in Higher Education (EGHE) Network as a body that explores gendered patterns of higher education participation and successes in STEM and beyond. The focus of the network is to understand gender equality in the experiences and successes of women in higher education on an international level. It undertakes comparative assessments of the work of its members in countries such as Rwanda, Gambia, Uganda and Kenya. It also undertakes a more in-depth assessment of issues regarding STEM education and factors in compulsory basic education that influences girls and women’s education as an entryway into universities. The network found that the use of the UNESCO’s Gender Parity Index often tends to mask the disparity in many areas, such as the participation disparity in STEM subjects.

Challenges Affecting Girl’s Participation in Higher Education

EGHE member, Dr. Josephine Munthali briefed the session on a scoping exercise carried out in large African countries that outlined the many challenges affecting girl’s access and participation when entering higher-level education. This was due to factors such as the gender policies as well as the academic, socio-cultural and environmental issues of each country. Areas affected by these factors include poor students, whose families are unable to put their children into higher learning institutions. ‘Enrolment of mature students’ is another factor as it discourages mature female students with bigger responsibilities at home to enrol in institutions of higher learning. Academic cultures and practices that favour mostly male students is a challenge. Gender policies have largely not been implemented in higher level learning institutions in Africa. One key issue the exercise found was the lack of role models in institutions of higher learning. When a female student enrolls in a tertiary institution, she notices that there are more male lecturers than female. This, according to Dr. Munthali, cannot inspire young ladies to reach greater heights.

3. EXPLORING REPLICABLE PARTNERSHIP MODELS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The session was moderated by Ms. Bridget Moya from the Ministry of General Education, Zambia. It was structured to help define characteristics of strong partnerships to support safe and gender responsive learning environments.

Strengthening North-South Partnerships

Ambassador Justina Mutale showcased the Justina Mutale Scholarship for African girls which gives opportunities to young African women who are very talented but come from poor backgrounds and whose parents are unable to send them to universities. While in the developed world, women are assured of finishing their education on both secondary and higher level of education that is not the same for women in African countries. It is important that “Africa in the 21st century should learn and progress at the same pace as the rest of the world”. In order for this to happen, “Africa needs to learn to think from a global perspective”. Amb. Mutale stated that, “the fight for gender equality in education makes one wonder what has been holding women back in regards to pursuing a proper education”. The need for FAWE members to continue working towards bridging this gap is still imperative.

Project Luangwa Foundation

Project Luangwa operates in rural areas of the Eastern Province of Zambia and has worked with various parts of the community since 2010. Activities include building school infrastructure, providing desks, teaching aids and sponsoring children with disability through primary and tertiary education. The project has built libraries as well as 21 office spaces for teachers within the schools. An additional 12 schools were refurbished and clubhouses that offer services for the girls and boys built. Project Luangwa consists of 5 member lodges in the Luangwa valley that contribute money to the projects by charging an additional USD $5 to room fares to tourists which assists the Project Luangwa foundations.

Partnership for GBV Survivor Support One Stop Center

Ms. Anne Banda from World Vision International showcased the organisation’s Gender Based Violence Survivor Support: Partnership for One Stop Center project. The Survivor Support Center is a one-stop center for Gender Based Violence (GBV) survivors and has a multidisciplinary team that provides immediate medical assistance. Some of the centre’s components include ‘Survivor support’ and ‘Access to Justice’ and asks the key question of all its interventions - “how can we prevent violence from happening in the community?”.

4. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

Mr. Alex Nyingi, a philanthropist Lead from Microsoft SSA moderated the session on Intervention Strategies to Enhance Gender Equality in the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics and Science. The session discussed issues on locating girls and women in initiatives to strengthen STEM as well as critical skills required for the contemporary workplace.
Improving Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa

The Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTEA)’s Priscilla Ombati highlighted a gender separation as well as strong negative reaction from females towards subjects such as mathematics and sciences. Often times these reactions are not deliberate. Students are unconscious of separating tasks based on their gender. In most cultures, people believe that female teachers cannot take up leadership positions because they belong to a patrilineal system. They believe that certain positions are meant for men. It is important that all males and females whether students or teachers are catered for in the same way to reduce the gender divide.

Testimony: Women in Science

Dr Harriet Sakala a FAWE Zambia Alumni and beneficiary works in the paediatric department at UTH now called the Lusaka Children’s Hospital. She noted that society still has many people who question why a woman should be studying sciences when her place is in the kitchen. She faced a lot of ridicule from her male counterparts especially in classes where the percentage of males was marginally higher than that of females. She believes that females add colour and spice to the field of STEM saying, “had a female the computer, it could have been more colorful and creative”. Dr. Sakala encouraged all girls to be fearless and go for their dreams - “once you are fearless, you will definitely become limitless.”

STEM: Benin Showcase

In Benin, in order to gain a degree in science ladies have to build a spirit of endurance. More females need to be encouraged to take up science subjects. The realisation however is that, in recent times, boys and young men are also shunning STEM subjects. Benin has put in place facilities where young girls could take up research and practicals in the sciences and mathematics. Through coordinated efforts of stakeholders in Benin, many girls have now started to take keen interest in subjects such as mathematics. While more needs to be done to encourage young people to take up science subjects, prizes and grants are needed to strengthen capacities of women to take up leadership positions in STEM.

5. INCLUSIVE LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR THE MARGINALISED AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The session was moderated by Prof. Naana Apoku-Agyemang, FAWE Africa member. It was designed to discuss and identify strategies to make learning programmes inclusive for margined communities and persons with disabilities.

Campaign for Non-formal Education Opportunities for Out of School Children

Ms. Lydia Madyirapanze, FAWE Zimbabwe noted that more work is needed to the campaign to support more girls in education. If current trends continue, more children will never see or receive education and this drives the campaign for non-formal education opportunities for out of school children. The programming needs to be continuously revised and special focus placed on out of school girls. Learner retention and out of school children policies are now in place in Zimbabwe to make for schools to be centres for both formal and non-formal education. It was recommended that, budgets allocations to support non-formal education should be increased. There is also need for inter-ministerial dialogues to support non-formal education as well as building capacities of communities for non-formal education.

Promoting Training and Employment Opportunities for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities: A Systematic Review

Ms. Michelle Chimuka, Sani Foundation, Zambia, said attention must be paid to intellectual disabilities such as down-syndrome. People with intellectual disabilities are limited and are often times marginalised. It becomes a social barrier for them and less expected of...
I dreamt of a country where education would prevail

Promoting Alternative Education for Learners Excluded from Mainstream Education: The Community Schools Initiative in Zambia

Ms. Cleopatra Muma, Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) said the gravity of limitation of education to intellectually challenged or disabled children, school leavers and those not yet in school is grave in Zambia. In 2009, Zambia had approximately 1.6 million orphans. Between 2013 and 2016, there were 800,000 children out of school, representing 59% of school aged children. The education budget dropped in 2017 to 16.5% from 17.2% in 2016 while the transition from grade 7 to 8 was 66.2% leaving a gap of 33.8%.

ZOCS aims to provide opportunities for children to access education through community schools. Overaged children are given the opportunity to go to school and regardless of location, ZOCS provides and maintains quality education. ZOCS focuses on advocacy & influencing, capacity building, service delivery and community partnership and the belief that, it is imperative to answer the question, “If they are not in school, where are they, and what are they doing?”

Lessons from Namibia

Namibia has initiated a house to house drive to register all people living with disabilities (PWDs). PWDs are celebrated yearly and made to know that they belong. Everyone is encouraged not to exclude PWDs, the marginalised and street children from education and life activities during these functions. Namibia has made a number of progress on the issue. The Government has created a Ministry of People with Disabilities and has involved the disabled in the ministry. Cabinet now members of marginalised tribes (the San) and Education is considered a Right and not a privilege. Further, the use of media to sensitize communities using local languages as well as providing grants for all parents with children with disabilities has improved the living conditions of PWDs.

Lessons from Benin

Primary to secondary education is compulsory for according to Benin’s constitution. Most children with disabilities are cared for by charitable organisations but the school curriculum has no provisions specifically for persons with disabilities. Government has however built schools for children with disabilities. These schools encourage children to continue with their education to the highest level possible. There are also projects from various funders like World Bank that creates skill learning opportunities like crafting for persons with disabilities. The target now is on getting street children to be enrolled into the school system.

6. TRANSFORMING TEACHER PEDAGOGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The session was chaired by Mr. Shem Okore Bodo, Acting Executive Secretary, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). The session considered approached to transform the teaching towards gender equality.

A teacher's' role is central to the learning outcomes of children. This is why International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA)'s objective is focused on capacity building for teachers. IICBA is currently undertaking motivation programmes for teachers. It has been proved that motivated teachers create enhanced learning experiences for the child. Dr. Yumiko Yokozeki, Director of IICBA UNESCO, emphasized the need for women and girls to embrace Science and Technology. She emphasised that Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP)
Observing gaps in teachers’ lesson presentations, Malawi adopted the GRP model and enforced its observance by all teachers to maintain uniformity. Three of the Six (6) pillars in the model are: Methodology, Institutional and Classroom Management. In Ethiopia, gender mainstreaming in general and GRP in particular has received serious commitments from stakeholders. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), nine targeted schools had separate restrooms for boys and girls constructed. Zambia saw the birth of a toolkit for GRP of Early Childhood Education (ECE) although it is yet to be launched. This was made possible through a partnership between FAWE and the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB). It was recommended that organisations use government systems to induce positive and sustainable changes because they are somewhat reliable.

Some questioned however remained unanswered from participants’ perspectives. Is there empirical information on Learner Centred Pedagogy (LCP) being inherently gender responsive; what is the link between LCP and Teacher Centred Pedagogy (TCP) and how can it this be reconciled; and why teachers and not ICT at the centre of administering GRP—are some of the critical questions to note.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH MINISTERS OF EDUCATION

Ms. Uwizihiwe Leonne Laura, Alumni Representative at GA said Africa has so much potential and most of the population are young people. With enough investments in education and social justice, the future of Africa will be brighter and developed. A number of youth delegates presented their positions from their country perspectives.

Ethiopia’s delegates noted the need to recognise problems at hand. This helps in formulating policies that can address such particular problems. There is need to adopt workable structures in every area to deal with GBV. Student-teacher ratios should always be reviewed to create trust and dialogue between teachers and their students. Mentorship by higher level students and community mentors is a way that can also guide students to learning from real life experiences. Ministries should create mechanisms for stakeholders to be able to contribute.

A delegate from Ghana said key partners in the educational sector have been making strides together with FAWE in providing scholarships to girls and women to be educated. UNICEF was praised for taking a stand in supporting FAWE to bridge the gaps in education between girls and boys. Technological advancements have been employed to improve the education quality for girls. What is needed however is to continue to appeal to ministers to be champions in facilitating good quality education, especially for girls and women.

Young delegates from the Gambia emphasised that it is vital that educational systems especially for girls should not only teach conventional subjects but also skills and other courses on sexual health and leadership. Education should also not end at basic/primary levels but encourage girls to enrol for tertiary education. To move away from the current African problems, there is great need to invest in young people today and reap the desired results. Discussions about young people should involve the youth themselves because young people understand their issues better. As students, challenges are faced both by male and females although females are more disadvantaged. They fall victim to pregnancy, violence, unsustainable political systems etc. There is need to avoid the repetition of past failures, therefore policies should be put in place to protect the girls in and out of the education system. Efforts must however be made to have girls remain in school. Change should start now and it starts with us—young people.

The crisis in Mali could be likened to other countries that face conflicts. The conflicts have forced many girls out of schools. The government is making an effort to rebuild the educational system and educational infrastructure. There however aren’t many strategies being implemented to support girls that are
displaced or were married off, violated, etc.

There are many issues such as school gender violence that are affecting the education of girls in Africa and Uganda in particular. These cause many other problems like school dropouts and early marriages. Girls need continuous support especially on GBV issues and new techniques need to be introduced to curb the vice. It is important for authorities to spell out their plan in dealing with perpetrators of GBV. The re-admission programs in Uganda supported by FAWE have also been a success. There is need to at least document the successes of such women and celebrate them. While it is important to take girls to school it is also important to make an after school plan for them.

**CLOSING SESSION**

Prof. Christine Dranzoa, Chairperson of FAWE chaired the closing session and thanked all partners, delegates, speakers and stakeholders for their attendance, support and contributions. She expressed FAWE’s appreciation to the Zambia’s first lady who committed to champion girls’ education program of FAWE and partners in Zambia and for her commitment to engage other first ladies of Africa in this cause.

With the continent of Africa being that youthful, “the presence of the young people made the conference more youth centred” and making it imperative for everyone to listen to young people lest Africa will not develop. She said, matters relating to girl child education cannot be compromised and should not be negotiated – it remains a right.

In his closing remarks, Hon. Dr. Dennis Wachinga, Minister of General Education, Zambia noted that FAWE has done an amazing job hosting a large group for the conference but more importantly, to discuss matters that are at the hearts of many – education. More so, the singular focus on girl education is commendable. While wishing them adieu, he thanked all delegates for their contributions and encouraged implementation of key decisions in their respective countries.