2009 Report on progress to date
Global Advisory Committee Meeting
27-28 May 2009
This report is submitted on behalf of the East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI Working Group\(^i\) as input into the 27-28 May 2009 UNGEI Global Advisory Committee Meeting. The document reports on progress to date in implementation of the 2009 regional annual work plan. The report consists of three sections, which intend to provide 1) overview of the region through brief summary of trends in gender in education, 2) an update on regional UNGEI partnerships and 3) short summary reports from several countries in the region, highlighting how girls’ education and gender in education is being addressed through different mechanisms.

### Current Trends and Analysis from East Asia and Pacific\(^ii\)

In East Asia and the Pacific, the gross enrolment ratio for all levels of education from primary to tertiary education reveals a mixed picture across countries in the region. In 13 out of the 22 countries with data, male enrolment ratios are higher than those of females, while in 9 countries, a higher proportion of females are enrolled. The situation in the region underlines the fact that promoting gender equality has to do with men and women, boys and girls, with disparities affecting both sexes.

At the aggregate level, notable progress was made in closing gender gaps and many countries in the region met or were very close to meeting this target of ensuring that equal proportions of girls and boys enroll in both primary and secondary school. However, significant gaps remain in some countries, where girls or boys are disadvantaged at different levels of the education system. While these aggregate figures provide an overview, further disaggregation by level of education and also sub-nationally would allow for a better understanding of the nature of disparities and where to target efforts to address them. For example, in Thailand, disaggregation by level of education shows that higher proportions of boys are enrolled than girls at the primary education level, while higher proportions of girls are enrolled than boys at the secondary and tertiary levels. At these higher levels of education, the disparities are, in fact, to the disadvantage of boys.

Further disaggregation of data reveals the range in the levels of disparity that exists within countries which may not fully be reflected in national, aggregate figures. In Cambodia, Myanmar and Mongolia, for example, national level data indicate that gender parity has been achieved in primary education enrolment. However, a closer look at the sub-national level shows that there are significant disparities in parts of these countries – to the disadvantage of girls in Cambodia, and to the disadvantage of boys in Myanmar and Mongolia. The case of Indonesia illustrates how wide the range in disparity levels can be, from a very low enrolment ratio for girls compared with boys in one part of the country (GPI 0.56), to parity (1.01) in another.

National data highlight disparities in the completion of the primary education cycle, but perhaps with unexpected outcomes. Disparities in favor of boys were only evident in Indonesia with a GPI for survival rate to grade 5 of 0.94. In a majority of countries for which data were available, gender parity was achieved in survival rate to grade 5. However, data reveals that when girls are enrolled in school, they tend to survive at rates equal to or higher than boys. In Lao PDR for example, girls remain slightly disadvantaged in terms of enrolment, but those who enter primary education survive at rates equal to their male counterparts. In five countries, there were clear disparities resulting in higher survival rates for girls, with Kiribati (1.16 GPI) and the Philippines (1.13 GPI) reporting the greatest disparities between the sexes.

Poverty is often a key factor in girls’ and boys’ school attendance. Consideration of the opportunity costs of lost income or the need for help with household work and childcare may affect parents’ decisions in sending their sons or daughters to school. In Mongolia, for example, boys often drop out of school to contribute to household incomes by working with livestock. This is reflected in the gaps in boys’ school attendance compared with that of girls, particularly at the lower income quintiles. Boys’ enrolment and attendance in secondary education is also an issue of concern in Thailand.

In Timor Leste, amongst the richest quintile, girls reach higher levels of education than their male counterparts, but amongst the poorest, the situation reverses itself and girls are disadvantaged. In Viet Nam, where girls’ enrolment and attendance is lower proportionally than that of boys, poverty does seem to be a factor given the gap at the lowest income quintile. However, it seems that at the middle to higher income levels, as poverty becomes less of an issue, families place relatively equal importance on both girls’ and boys’ education. In Papua New Guinea, recent education census data reveals sub-national gender disparities in enrolment to the overall disadvantage of girls. Interestingly, in certain regions where cultures are based on matrilineal systems, disparities are reversed and boys are disadvantaged.

*This data highlights the importance of sound analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information leading to more efficiently and effectively targeted policy and planning, and advocacy.*

### Update on Regional Partnerships

The regional working group has a membership of 18 partner organizations. The group meets every two months throughout the year and at special events, meetings and conferences\(^iii\). UNICEF serves as co-chair/convener and secretariat for the working group. UNESCO Bangkok is also a co-chair and convener. The regional working group brings together a good blend of UN and CSO/NGO partners.

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\(^i\)East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI

\(^ii\)Current Trends and Analysis from East Asia and Pacific

\(^iii\)Update on Regional Partnerships
EAP UNGEI

2009 marked the first year that the regional working group solidified its work through a joint annual work plan. The plan aims at strengthening UNGEI messages and broadening its reach. 2009 annual work plan for the EAP UNGEI focuses on three areas: gender in education advocacy, knowledge generation and knowledge management. Concrete activities, summarized in the annex to this report revolve around independent national and multi-country research, capacity building in strengthened advocacy messages by national partners, and improved visibility, dissemination, and networking.

Research
In 2009, with technical and financial support, coordination and management of the East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI working group, research on the gender-related impacts of the financial crisis on education will be conducted in four countries; research on the status of boys in education will be conducted in two to three countries. National research on school to work transitions will be conducted in the Philippines.

These findings will be important not only in informing policy discussion at a national level, but also relevant to countries throughout the region and beyond. The UNGEI WG will assist in the packaging and broad dissemination of these results.

Capacity building
Gender focal points within the Ministry of Education from thirteen countries in East Asia and the Pacific (including those six countries participating in the GENIA network) will be invited to participate in training workshops on strengthening evidence-based advocacy messages. Beyond this, invitation will be extended to UNGEI partners at the regional and national level throughout the region.

Networking, Advocacy, and information sharing
The Regional Working Group has agreed to prioritize establishment and strengthening of the communication and information sharing function of the partnership and to better link to national partnerships in place throughout the region. This includes establishment of a more prominent web space and regular communication mechanisms through e-newsletters and mailing lists. This is aimed to engage within a network of networks to ensure partners are informed and supported and that publications, resources and on-going events are shared amongst partners at regional and national levels. Importance of this function has been reinforced by gender focal points within the Ministry of Education throughout the region and regional partners.

This year, the EAP UNGEI was present through an exhibition at International Women’s Day celebration at UNESCAP and released statements during EFA Global Action Week and the Regional EFA Coordinators’ meeting. Participation is planned for the June 2009 Commonwealth Ministers of Education Meeting in Malaysia. UNGEI joined hands with UNESCO Bangkok this year to launch the Photo Contest 2009: Reversing Realities: Seeking Gender Equality in Education.

In early 2009, the EAP UNGEI presented its most recent UNGEI publication, ‘Making education work: the gender dimension of the school to work transition’ in a panel discussion of the UNESCO Global Women’s Research and Studies Conference in Bangkok. The UNGEI panel was given a prominent position on the agenda, ensuring that our messages were heard by all and were able to provide positive influence on the conference. UNGEI was also able to positively influence the focus of the regional research agenda of the network to ensure that issues of gender in education included there within.

The school to work report is set to be republished in a summary form in the Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2009 publication.

EAP UNGEI was able to leverage the space within the 10th Asia and Pacific Regional National EFA Coordinators Meeting, which brought together approximately 35 national delegations from the Asia and Pacific Region. UNGEI was featured in a panel response to the presentation of the EFA Global Monitoring Report.

The bi-monthly business meeting of the East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI working group was planned to coincide EFA Coordinators Meeting and so the group met and further welcomed special guests from that meeting, including Ministry of Education Gender Focal Points, National EFA Coordinators, regional NGO/CSO and national counterparts. The Secretary of State and National EFA Coordinator in Cambodia joined the meeting. This was an important opportunity to engage with national partners as a means for advocacy and to strengthen linkages between countries and with the regional level partnership.

Country level Partnerships
In this region, UNGEI is most present and visible at the regional level with existing country level structures such as local education groups (LEGs), sector working groups often times assuming the partnerships and coordination of UNGEI, but under a different name. This is especially true amongst the many countries which have engaged in sector-wide support mechanisms to education with structures in place.

In 2009, the Regional UNGEI working group through its planned activities will seek to better link to national processes, groups and counterparts through improved communication and linkages between agencies and their partners.

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The short summary which follows intends to provide only examples of various work on gender in education and/or girls’ education in place throughout the region. It is in no way constitutes a full picture of the unique and varied work taking place throughout the region, but highlights potential areas in which UNGEI can better link with, feed into and support country initiatives.

**One UN in Viet Nam**
With the One UN pilot in place in Viet Nam, the UN is positioned to promote a common voice and approach and to provide high-level policy advice to the Government. UN has developed a $4.5 million joint programme on gender equality to provide strategic, coordinated and multi-sectoral technical assistance to the Government. The One Plan 2006-2010 includes an additional $15 million to fund projects which aim to improve gender equity and equality across multiple sectors, including education. The main mechanism for coordinating these joint UN activities is the UN Gender Programme Coordination Group (PCG). A recent gender audit of the UN programme found that gender mainstreaming is not considered a priority by many senior managers within the UN; tools for gender mainstreaming are available, but many staff do not know of, or use them; and that Gender is inconsistently mainstreamed in UN messaging on general issues, or specifically where gender equality and women’s empowerment should be “centre stage” such as health, education and HIV.

The gender audit provides a baseline for future monitoring of progress within the United Nations Country Team. The Gender PCG and the agencies and partners supporting education are natural counterparts for the regional UNGEI. Regional partners are positioned to offer support through country-level counterparts.

**Timor Leste**
Although the need has been identified, partners in education have struggled to establish footing for a UNGEI partnership amidst competing priorities within the education sector, especially in this relatively young country. It was noted that Timor Leste may have similarities with South Asian countries—particularly Afghanistan—where valuable lessons and strategies in planning and establishment of a national UNGEI could be shared. This has set up a potential for UNGEI cross-regional support. With the Regional Focal Point from South Asia, the EAP UNGEI will continue to remain pro-active in its support for national activities.

**Cambodia**
In Cambodia, gender in education is addressed through the Gender Working Group (GWG) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The GWG recently conducted and published an Education Gender Review. The study resulted in in-depth findings across each sector of the education system. The report recommends a shift in priority and focus from increased access to improved quality and learning outcomes; to sharpen targeting to ensure the neediest are receiving intended interventions (scholarships, etc) and to concentrate on implementation of local initiatives.

Through national coordination mechanisms, UNICEF and partners support the education sector and the Gender Working Group. UNGEI maintains communication through country representation by partner agencies, but recognizes the need to strengthen this function to ensure that the national partnership feels engaged with and linked into regional and global work.

-prepared by Jon F. Kapp, Education Specialist
East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI Focal Point
UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Region (EAPRO)

On behalf of the East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI
### ANNEX 1

**Annual Work Plan** – 2009 - *summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender in Education Advocacy</td>
<td>1.1a</td>
<td>Advocacy guidelines / toolkit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.1b</td>
<td>Evidence-for-Advocacy on Gender in Education Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Photo contest and calendar to promote Gender Equality in Education</td>
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<td>2. Knowledge generation</td>
<td>2.1a</td>
<td>Making Education Work: the gender dimensions of school to work transitions published and disseminated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1b</td>
<td>Making Education Work: the gender dimensions of school to work transitions – panel presentation at the UNESCO Gender Studies Conference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.1c</td>
<td>National Study on gender dimensions of school to work in the Philippines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2a</td>
<td>Gender Equality in Education, Progress Note published and disseminated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2b</td>
<td>Gender Equality in Education, Snapshot published and disseminated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Case study on drop-outs / non-transition amongst boys commissioned and completed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>National and sub-national research on gender-dimensions of impacts of the financial crisis on the education system commissioned and published</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Repository of Adolescent Girls’ Education / Girls Education Mapping Exercise (GEME) piloted and lessons learnt processed</td>
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<td>3. Knowledge management</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>EAP Regional UNGEI webspace established, linkages to partner networks and communication mechanisms strengthened.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Regional calendar established and updated regularly</td>
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1 Full work plan includes indication of budgetary requirements, responsible person/agency, timeline and progress to date.
End notes


2 Analysis presented here was prepared for publication in the Snapshot of Gender Equality in Education, East Asia and Pacific, prepared by UNICEF EAPRO with contributions and support from the EAP UNGEI working group on the occasion of the regional EFA Mid-Decade Assessment.

3 The EAP UNGEI strives to be present in person and through release and distribution of statements, materials and publications at regional events, conferences and meetings.

4 Regional partners manage related, but distinct networks such as the Gender in Education Network In Asia (GENIA), coordinated by UNESCO, the gender and HIV/AIDS network of partners managed by UNAIDS, the youth employment network support by ILO, and the Asia and Pacific Education for All network coordinated by UNESCO.

5 See annex for full text, prepared and released as a joint statement with UNGEI South Asia.

6 See annex for full copy of the photo contest announcement.

7 Summary drawn from the UN Gender Audit Report and Delivering as One on Gender n Viet Nam

8 Summary drawn from the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport Education Gender Review, 2007/2008