Selected trends and thematic analysis:

The MENA region is one that manifests a great deal of diversity both at the regional and national levels. The region is divided into four types of countries; Least Developed countries LDCs such as Yemen, Djibouti and Sudan; Middle income countries such as Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan and border line countries such as Egypt, and Libya; high income countries such as the Gulf countries. In addition there are other countries that are emergency ones and that cut across all three types. Each of the various typologies manifests different trends.

The LDCs are countries where gender disparity persists. Although the Average Annual Rate of Increase AARI in general in the region is an elevated one at 1.4, gender disparities continue to loom large for the three least developed countries mentioned.

For the Middle and high income countries the issue of equality surfaces prominently. In Lebanon as in Saudi Arabia girls and women reach the highest levels of education. In the former they choose not to participate economically and in the latter they are convinced not to.

In emergency situations in occupied Palestinian territory, and in Iraq, past gains in girls’ education and gender equality are being gradually eroded. The security issue is resulting in a widening gender gap in Iraq wherein accelerated learning for girls is part of the response. In oPt violence is targeting girls as a result of the wider violent situation with the occupation and conflict.

Updates on the regional UNGEI partnership:

The most prominent responses at regional level have been around partnerships with media where much advocacy was done in the way of gender parity and equality. Partnerships with MBC television to produce videos on girls’ education in select countries of the region, and several forums to engage media around the issue. Meanwhile the first learning series one highlighted the success story of the Egypt UNGEI partnership leading to peer learning and the development of similar partnerships in Sudan and Yemen.

Another avenue for future partnerships at the regional level is building on existing ECD networks and partnerships as recommended by the EFA high level meeting in Cairo in
2006. A third potential is the League of Arab States that has shown its willingness to work on the issue regionally through its childhood and women’s departments. In addition the MENA region is working on an adolescents’ regional strategy in which gender will be a critical entry point particularly for post primary education and out of school adolescents. The strategy upholds a wide ranging partnership amongst the regional development agencies.

Finally MENA is developing a regional and global partnership around the development of an equality framework with indicators.

**Updates on the country UNGEI partnerships:**

The case study of Sudan highlights a great example whereby the country’s diversity was taken into account, steering away from the dangers of planning strategies and policies that treat the issue as a homogenous “average”. Each of the several states participated in setting up a strategy to tackle girls’ education within the context of their situation analyses. Nomadic girls’ education had their share of tailor made strategies. The participatory process over a period of 18 months yielded excellent results with detailed tailor made strategies. These were developed into meticulous plans of action with measurable results. Funding for those plans is largely within national planning systems. The first lady of Sudan champions the national Girls’ education strategy for Sudan.