Parliamentarians for Equity and Girls Education

South Asia UNGEI Regional Consultation

20-22 September 2011
Kathmandu, Nepal
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Cover photo: Right to Education (RTE) Poster

Developed by Ministry of Human Resource Development of India with support from UNICEF India.
PREFACE

- **UNGEI: United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative** is a partnership of organizations dedicated to promoting girls’ education and gender equality at global, regional and country levels, with UNICEF as its lead agency. A regional partnership in South Asia supports and guides country level partnerships to form, evolve and function as effective platforms for evidence-based advocacy and positive change. UNGEI country partnerships are led by Ministries of Education and include development partners and civil society organizations. In South Asia, country partnerships are currently active in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. These partnerships contribute to national priorities in children’s education and UNGEI’s vision of “a world where all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realize their full potential and contribute to transforming societies where gender equality becomes a reality”\(^1\).

- **Parliamentarians for Equity and Girls’ Education** is an initiative under the South Asia country UNGEI partnerships. It is a coalition of parliamentarians, young people, civil society organisations and governments, to promote greater equity in education, with a focus on marginalised children, especially girls. The model is currently under implementation in Bangladesh, Nepal (where it was first introduced), and Pakistan. The regional UNGEI has supported the initiative through facilitation of cross-country learning and dialogue.

- **Young Champions or YC** is an initiative under the South Asia country UNGEI partnerships, is currently under active implementation in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, and in its early stages in Bhutan and Maldives. Young champions are young women and men who volunteer their time to make a difference, from equity and rights based perspective, in the lives of disadvantaged children and young people. Young champions work at community levels as spokespersons and advocates for social change including the multiple barriers that influence enrolment, retention and completion of a full cycle of basic schooling for girls and boys, such as child marriage and gender-based discrimination. Young champions work with parliamentarians at grass-roots level and highlight issues in equity and girls’ education. The South Asia regional UNGEI supported this initiative through a series of training of trainer (TOT) events and a training module developed in partnership with young champions and various stakeholders.

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\(^1\) Adopted at the UNGEI GAC Business Meeting, June 2008, Kathmandu Nepal
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>AFPPD</td>
<td>Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development</td>
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<td>AGEI</td>
<td>Afghanistan Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>FASSPED</td>
<td>Forum of Asia Pacific Parliamentarians for Education</td>
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<td>GRB</td>
<td>Gender Responsive Budgeting</td>
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<td>FTI</td>
<td>Fast Track Initiative</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<td>Ministry of Human Resources Development</td>
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<td>PBSA</td>
<td>Pakistan boy Scouts’ Association</td>
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<td>Pakistan Girl Guides’ Association</td>
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<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
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<td>SZOP</td>
<td>School Zone of Peace</td>
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<td>RTE</td>
<td>Right to Education</td>
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<td>SSMK</td>
<td>SaathiSanga Mon Ko Kura (Chatting with my Best Friend, Nepal radio programme)</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Found</td>
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<td>United Nations Fund for Population Activities</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This report outlines key outcomes and results from a high-level regional consultation to ensure that all children of South Asia are able to realise their right to complete a full cycle of quality basic schooling, using partnerships as a strategy for equity and girls’ education.

THE CONSULTATION SOUGHT TO:

• Provide a forum for parliamentarians, representatives of relevant ministries, including education, finance and planning, selected partners of the United Nations’ Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), and young people from South Asia to convene, share their experiences in promoting education for marginalised children, and agree on a way forward, both in their own countries as well as the region;

• Prepare the groundwork for greater South-South cooperation of Parliamentarians for Equity and Girls’ Education; and

• Create an opportunity to review existing activities of country UNGEI partnerships and young champions with a view to making them more effective, cross-sectoral and results oriented.

Seven countries were represented at the Consultation that was organised under UNGEI and hosted by the Government of Nepal in collaboration with members of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal. This Consultation built on earlier meetings on this topic, held in Nepal and Bangladesh, as part of UNGEI activities to enhance cross-country dialogue, learning and South-south cooperation.

KEY RESULTS/OUTPUTS AND ACTION POINTS :

• The Kathmandu Statement was adopted by participants

• Action points were presented by individual countries using the Statement as a point of reference

UNICEF efforts to promote and support South-South cooperation are aligned to national priorities for children, including the MDGs, and has fostered various forms of cooperation such as: (i) cross-border cooperation to combat children and women trafficking; (ii) sub-regional and regional cooperation, such as the one proposed for parliamentarians; (iii) Technical cooperation; (iv) mobilizing cash and/or supply assistance; and (v) Information and consultation in the form of regional meetings. Source: UNICEF Approach to South-South Cooperation Programme Guidance Note February 2011
Consultation of Parliamentarians for Equity and Girls’ Education

20-21 September, 2011
Kathmandu Statement

Countries in South Asia have made good progress in the achievement of Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for education. At the same time, this progress has highlighted some of the disparities that continue to exist within countries. Both girls and boys who are out of school are disadvantaged by multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion associated with gender, religion and social status; economic status; geographic location; migration and displacement; stigma including that related to HIV/AIDS; disability, language, race, ethnicity; birth registration status; civil strife, conflict and natural disaster. These inequities in opportunities in quality education need urgent attention.

We have taken into account some of the challenges and opportunities in basic education of marginalized children, especially girls, which were raised at recent meetings such as: A Collective Commitment on Girls’ Education and Gender Equality (Constituent Assembly Members, Nepal 2008), Dhaka Declaration on EFA (Bangladesh 2009), Dhaka meeting of Parliamentarians (Bangladesh 2010), UNGEI Dakar Declaration (Senegal 2010), the Addis Ababa Declaration (Ethiopia 2010) and the Jomtien Statement (Thailand 2011).

Based on the above, and on our Government’s commitment towards implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), we call for urgent action in the following areas:

1. **Greater Equity in Education**
   - Collection and analysis of data disaggregated beyond sex to include other forms of exclusion such as income level of families, geographic location, language, HIV status, disability and ethnicity and the sharing of evidence based knowledge in the region
   - Innovative practices (e.g. incentives schemes,) involving various sectors, ministries and a diverse set of partners ensuring that these innovations reach and benefit marginalized groups
   - Policies and practices that provide a protective environment in schools and ensure education as an integral part of humanitarian response
   - Encourage gender sensitive quality education based on activity based, child centric and joyful learning in pre-primary, primary and secondary education that leads to equal opportunities including employment
   - Flexible schooling modalities to ensure a second opportunity for out of school children, including girls
   - Eliminate discriminative practices such as exclusion of married girls and young mothers in the education system and children without birth certificates

2. **Empowerment of Girls and Women**
   - Promote and support attitudes among young boys and men regarding gender equality in girls in family setting, community and society at large
   - Integration of gender responsive budgeting into overall planning processes and gender audits of curricula, textbooks and school facilities (separate functioning toilets)
“Zero tolerance” for acts that have a negative effect on education of girls, such as violence, abuse, harassment and “teasing”

- Elimination of traditional harmful practices including child marriage and practices related to menstruation
- Promote technical education for both women and men to ensure inclusive economic development of our countries

3. Resources
- Enhanced education budgets as per the recommendation of Education for All (EFA) meetings, of 6% of GNP and/or 20% of public expenditure to education
- Monitoring that the trend of public-private partnerships with the civil society and private sector is promoting equity and ensuring increasing opportunities for disadvantaged groups

4. Supportive Policies
- Enactment of legislation to make basic education free and compulsory for all children
- Review of policies, processes and practices from an equity and gender perspective to maximise benefits and minimise negative impacts on marginalised children during decentralisation/devolution/de-concentration processes

5. Partnerships at Community, National and Regional Levels – South-South Cooperation
- Working with young people and civil society organisations to help bring about societies based on tolerance, peace, moderation, respect for diversity and non-discrimination
- Greater South-South Cooperation through forming and strengthening country initiatives of Parliamentarians for Equity and Girls’ Education involving governments, civil society and young people
- Involve the media to launch an advocacy campaign and to bring change in our society as well as in behaviour and mind set
- Working with religious leaders to make a positive change for girls throughout society

We, parliamentarians, representatives from governments, regional bodies, inter-governmental and UN agencies, civil society organisations and young people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan express our appreciation to the government of Nepal for hosting this high-level Consultation to promote greater equity in education for all children, with a focus on marginalised children and girls.

Kathmandu, 21 September, 2011

\[^3\] 2010 Addis Ababa Declaration, 2011 Jomtien Statement
INAUGURATION

The Parliamentarians for Equity and Girls Education South Asia UNGEI Regional Consultation was inaugurated with an acknowledgment of regional progress towards achieving MDGs in education, however with a recognition that much more needs to be done, especially for the most marginalised children. Opened by the Education Secretary of Nepal, the inauguration included high-level representatives who universally called for increased commitment to achieving equity in education, especially for girls.

Mr. Shanker Prasad Pandey
Secretary
Ministry of Education, Nepal

It is a great pleasure and privilege that Nepal has been chosen to organise this Consultation. I welcome you on behalf of the government of Nepal and the Ministry of Education.

Nepal has made progress in enrolment and gender parity, participation of ethnic communities and marginalized groups. Scholarships, food for education (2 litres of cooking oil for mothers), hostel facilities for girls, are some of the actions to achieve inclusive education for girls. Disabled children, dalits and different marginalized groups have also benefited from these interventions by the government. However, remaining out of school children in difficult circumstances need special targeted interventions.
Ms. Kamala Roka  
Minister for Youth and Sports, Nepal

The Parliamentarians Consultation on equity and girls education is very important because it aims to review strategies and policies to end the disparities between girls and boys in education and other sectors. The Government of Nepal is committed to ending illiteracy and has been actively working in education for a long time. I express my thanks to all women parliamentarians, UNICEF and ministry of Education for organizing the consultation. As a minister I commit that I will do as much as I can for the sake of equity and girls education.

Miss Karuna Shrestha  
Student of Class 9  
Balambu Higher Secondary, Nepal

Poverty is a major barrier to girls’ education. Children are compelled to work in brick factories, carpet industries, and sometimes children also help their families in agricultural and other work. Thus, the program of self-employment for parents should be introduced by the government. Likewise, the geographical scenario of Nepal is also a barrier to education. The hills, mountains and rivers are creating problems for children to reach school. Therefore, more schools should be established, including mobile schools.

Policy is formulated at the central level but not implemented well at the local level. Target groups should be involved in policy making processes.

Mr. Rajendra Bhujel  
Student of Class 9  
Gyanodaya Secondary School, Nepal

The needs of student and the delivery systems must be well understood by governments. The environment must be student friendly. We need education that is of good quality, practical and realistic to our needs. This is our right.

I want skill oriented education to make myself competitive in the present labour market. I want this as an outcome from the discussions of high level people present here and from our government.
Ms. Hanaa Singer
UNICEF Country Representative for Nepal

We have to push much harder to achieve real parity, beyond numbers, and understand better the factors that exclude children, more so girls, from education. We have to look beyond national averages — to seek out regional disparities within a country and even within a province, state or district. Usually countries are very prompt and good at drafting policies, but even more essential, and a continuing cause for concern, are the allocation of budgets, effective implementation and monitoring of those policies.

This is a call for action, renewed commitment and political will – let us unite, work collectively, support each other at country, regional and global levels so that every child, girl and boy alike, is able to complete a full cycle of basic education.

Rt. Hon. Subhash Chandra Nemwang
Chairman
Constituent Assembly, Nepal

Access to education by girls is still a big challenge. I suggest parliamentarians from SA countries to be more active at the local as well as policy level.

The role of the Ministry of Education is crucial in setting policy guidelines with support from UN agencies such as UNICEF. The 15 point commitment by women parliamentarians/CA members of Nepal was as meaningful then as it is today. I hope that boys and girls should not drop out because of lack of toilets. Scholarship for Dalits, girls and others is the second important part. The activities by parliamentarians in Nepal include pressure to pass the education act and regulations that are girl friendly, special acts to benefit girls, school to central level monitoring of education, and feedback to policy makers.

Hon. Yasoda Subedi Gurung
CA Member, Nepal

When we look at the education status of girls in South Asia, we share social, political and cultural similarities. For women parliamentarians our problems are similar and so are our achievements. We can learn from each other’s experiences.

In Nepal, 197 women parliamentarians and women leaders are focusing on protecting and ensuring full rights of women as we write the new constitution. If we can ensure the parity or equality of women in politics, we will be able to generate equality in other sectors.

In Nepal we have many policies that address equity and girls’ education. However, drop out from school, enrolment and sustaining girls in schools and ensuring higher education for them, are some of the major challenges we face. Issues around school sanitation and toilets also affect enrolment and retention of girls.
Hon. Radha Gyawali
CA Member, Nepal

We women members of constituent assembly are trying our level best to ensure equal status and rights of women in the forthcoming constitution. Education, health, employment and social security of women must be secured by laws of positive discrimination, quota system and so on. Equal participation of women at various levels of the power structure is our goal. Identification, participation in decision making process and access to control over resources is our main focus.

We CA members trying to change the age old laws which exclude women in policy making process, management committees, access to education planning, implementation, supervision and evaluation of programmes.
SETTING THE STAGE FOR EQUITY
AND GIRLS’ EDUCATION

SESSION I

Who are the most marginalised in Education? What are the issues?

In the 1990’s we had a steep increase in enrolment and attendance, but currently progress is stagnating. This is normal, as once you have 90% in school the remaining 10% require special attention and you can’t just stop with 90%. The message we have today is that we want to go beyond the averages and reach the remaining children who are out of school.

Many countries have made compulsory and basic education free from grade 1-8. However, the transition periods are a challenge for all of us to deal with as children, especially girls, drop out before completing a full cycle of basic education. We have to know where, when and why children are dropping out/exiting from schools., and plan, implement and monitor accordingly.

What factors keep children out of school? Shocks are a big impact on daily life, such as insecurity and flooding. The family unit is also an important factor, as often the ones who drop out of school need special protection to ensure they can access services.

Poverty can restrict access to education. However, it is not the only factor, and multiple deprivations need to be addressed.

Wealth is critical for girls’ enrolment, even more critical at secondary level. However, conflict is a large factor in influencing education and policies must factor in the negative effect of conflict. Schools as zones of peace (Nepal), is a concept to ensure children in conflict areas can attend school.

• Ms. Lieke van de Wiel
Regional Education Adviser
UNICEF ROSA

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This slide shows various disparities. The first line has the different countries and where they stand in average years of schooling.

When you look at the 20 present richest compared with the poorest there is a major difference in the years of schooling. If you then divide the poorest between urban and rural that the rural boys are much better educated than the poor rural girls. If we then look geographically we see that boys in Bihar do worse than the poor rural boys and girls in Bihar are even further behind poor rural girls elsewhere. This tracks multiple deprivations. UNICEF can assist to prepare these slides in CO’s if you would like to visualise the data.

To make sure every child is in school, systems and processes have to be in place, but schools must seek children as well. Those who are the most marginalized need the most investment.

"POWERMED"  "POWERMED"

Session conducted by Ron Pouwels, Henk van Norden and Godfrey Yikii of UNICEF ROSA

This exercise provided participants with an insight into issues of power and rights by assigning identities that they encounter in their daily lives, including people whose lives their work affects.

As a series of statements were read out relating to rights, participants took a step forward if they agreed/the statement applied to them/their identity in the exercise.

When the exercise was completed, some participants had moved further ahead than others. The participant with the identity of a disabled child from a poor family living in a remote area had made the least/less progress.

The resulting discussion included points such as, existing power relations gave more opportunities to those who were already privileged, and that those in advantageous positions had a duty towards those who were not as fortunate.

At the end of the exercise, participants were:

- Able to identify issues of power and rights relating to the communities they work with and their work environment
- Introduced to child-rights oriented thinking
- Able to identify actions to address inequities/disparities
COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES

During the consultation participating country delegations discussed and presented their experiences in promoting education for marginalised children. Existing activities of country UNGEI partnerships and young champions were reviewed to promote regional sharing and learning. By considering perspectives of parliamentarians, government representatives, technicians and young people, a rich picture was presented of progress, challenges and opportunities in each country.

At the end of the consultation, country delegations sat together to develop action points to follow up using the Kathmandu Statement and learnings from other countries. These action points are outlined in ANNEX I.

AFGHANISTAN
FROM THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

In 2011, we have 2 million children attending schools with 170,000 teachers of whom 30% are women. 27.5% parliamentarians in the lower house are women. BUT we have 5 million children who are not in school, 60% of them are girls. There are many provinces where we don’t have a single high school. Only 20% of women are literate in Afghanistan, in some provinces we don’t have a single women teacher – these are results of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The religious leaders are the drivers of society. We are thinking of strategies to use their capacity to open more schools and to encourage girls to go to school. I hope we can increase the rate of children in schools.

FROM THE AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP

Key Results:
Successful Advocacy:
- Increase in the number of female teachers
- Reform of the Teacher Education and School curriculum
- ECD policy development
- Expansion of and ownership by MOE of community based classes
Challenges

- Absence of girls in grades 10-12 in nearly half of all schools
- Lack of female teachers and their concentration in urban areas and
- Attacks on schools resulting in damage and closure

Opportunities and Way Forward

- FTI partnership and UNICEF as supervising entity
- AGEI at sub-national levels
- Inter-ministerial partnership at the level of Afghanistan Human Resource Development Board
- Engagement of parliamentarians in promoting girls’ education

BANGLADESH
FROM THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

Thank you UNICEF, for inviting me from the ruling party, and my counterpart from the opposition party. This shows that we can achieve education for women if we cross party lines and work together. There are several reasons to celebrate:

- The constitution of Bangladesh specifies that the state should not make any discrimination and should uphold equal rights and there should be equality of children. The national education policy states the need to address the problem of drop outs, provide lunch in schools, environment enjoyable, special attention to hilly and remote areas, change of school hours, special attention to monitoring marginalised and disabled children, areas of natural disasters. We have achieved 95% enrolment rate, but we need to pass the compulsory primary education act. The National child policy provides for child friendly environments, prohibits physical punishment, and gives rights to mentally handicapped and autistic children.
- Teasing/harassment of girls in schools is illegal, and a magistrate is usually located just outside schools and will immediately punish offenders
- Incentives are in place to attract women in science and technology
- The Secondary education stipend program is a great achievement. It starts in class 11 if promoted to class 12. Girls need to be unmarried and have 75% attendance. Second phase starts in class 12 if she passes the examination. Started in 2008, the objective is to encourage girls to complete secondary schooling.
We have gender parity at primary level and have set a target of achieving 100% enrolment at the end of this year and education for all by 2014.

- We have a school feeding program, but yet to explore more examples of programs to involve the community to provide food to children.

Child marriage is a challenge. In our law it is not an offence, but you can punish the people arranging the marriage, but that does not make the marriage invalid. We are trying to implement a ruling in a high court so that when a girl’s marriage is to be registered she needs to present her birth certificate to see her age.

Continuation of policy is important. Often, when new/opposition governments come into power they reverse policies of the previous government. We must agree that we will not hamper policies on girls’ education of the other government and we need to see results.

Pakistan : Regarding early marriage, do you have any issues with the religious sectors?

Answer : The religious political party has a different women’s policy because they think women should not have access to training. The ruling of the high court, has restrained this.

“A malnourished mother cannot give a health child and a malnourished child cannot be a good student.

Security is a major constraint to female students. If they do not have security their parents will not allow them to attend school.

The national Women Development Policy 2011 identifies the gender responsive areas of the national education policy.

Meeting practical gender needs by establishing linkages between micro-credit, livelihood development and education and provide career counselling for women to step out of the stereotypes.

Curriculum needs to be further adapted to be more gender sensitive.

This partnership of parliamentarians provides an opportunity to bring about change.”

FROM THE BANGLADESH COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP

Young Champions
Young champions in Bangladesh work with 640 young journalists and girls who have dropped out of school, throughout Bangladesh, and with parliamentarians on equity and gender issues in education.

Areas of activity: education, child labour, street children, child abuse.
Key Results

- Produced a documentary on girl stars,” by a YC who is a TV journalist, which was aired on various major channels
- Formed an on-line radio station focusing on public health and social exclusion, following the SSMK model of Nepal. Called Edoctor, the radio channel now has about 70,000 listeners worldwide. http://www.edoctorradio.com Facebook page link: eDoctor Radio
- Also introduced Facebook for young people
- On-going advocacy efforts are around Right to Information (RTI) through workshops in partnership with Transparency International
- Anti-drug campaign at Dhaka University, also in partnership with Transparency International Bangladesh
- Wrote the chapter on violence against children in the regional YC training manual, currently under adaptation for use in Bangladesh

Challenge: Funds and time!!

Opportunities and the Way forward:

- Scaling up the young champions
- Proposal for a blog (more on this in the session on “Staying InTouch Using Technology”)
- Continue RTI advocacy and women parliamentarians for equity and girls’ education

BHUTAN

We can see there is discrimination in Bhutan, especially in higher education, employment and decision making. The parliament has 72 members of which 10 are women. At the local government level only 4% of leadership roles are women. Women account for 1.5% at the executive level, in the judiciary only 3% of judges and 4.2% deputy judges are women. When it comes to economic development and employment the gap between men and women is decreasing. In terms of employment rate there is a pronounced difference between rural and urban areas. Gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary levels. However, there is low participation of women in the tertiary level. This is a key challenge.

We have policies and legislation to empower women, such as the constitution of Bhutan. The local government act does not differentiate between sexes. Sexual harassment, rape and verbal harassment is criminalised. We are planning to integrate gender issues into policies and programmes.

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4 Bhutan does not yet have a country UNGEI partnership, hence only the parliamentarians spoke

“Both the ruling party and opposition are pursuing the same goals which is a great sign”
Hon. Dasho Lhatu, Bhutan

Hon. Dasho Choida Jamtsho
INDIA

Over the last two years as part of implementation of RTE Act, the government launched a program for out of school children and adolescent girls of 11-14 years. To take this forward, UNICEF supported the government to hold state regional consultations to identify barriers to girls’ educations and specific steps to move forward. This formed the basis for UNGEI in India.

Using the information from the regional consultations, we developed a policy document and framework for action which we are now in the process of finalizing. Following this, a national consultation is proposed where all state departments will look at how this framework can be translated into action. States can plan for girls’ education to ensure we are addressing the barriers before 2015. Systemic issues and the kind of response required from communities, parents and school authorities are key, as implementation will occur at the block level, where every school will have girls’ education in their education plan.

We look at education as an enabling right that allows girls and women to access other rights. We believe the issue of gender and girls’ education cannot be seen in isolation from issues of caste, class, religion which influence the type of education girls and women access.

We are involved in the writing of school text books and designing a curriculum framework which includes gender education. We have also been involved in running bridge courses for girls, which are residential schools where girls live for 6-8 months to complete education up to the middle school level. We advocate for issues of girls education with the government, e.g. we have the 12th 5-year plan process and we are looking at the idea of education for Muslim girls. We also conduct teacher training and monitoring of the RTE act implementation, including a social audit.

FROM THE INDIA COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP

Key Progress and Achievements

- An enabling environment
  - The Right to Education Act (RTE) and sustained focus on and provisions for girls’ education
  - Recognition of the need for targeted programmes for hard to reach groups
  - Gender coordinators’ at district level provide focus on planning, implementation and monitoring
  - Available mechanisms such as MeenaManch to engage with young people
- Regional consultations around RTE successfully used as platforms to form girls’ education country partnerships

Challenges

- Hard to reach girls, including those from lower castes and tribal communities as well as older girls who have never been to school, and discrimination based on various factors of social exclusion
• Resource allocation is not need based
• No comprehensive policy for girls’ education
• Weak civil society voice for girls’ education

Opportunities and Way forward
• Strategies for retention, school-community linkages, working with the media and greater accountability
• Existing schemes to be reviewed and made available at school level
• Greater convergence in planning and implementation at community through state level
  o Dis-aggregation of data to analyse pockets of exclusion and provide budgets
  o Targeted interventions ‘to reach the last mile’
  o Bottom up planning through demonstration to develop school development plans
• Addressing policy gaps through:
  o Convergence and complementarity between existing legislations on child labour and RTE
  o Developing systemic preparedness for more effective implementation (such as inclusion of gender issues in training programmes of school management committees)
  o A framework for girls’ education focusing on (i) strengthening access for girls from pre-school to secondary level; (ii) improving participation in services and community decision-making; (iii) ensuring equal treatment and; (iv) promoting equal opportunities

NEPAL

FROM THE PARLIAMENTARIANS/CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA) MEMBERS

Early marriage, dowry system, denial of education, trafficking of girls are among the many deprivations. We chose girls’ education as a key area of focus in order to move forward. With UNICEF support, a group of CA members have started this campaign for girls’ education and equity.

Among CA women members, in all women’s issues we are one, because we want at least 50% of women’s participation in different aspects of life and governance. This movement was started in 2008 and signed by the then Prime Minister Prachanda.

The Education Act was formulated to fulfill our fundamental right to education and now it must be passed. We have emphasised free education for girls up to senior high school in the Act.

CA members go to the districts, visit schools and interact with authorities and community members and give feedback to the Ministry of Education and Girls education network that exist at district level, for follow up and monitoring. At the local level we raise awareness on empowerment of girls and influence parents to invest in the education of their daughters.

Hon. Suprabha Ghimire
We do awareness raising as girls’ education is a must.

We also have an interparty women’s alliance at the district level, where political party members have come together to work on girls right to schooling. When we hold such discussions at the district we raise local issues.

**Dr. Lawa Dev Awasthi**

*Joint Secretary*

**Ministry Of Education**

At the policy level we have consensus. Education has become a key agenda for the development process in Nepal. We have made significant achievements in many areas in our education services. Challenges are there, retention is still a problem and we need to look at how we face these challenges in the future. Physical distances have reduced, but the social realities have not. We need to assist learners who face difficulties due to disabilities. We need to utilise experiences that we have in the region.

There are huge changes occurring in the right direction. We have almost 95% girls’ net enrolment rate in primary level.

Those from the multiple excluded groups need to be a key focus for education. Some of the changes have taken place, but in many cases schools are not girl friendly.

We have to transfer what we have created into actions. We have promising results in the region and can learn from each other.

**India**

: The inter party women’s alliance is a valuable tool, and would be a valuable experience for other countries in South Asia. Would like to hear more about the positive impact that you have had. How is this financed?

**Answer 1**

: It is an alliance of all central level members of different parties. We are 30 members from 14 different parties from the central level. It has been a very good experience because we have been able to rise above the party lines for one common cause which is women. It reaches all over the country in 75 districts to raise awareness and conduct activities at the district level. Other political parties are always invited and we receive a good response.
from our activities and it has a great impact. We are sponsored by NDA and sometimes other parties.

Answer 2

This is an important advocacy group and Hon. Suprabha Ghimire presented before me on behalf of the alliance. They provide inputs into pending legislation such as the Education Act, advocate for policy changes/new policies, enhanced budgets for education, and provide feedback from school visits, and are ensuring that the new constitution is gender-friendly.

Afghanistan

You pointed out that you are working to remove gender stereotyping from the curriculum – would like to hear more about the challenges?

Answer

Most roles in text books are very conventional where women are housewives and men are lawyers or doctors. We have brought changes in the content, changes in the software part of the curriculum and the hardware.

FROM THE NEPAL COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP

Young Champions

In Nepal, nearly 500 young champions work with district education officers and girls’ education networks and directly with communities. About half of them are women.

Activities and achievements

- Young champions in Nepal have been successful in creating community/school to district level linkages through the district gender focal point. They also work with CA members and brief them about local issues
- YCs visit schools, keep a record of students with irregular attendance, and those who have dropped out of schools
- They work with the media and child clubs to disseminate information
- At the community level, young champions are involved in home visits to motivate parents to send children/girls to school and work with mother’s clubs and youth groups
- Street theatre and motivation and advocacy campaigns have resulted in reducing child marriage (one of the successful strategies has been to launch village level campaigns to boycott child marriages), increased enrolment and return to school by drop outs
- Young champions focus on hard to reach girls.
Challenges:
• Low representation of dalits among young champions
• Reaching out of school children

Opportunities and the Way Forward
• Working more closely with gender focal points at district level and parliamentarians/CA members
• Regular media mobilisation
• Intra and inter-district learning and sharing of good practices
• Proposal for a blog submitted along with YCs of Bangladesh and Pakistan

MALDIVES

FROM THE PARLIAMENTARIANS
We come from a very unique and very small country. The population is 300,000. There are advantages and disadvantages. For the last 20 years, we have spent 20% of our budget on education each year. If you look at the statistics there is no difference between male and female, but in practice there are religious and cultural challenges. 90% of our teachers are ladies, but if you talk about the parliament, only 3% are female. The government high officials, only 20% are female, the rest are men. The main challenges we have are people from extremist/religious backgrounds who oppose girls to go for higher education. We have got many new ideas from Bangladesh and Nepal and will attempt to address them in our country.

Mr. Hassan Mohamed

PAKISTAN

FROM THE PARLIAMENTARIANS
We are good in presentations and in making laws, but what matters is where we went wrong in implementation. What matters now is action.

There are many articles that give equal rights to all citizens in the Constitution of Pakistan, but gender disparity remains.

In the Parliamentarians’ caucus, we are not working in isolation. We have girl guides and boy scouts in every high school. Working groups involve civil society, private sector, NGO. At the top we have the caucus and are planning a central caucus in Islamabad. The media are also interested to work with us and
Top rating channels have led to 2.6 m boys and girls working at grass level.

Through successful advocacy, we have increased the education budget in Punjab from 9 to 14 billion rupees.

Those educated in Islam support education, and we must take them on board and open their minds and hearts for women.

We are also involving male parliamentarians. Any policy and amendment we want to make we need support from the male members and now this is recognised by all political parties.

The reasons for disparity are similar to what you face in your countries. For example, it is difficult for women to go against the wishes of her husband. An enabling environment for women to work and move in society is critical, but no state can provide protection to women until they get it from their home. But there is also positive change. For example, we have 73 women parliamentarians – I am one of the 13 that were elected directly, the others are part of the quota.

We can’t isolate girls’ education from quality education for all. An educated class, their attitudes towards women are different from those who are not educated. We have to focus on men and engage them in these issues.

We must offer studies that are needs based. Many women have master’s degree in languages but there are no vacancies, so we need to focus on sciences which are the need of the time. This is a topic for advocacy and the responsibility of those of us who are in a position to make a difference.

In Pakistan we have 100% female teachers in girls’ schools, now we are planning to have them in boys’ schools also. Stipends are given to make it easier for parents to send their children to school. We have more than 50,000 with only a single teacher. If there is a problem with the teacher, the school is closed. We are recommending that each school has at least two teachers.”

**Bangladesh**: 100% female teachers in girls’ schools, what about boys schools are they separate or do they have female teachers?

**Answer**: We have 100% female teachers in female schools, what we are planning is to have female teachers in boys’ schools also.

**Comment (India)**: About 5 years back we had a huge polio campaign where UNICEF started working with religious leaders. After about 1 year we realised that many children do not go to school and talked to the religious leaders which led to a poster campaign and every Friday before prayers the religious leader / imam in the mosque asked people if their
children went to school and gave them posters to encourage children’s schooling. Following these interventions, there was a 25% increase in school enrollment.

**Afghanistan**: Another common feature in Afghanistan is insecurity. This impacts girls more than boys because communities who are already conservative find another reason not to send the girls to schools. We also have school management groups that look at improving schools for girls; however female members are not literate and unable to advocate as much in the same forum due to gender segregation norms. Do you have these problems?

**Answer**: We also face insecurity as a society and to send a girl to the school parents and society feels insecure. We are trying our best to get this solved, through having young champions, scouts, girl guides and motivating society. The involvement of religious leaders to promote education is the only way forward for us. We must bring them on board. When our society motivates all sectors of society and media to make people more aware of girls’ education it will lead to good results for us. It was a major issue in Northern Pakistan where we tried to involve religious leaders. You need to create ownership and involve them in conception or planning otherwise you are likely to find resistance.

**FROM THE PAKISTAN COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP**

**Key Achievements**

- Several policy briefs on gender concerns in flood emergency scaling up and gender biases in the curriculum
- Documentary films on gender dimensions of missing infrastructure in Punjab, gender dimensions in school (AJK)
- National level partnership launched in 2010, with over 250 partner organisations representing academics, researchers, think tanks, civil society, parliamentarians, media and departments of education, media clusters formed, and working groups on gender and education formed to link province level partnerships to the national partnership
- Gender analysis of textbooks in the provinces of Baluchistan, Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir
- Annotated bibliography on gender in education in Pakistan
- Research studies on: community based participation model in the Baluchistan province and on problems faced by teachers in Khyber Pakhtunia
- A Parliamentarians Caucus formed, linked to young champions
- Partnerships with girl guides and boy scouts (young champions)

**Challenges**

- Low resource allocation for Education
- Implementing article 25 (equality of citizens); gender is an add-on, not a top government priority
• lack of knowledge sharing culture
• Poor coordination within the partnership
• Possible funding shortfall, as DFID project under which PGEI was launched has now ended

Opportunities and the Way forward
• Political commitment of government and government ownership of PGEI
• Involvement of parliamentarians has already shown results
• Involvement of media
• Partnerships with girl guides and boy scouts
SETTING THE STAGE FOR EQUITY AND GIRLS’ EDUCATION

SESSION II:

What Can Parliamentarians Do?

**BUILD KNOWLEDGE**
- Become familiar with education policies and processes and understand the role of different ministries and sectors
- Monitor education service delivery, particularly in decentralized systems

**BECOME ADVOCATES**
- Call for disaggregated data (beyond sex disaggregation) to reveal pockets of disparity
- Influence supportive policies, improved processes and practices, including gender responsive budgeting

**PROMOTE PARTNERSHIPS**
- Continue the South-South learning and cooperation initiated with this Consultation
- Invite youth to share their opinion, voice their experience and demonstrate their potential to make a difference
Gender responsive budgeting has an important role in education, especially in girls’ education. I am one of the champions for gender and today I want to share with you our practical experience.

GRB is not about separate budgets for women or men. Instead, it brings gender sensitivity into the policies, programmes, budgets and expenses of all agencies and is not limited to the government. It combines technical knowledge for equitable policy making with advocacy and ensures sufficient budget allocation for policy, program and project implementation to achieve expected results efficiently. It is a tool for results based planning and budgeting. It includes allocation of resources to those who are most deprived.

We have an enabling environment in Nepal. In our 11th census, we included gender focused questions to 20% sample households. We also have electoral and proportionate representation of women (33%) in our parliament. The constitution writing process includes gender responsive consultations. Finally, we have women’s peace committee at ward level, and inter-party women’s alliances at district and national levels. Finally, the education sector is declared as peace zone.

The GRB committee (GRBC) is led by the Ministry of Finance (MOF), is inter-ministerial and includes development partners as well. The GRBC provides suggestions to National Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance to prepare gender responsive policies, programmes and budget. Among its objectives are capacity building of gender focal points, research, monitoring and analyses of public expenses and impact of economic and national development policies on women, coordination with line ministries, development partners and NGOs for gender responsive programming and budgeting. GRB categorization in the budget started from 2007/8.

We use a bottom-up planning process using selected indicators and a score card, illustrated below. Using these 5 indicators we categorize every program to see if it is gender responsive or not. If answers are yes then you get 20% for each of the 5 indicators. For example, if there is a national plan to make cooking gas more accessible for women, and will result in reducing the time women spend in cooking, this plan will get more points.
We calculate all programs on the basis of this. If no indicator is achieved, it is neutral. If at least 3 indicators are achieved it is directly responsive.

When we started only 11.3% of the budget was gender responsive, in the second, in the third year it was 17%. In 2010/11 it is nearly 18% and this year is 19.5%. We are progressing and the gender neutral budget is decreasing.

In the GRB, it is mandatory that 10% goes to women, 10% to children and 15% to socially excluded persons. This year the government has allocated funding for women motivators in 12,000 wards for the elimination of literacy.

Fiscal measures in the budget include: Provisions for a 25% land registration fee rebate on land transfer to women in urban and 30% in remote areas; 10% rebate on income tax to women professionals; 10% rebate on income tax for firms that employ more than 100 women; Provision of changing into joint ownership of husband and wife by charging Rs. 100;

We have multiple discussions with parliamentarians before and after the budget to focus the government budget on gender issues and we have discussions with gender advocates. In my ministry, I am responsible for answering queries on gender budget allocation.

GRB is a new concept and there is not enough awareness nor adequate skills among government officials who make the plans and programmes. The software package needs to be able to track what is spent and if it is really allocated to gender budgeting.

There is a special provision for those programs that are more than Rs 50 million, there should be a gender assessment.

“According to our socio-cultural norms, development is not sustainable without educating women. We will be supporting GRB from the Afghanistan parliament”
Hon. Sher Wali Wardak
Afghanistan
Pakistan: We are trying to experiment with GBR in Pakistan. When you talk about lack of capacity of government staff, how do you address this? When you talk about other agencies such as bilateral donors, are you talking about convergence with health, education and protection or just education?

Answer: There is scope to improve capacity within the government as well as gender advocates. Frequent transfer of government officers is a problem. But capacity development is a focus for us and UN women is providing support for gender training at various levels starting from village development centres. The overall budget focuses on deprived groups. And women as are deprived within marginalized groups, so the government tracks how well women are benefiting. Over the years, government funding for girls and women has increased.

India: How do we work to address girls out of school, especially 11-14yrs. In Nepal what has been the experience of the different regions that we can take back to India?

Answer: Our research showed that it is difficult for girls to attend school during menstruation because there is no toilet, and if there is one, no separate toilet for girls, and hygiene and sanitation facilities are poor. The government concluded that one of the main reasons for absenteeism and drop out among adolescent girls had to do with school sanitation. Government policy now is to build a separate toilet for girls in every school.
THEMATIC SESSION II

STAYING IN TOUCH: USING TECHNOLOGY

Young Champions speak

Bangladesh- Tareque Mehdi; Nepal- Dhurba Shrestha;
Pakistan – Arhum Hayat

"We want to share with you our idea of a real time blog for the YCs will help spread the word about what is being done by the Young Champions, in not within our friend circle but also with people all over the world for bringing in a positive change that we too can make!

The objective is to: share the regional experiences; understand the work of Young Champions across the region; Follow up and monitor the works of YCs; build capacity of YCs (sharing the good practices across the region, facilitating trainings and online support – if they have any problem they can put it in the blog and anyone who has the skills and knowledge can suggest solution

It is a network of Young Champions’ across South Asia with individual profile of YCs (A brief description about the YC- address, educational background, work experience, future aim etc.); Chat facility; Facility of posting Comments and feedbacks; Documents that are related to YCs from different countries; Sharing of photos, videos, events etc.

How will we manage it?  We need a Website which means: Buy space; Design the website; one moderator per country (8 countries); Dedicated officer; Posting/ Sharing of experiences, photos, events, videos...; Particular YCs with access to internet will share the ideas.

This is our action plan.
THEMATIC SESSION III

Working with the Media

Thomas Bell, Communications Consultant, UNICEF ROSA

Newspapers don’t generally have people assigned to education. So reporting on education is often by non-educationists.

The best way to get in media is to: (i) Be friends with a reporter; (ii) Do something that stands out.

Look at the interesting stories in the newspaper and look at the boring ones – don’t be boring!

Journalists hate development jargons and acronyms, so deal with simple language.

Be careful who you trust with sensitive material – you might find something embarrassing next to your name in the newspaper!

Keep and include in your network names and phone numbers of local journalists. Let them know of your work on a personal, individual basis and not through press statements.

Press statements are like junkmail to a journalist – they get several every day. It is better to get coverage through direct relationships with reporters. If your friend thinks what you do is interesting, they’ll suggest a story to their edit, orally if necessary.

Keep press releases to a minimum. And if you must write one, keep it short, strong quote(s) and a few facts to prove it. Keep the tone professional and sober.

If you are involved in a struggle/controversy, keep it simple, use ordinary language, and think carefully about what you will say.

Make an announcement only if it is important and interesting.

Put the text in the body of the email, not as an attachment. The paragraph and subject line should say what this is about.

Don’t push stories about meetings – they are boring to a journalist.

Do make sure journalists see the real work you are doing. Journalists want to cover things that are “real” that can be described in ordinary words to ordinary people.
THEMATIC SESSION IV

Using Data for Advocacy

Lieke van de Wiel, UNICEF ROSA

The slide below shows the steps involved from collecting to using data using data with the following slide outlining the challenges in undertaking this process.

But knowledge is often not enough.

It is important to think about how we currently share knowledge, when the knowledge reaches and if it is expressed in a way that will capture its audience. There is a plethora of knowledge sharing options on the internet, but key is ensuring that the knowledge reaches your target audience.
But knowledge is often not enough. See the slide below.

How can you share knowledge? The internet is an option. You can also use blog, TWEET or FACEBOOK.”
THEMATIC SESSION V

SOUTH-SOUTH NETWORKS

This session showcased a range of networks, organisations and partnerships working in the region on issues relevant to the advancement of education. The consultation provided opportunities for increased South-south cooperation through both the development of informal networks and learning about established partnerships, forums and programmes. The following organisations presented their role to the country delegations and opened opportunities for further collaboration:

• Asia Pacific forum on population and development APFPD: Presented by Naveeda Khawaja, Regional Adviser HIV and SRH- UNFPA-SRO, Nepal

Asia Pacific forum on population and development has a separate advocacy group for capacity building of parliamentarians. The last two years there has been a lot of thematic meetings, e.g. maternal health, GBV, with men and boys to work on violence issues, reproductive health commodity security. There is a broad scope of activities and I see this forum on education, the need is to create linkages between groups working with parliamentarians. While the needs may be different between countries, it is important to link the issues as we are trying to reach a common goal. For further information, please look at www.afppd.org and www.afppd-populationpolicies.org or contact Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive director AFPPD at afppd@afppd.org

• The Commonwealth Secretariat and Girls Education (Virtual): Presented by Pauline Greaves, Head of Education, Commonwealth Secretariat

The Secretariat’s theme for 2011 is “Women as agents of Change.” Particular focus is being given to member countries at risk of not meeting the MDGs.

We work with Commonwealth Governments to strengthen legislation and policies on equity and access; advocate for gender sensitive policy development and gender responsive schools, programmes and environment; conduct research on topics such as nomadic education and feminisation of the teaching profession; engage in knowledge building, capacity development and sharing of best practices; advocate for gender sensitive policy development and gender responsive schools, programmes and environment; conduct research on topics such as nomadic education and feminisation of the teaching profession; engage in knowledge building, capacity development and sharing of best practices; contiue to impede progress on the achievements of the MDGs such as increasing public investment in quality education and in scaling up interventions and strategies that deal with Early Childhood Education (ECE), students’ achievement and retention and over-all access to quality higher education; and engage in strategies to upgrade the professional standards of teachers and school leaders.

The Gender Section is working with governments and organizations on Institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting; Gender Responsive Investment; and developing a Gender Equity and Women’s Leadership Development (Capacity Building) Program.

Education is at the forefront of this charge. Not only do schools teach literacy and lay the groundwork for productive lives, they also play a crucial role in promoting tolerance, peace and understanding between peoples.

To give women and girls the opportunity to maximize their potential, we need the commitment and involvement of legislators, governments, policy makers and committed citizens. We need the commitment of all of us.

• Forum of Asia Pacific Parliamentarians (FASPPED), Presented by Tap Raj Pant, Programme Officer, UNESCO Nepal

The Forum of Asia Pacific Parliamentarians (FASPPED) was created in a Jakarta meeting of parliamentarians in 2008.

Its specific objectives are: Ensuring realization of the six EFA goals in all countries of the Asia-Pacific region; Fighting against illiteracy and poverty, so as to break the reciprocal cause and effect relationship between these two phenomena; Ensuring education for women and girls in order to eliminate gender disparities; Supporting the development of education systems so as to include quality education for all individuals, including minorities, the poor, refugees and migrants, people with a disability and those living in areas of conflict and disaster and learners affected by HIV/AIDS; and Promoting education for peace and sustainable development to help in the emergence of democratic, pluralistic and tolerant
societies where Human Rights are respected;
We can explore ways of working together with FASPPED for the establishment of the FASPPED chapter for South Asia.
FASSPED is present in five sub-regions, including South Asia. It has a secretariat (now in Iran), a bureau and a general assembly that meets once every 2 years.
The next meeting will be in October and your country will be there. I request you to promote this network in our region, UNESCO will be happy to provide support in the framework of UNGEI.
“For more information, please contact:
Website: FASPPED.com; unesco.org
Chairman of the Organizing Committee:
Dr. Ali Abbaspour Tehrani Fard Email: abbaspour@sharif.edu
Secretariat: Mr. Morteza Razaviani Email: info@faspped.com

India : How do you see coordination between this UNCESCO initiative and UNICEF UNGEI?
Answer : UNESCO is active in UNGEI as well. UNESCO is coordinating Education for All globally with support from UNICEF. We agree to support joint initiatives to promote South South networks promoted, including linkages to FASSPED.

South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): Presented by Ibrahim Zuhuree, Director-SAARC
SAARC is pleased to attend this Consultation, as the topic fits well with SAARC’s programmatic focus and shift from “Declarations to implementation.” In other words, more involvement in helping countries to achieve national priorities. In the 16th SAARC summit, the leaders emphasised cooperation in education and greater linkages among universities of the region. As you are aware, the South Asia university is based in Delhi and has quotas for member states (sau.org). We also plan to have campuses in each country of the region.

South Asia women’s Network (SWAN): Presented by Prof. Veena Sikri, SWAN
South Asia Women’s Network was established in 2009 in Delhi. It is a group of woman who participate as our members in sectors of their interest. There is one SWAN specifically that looks at education. Others look at health and nutrition; food security; environment; arts and literature; women ad peace; women and media; craft and textile. It is a great trust building measure as women exchange best practices and experiences. There are annual conferences with involvement of 9 South Asian countries (including Myanmar). There has been high level participation and great forward movement. We found that women in South Asia are very strong but as a group, women face discrimination. Women bear the brunt of poverty and disasters. With UNGEI we have been talking about working in girls’ education in a pan Asian movement, this will assist parliamentarians to take up issues for equity and women’s education. There is so much in common and we can share ideas of what is working.”
MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

The participants of consultation workshop also conducted a meeting with President Rt. Hon. Dr. Rambaran Yadav. The output of the workshop was shared with the President by CA member Hon. Mrs. Janakkumari Chalise.

Recognizing the problems of girls’ education common in the South Asian Regions, the President suggested strengthening of the partnership in country as well as regional level in order to address the common problems of girls’ education.
The parliamentarians visited three schools in the Kathmandu valley in order to understand the education system of Nepal. They visited Shikharapur community learning centre, Buddha Secondary School Badegaun Lalitpur and Bageshwori Higher Secondary School, Bhaktapur.

Some observations from the participants are summarised below:

- “Even mostly parent were poor but the children’s dresses were neat and clean” - Hon. Dasho DLhatu, Bhutan
- “The have a very fine alternative education system. They have been successful in reducing the rate of dropout” - Hon. Ch. Javed Ahmad, Pakistan
- “The whole community is actively involved in reducing illiteracy. They have established various types of alternatives schools. The management committee is inclusive. They have also used the land wisely as well. We tried to follow this integrated education model and faced some difficulties, but now I think this visit will help us to overcome those difficulties.” Hon. Shir Wali Wardak, Afghanistan, after visiting Shikharapur CLC said

After the visit, they shared their experiences with officials of Ministry of Education. Joint Secretary Janardan Nepal gave an overview of the educational system, government priorities in education and the education policy of Nepal. He said, “I hope the school visits will be helpful for parliamentarians. We have open schools, alternative school and community learning centre. We have implemented the policy of free and compulsory education up to primary level. However, we are facing some problems in implementations because schools need electricity and drinking water and other facilities that we are not always able to provide. We have been providing day meal to the students in area where there is shortage of food.”
CLOSING SESSION

Hon. Shah Gul Rezaie of Afghanistan read out the of Kathmandu Statement (See page 2)

Hon. Mohamed Mujthaz
Maldives

We know South Asia as a region which has a lot of cultural and economic differences, but from the differences we can learn many things. Even though we have differences, we have some common problems. We knew that culture, religion and poverty play vital roles in overcoming the problems. I hope the discussion we had today is fruitful for each country. I believe we will all be able to strengthen our programs from what we have learnt today.

Ms. Laila Ismail-Khan,
Deputy Regional Director and Officer in Charge
UNICEF ROSA

As I was listening today what came through is -- there is big progress, there are remaining challenges, and a lot can be done individually and collectively

Individually those in this room can:

• Be the voice for equity and girls education, to understand the issues, the situation, so that you can advocate action based on that understanding. To understand why girls are not in schools – only when we understand the why can appropriate action be taken
• Understand the roles of the various government ministries
• Work with media, a very important and powerful tool for social change
• Work with communities, because that is where attitudes and behaviors must change

I would urge all in this room to understand, monitor, advocate for change, mobilise for change and be the voice for children.

Collectively we can:

• Understand disparities and push for greater equity through the disaggregation and analyses of data beyond sex
• Advocate for supportive policy and legislation
• To give the young people a voice-- they know the issues and we must enable and facilitate their participation as partners in development
• Continue the South-South dialogue

What can UNICEF do? As UNICEF, we stand by you and will support you in any way we can. Your goal is our goal, and all of us want to ensure the right to quality education for all girls and boys.

Mr. Janardan Nepal
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Education, Nepal

We are privileged to have this meeting in Nepal. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of you for being with us. Many thanks to UNICEF, UNGEI and parliamentarians who have made this event possible.

The problems shared are very similar in the region. Many countries have initiated various initiatives that could be replicated and learned from each other in the region. Now, our focus has to be in real actions off the identified solutions.

We hope that after we adopt the Kathmandu Statement, it will be a guiding document for all of us and will be incorporated into our policies and plans.

Hon. Purna Kumari Subedi
Vice Chairman
Constituent Assembly, Nepal

The issue of providing education should be the first and foremost priority for any person because is directly related to the development of people.

What we see at this stage is that the right to education has been for sons but not daughters. Girls are still seen as assistants to mothers, herdsmen, housewives, wives, the person to give birth and live as a housewife.

In the context of Nepal, in order to encourage parents to send their girls to school, families were provided with 2 litres of edible oil per month and this encouraged the parents to send girls to school.

Not only should girls should be in the school, we need to look deeper as to why the girls are dropping out.

The most important thing is how we implement education policies, as it must provide practical education that is based on science and technology and will give girls and boys employable skills.

The Nepal example of bringing together the 601 parliamentarians and expressing joint commitment for girls was successful in drawing attention of friends from the region.

In our Constituent Assembly we will continue to promote girls’ education and are doing our best to create a constitution that is friendly to children, women, girls and marginalized people. To be successful, we need cooperation, support and feedback from countries in the region and the international community.
Hon. Surita Kumari Sah  
**CA Member, Nepal**

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Nepal is passing through a historic time with drafting a new constitution. We are trying to attest the rights of children and women in education and health and are incorporating these in the constitution.

We heard the presentation in the morning on gender responsive budgeting and this was the outcome of the efforts made by women in parliament. We have achieved many of the points in Collective Commitment. The kind of inputs, ideas and knowledge, that we gained today about girls’ education, tells us we share many common problems in the region with regard to education and your experiences will help us to plan better programs, particularly regarding the issue of girls of 11-14 years who are dropping out of school.

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Hon. Top Badahur Rayamagi  
**Minister of Education**

Equity has to start from education.

The Kathmandu Statement is accepted and we stand by it. It is brief, but will have a long-term impact.

Unless education becomes a fundamental right and girls and women from marginalized groups are prioritized, only then can we make a difference. But first we must to ensure this right in the constitution and the programmes in such a way that we achieve quick progress.

In the old regime, women were not expected to speak up and families thought if girls get educated they would not be good housewives.

For us, girls’ education is of high priority on our agenda for political and social change. To bring mainstream marginalized groups in the education process, we are talking about free education, more technical education and other ambitious plans.

There has been revolutionary progress in the political empowerment of women within a short period and there are demands that girls should be educated on par with boys.

Empowerment of women is being raised in every sector. 33% of women in every sphere of the government is assured, but we want 50%. If we can champion this cause in the South Asian region along with a focus on educating girls and women, we will reach our development goals much quicker. This will also help resolve the problems in our society, such as poor sanitation and lack of toilets.

In this context the programme you have organized and the outcome you have come up with, on behalf of the parliamentarians of the region, will help all of us to ensure that girls’ education is at par with boys.

Oh behalf of the State of Nepal and parliamentarians I would like to express commitment that we will be standing by you and providing full support.
KEY ACTION POINTS BY COUNTRY

AFGHANISTAN

- Form an initiative of Parliamentarians for Equity and girls Education as an AGEI initiative
- Address the following thematic areas under AGEI:
  - Partnerships: work with religious leaders at various levels
    - Action by women’s committee of parliament, particularly in the area of child marriage, involving young champions and with UNICEF support
  - Empower girls and women: introduce gender responsive budgeting in the planning process and enhanced budget for education, gender audits, gender-responsive reporting on the use of budgets
    - Action by parliamentary committees on budget and education, MOE, Ministry of Women’s Affairs.
  - Supportive Policies: Develop a set of recommendations for increased participation of women in education and other disciplines at higher levels to increase the pool of female teachers
    - Action by MOE, MOHE, Ministry of women’s Affairs, parliamentarians

BANGLADESH

- Partnerships: Support and strengthen the existing initiative by incorporating larger representation of various political parties, form All Party Alliance on Equity and Girls’ Education
- Flexible schooling modalities to ensure second opportunity for out of school children, particularly girls
- Empowerment of Girls and Women using gender responsive budgeting
- Supportive policies by advocating for legislation to make basic education free, compulsory and inclusive.
- Ensure inclusion of all girls particularly married girls who have dropped out from the education system
- Partnership at Community, National and regional Levels i.e South-South Cooperation:
- Promote greater South-South cooperation through forming and strengthening country initiatives of Parliamentarians for equity and girls’ education involving govt., civil society, private sectors and young people; and (ii) Work with religious leaders to make a positive change for girls throughout society

BHUTAN

- Organise a de-briefing session with relevant committees in the parliament and with UNICEF Bhutan
- Hold a small meeting with other parliamentarians and stakeholders to explore the usefulness and priority areas for a coalition of parliamentarians, ministries to involve (education, youth, women, others)
- If there is consensus to form a network of parliamentarians for equity in education, organise an inter-ministerial, inter-party workshop involving youth organisations with support from UNICEF Bhutan, to agree on areas of priority (using the statement as reference), and a workplan for advocacy and action in 2012
INDIA

- Equity in Education: (i) Collection and Analysis of disaggregated data; and (ii) Collection and review of policies and practices to provide a Protective Environment
- Empowerment of Girls and Women: “Zero Tolerance” for acts that have a negative effect on education of girls
- Supportive Policies: Review of policies, processes and practices from an equity and gender perspective (curriculum, community mobilisation, legislation)
- Partnerships at Community, National & Regional Levels: South – South Cooperation: Increased sharing among ROSA countries including Parliamentarians, UN, NGOs, Young Champions using innovative technologies

MALDIVES

- Organise a de-briefing session with relevant committees in the parliament and with UNICEF Maldives
- Hold a small meeting with other parliamentarians and stakeholders to explore whether there is consensus for a coalition of parliamentarians
- If there is agreement to form a network of parliamentarians for equity in education, organise an inter-ministerial, inter-party workshop involving youth organisations with support from UNICEF Maldives, to agree on areas of priority (using the statement as reference), and a workplan for advocacy and action in 2012

NEPAL

- Review the “15 commitments” and revise/modify as required
- Incorporate male parliamentarians/CA members in the existing inter-part coalition for equity and girls’ education
- Provide inputs into the Education Act
- Advocate so that the Act is enacted into legislation
- Continue to provide input into the constitution drafting process to ensure that it is based on human rights from a gender and children’s perspective
- Continue the good practice of using individual CA members “constituency development fund” to improve schools and girls’ education in their constituencies.

PAKISTAN

- Greater Equity in Education: Innovative practices involving PGGA and PBSA partnership to scale up young champions with community involvement, parliamentarians, media, civil society.
- Policies and practices that provide a protective environment in schools and ensure education as an integral part of humanitarian response: Documentaries on the best practices to advocate for provision of a protective environment to be launched in seminars
- Flexible schooling modalities to ensure a second opportunity for out of school children including girls: Pilot initiative
- Supportive policies
  o Advocacy to support Article 25 A (right to free and compulsory education) at the policy level
  o Policy analysis from a gender perspective
- Partnerships at Community, National and regional level:
  o Cross country linkages through e conferencing at national and regional level
  o South Asian Dialogue to be hosted by Pakistan

South Asia Women’s Network (SWAN)

SWAN, together with Nirantar, would facilitate a forum of parliamentarians to promote equity and girls’ education in South ASIA.
Recommendations for the South Asia Regional UNGEI

- Support to UNGEI focal points through top management involvement to raise UNGEI as a platform to address equity concerns in education
- Help organise training on gender-responsive budgeting (Afghanistan, Bangladesh)
- Advocacy with SAARC to include equity in education as its priority
- Support in the areas of research, study, survey etc.
- Facilitate sharing of best practices amongst ROSA Countries
- Establish forum of Parliamentarians to promote inter regional experiences
- Forums using technology where in countries can come together and share experiences on a regular basis (Skype, Face book Etc.)
- Forum of parliamentarians to promote partnership on girls education under UNGEI
- Advocacy on Equity and Girls Education through parliamentarians in the context of SAARC
- Parliamentarians Forum to visit India and learn from it Right to Education Act Experience
- NGOs/ CBOs to be part of capacity-building, monitoring and supervision for girls education
- Regular sharing of good practices for girls education among the member countries (Advocacy, Partnerships, Community Mobilization, Curriculum, Teacher Development, Emergencies, Children in difficult circumstances
- Support young champions’ proposal for a blog
- Hold a regional Youth Meet in 2012 to promote convergence and consolidation of efforts involving young people as advocates for women and children’s rights
- Begin a biannual newsletter (Pakistan volunteers to support)

Questions for South Asia Regional UNGEI (from the young champions)

- Can we use web server of UNICEF as youth voice is using?
- Can IT professionals from UNICEF can help design and moderate the sites as per the need?
### List of Participants

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**PAKISTAN**

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Parliamentarians for Equity and Girls Education

South Asia UNGEI Regional Consultation