LETTER FROM THE UNGEI CHAIR

Norad is pleased to have the opportunity to chair the UNGEI Steering Committee in 2015-2016. This comes at an exciting period for Norad and dovetails with the momentum Norway seeks to foster for increased advocacy and action around girls’ education and gender equality. Norway’s Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, was active in creating opportunities in 2014 to raise girls’ education as a crucial issue for sustainable development: At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, where she co-chaired a session on the Millennium Development Goals emphasizing girls’ education; and in the blog post ‘Teach a Girl, Enrich the World’ (http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2014/01/23/teach-a-girl-enrich-the-world/) which she co-wrote with Ethiopian student Hannah Godefa.

In June 2014 Norway launched a White Paper on Education for Development, with the aim of increasing leadership and support to global education, emphasising girls’ education as a key area. Not only is it every girl’s right to get an education, educating girls provides great return on investment in terms of development. The Norwegian Government will seek in particular to ensure that girls start and complete secondary education.

Norad appreciates the fruitful sharing of experience and knowledge among members of the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee. UNGEI provides an important platform for policy engagement at the global levels, as well as a place to learn from both challenges and best practices at regional and country levels. We would like to thank the UNGEI regional partnership in East Asia and the Pacific for hosting the annual face-to-face meeting of the GAC in August 2014. This event provided space and opportunities for sharing among members and for setting out the UNGEI priorities for the end of 2014 and 2015.
We find the UNGEI partnership to be important for collective solutions and collaboration to promote every girl’s right to education. We need to continue to raise awareness of the multiple challenges girls have in their effort not only to access primary education but to complete secondary education with meaningful learning in a conducive and gender-friendly environment. Norad is looking forward to continuing an active engagement in UNGEI. We are honoured to have been selected as the UNGEI Chair for the next two years and eager to work with partners to shape UNGEI’s role in the new SDG landscape.

Sincerely,

Randi Gramshaug
SC/GAC Member (2014)
Norad

Kjersti Okkelmo
Chair (2015)
Norad

“The most visible of all global mechanisms associated with gender equality has been the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), a multi-stakeholder partnership established in Dakar in 2000. An evaluation of UNGEI particularly acknowledged its contribution in global policy dialogue and advocacy.... Recognizing the challenge of translating globally agreed priorities into country-level activities, UNGEI has created stronger links with the GPE. The evaluation also praised UNGEI’s role in coordination and priority-setting among its members.”

Reflecting on an eventful year and looking to the future.

WHO WE ARE

UNGEI is a multi-stakeholder partnership committed to increasing girls’ access to education and improving its quality, and to contributing to the empowerment of girls and women through transformative education. UNGEI partners are a diverse group: multilateral and bilateral development partners, international non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, regional networks of civil society organizations, youth organizations and representatives of academia.

The UNGEI partnership is committed to heightening policy impact through collective advocacy and coordinated action; knowledge exchange, sharing evidence-based solutions and learning; and strengthening partnerships and collaborative approaches.

The Global Advisory Committee (GAC) provides leadership and guidance on UNGEI’s goals and operational plans. GAC members also act as advocates and ambassadors for UNGEI in global and regional forums, and they provide technical leadership by participating in task teams. The Steering Committee includes five GAC members who represent the different stakeholder groups in the partnership under the leadership of a chairperson. In 2014, the GAC expanded to include four new members (see panel listing UNGEI Global Advisory Committee members). GAC members help deliver on the UNGEI mandate through the work of their own agencies.

31 MILLION GIRLS
The number out of school in 2013.

55%
Of these out-of-school girls, 55% expected NEVER TO ENROLL in school.
On 10 August 2014 in the State of Palestine, (foreground) 12-year-old Aya Abu Taweida, who wants to be a teacher for hearing-impaired children, stands in a temporary shelter for displaced families that has been set up in a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) school in Gaza City.
The UNGEI Secretariat plans, leads and coordinates the work of the partnership on a daily basis. It carries out coordination and outreach activities to ensure that girls’ education and gender equality remain central to the global development agenda. UNICEF is the lead agency for UNGEI; it is a member of the GAC and hosts the UNGEI Secretariat. The Secretariat, in conjunction with the GAC, strategizes around opportunities to effect change. This typically includes an event or the launch of a report, engaging with others working in a specific area, contributing to global policy events or processes and nourishing a partnership that can take collaborative – and effective – action.

UNGEI’s regional focal points provide leadership at the regional level. They support country partnerships and link global efforts with regional and country-level partnerships, bringing emerging issues and critical perspectives from the field. Much of UNGEI’s sense of revitalization and renewed action in 2014 emanated from initiatives and connections fostered by the regional focal points and the regional partnerships they support.

2014: A GOOD YEAR FOR UNGEI

Following a formative evaluation in 2012 and significant groundwork for change laid in 2013 – governance reform, development of a policy advocacy agenda and knowledge management action plan – 2014 was a year of operationalizing these changes. Much of UNGEI’s work in 2014 at the global and regional levels reflected this revitalization, which also dovetailed with gathering momentum around creating the next global development agenda.

Throughout 2014, the global development community reviewed the achievements of the MDGs and sought to influence the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. UNGEI’s goal was to keep girls’ education and gender equality at the global policy table. UNGEI focused on the Education for All (EFA) community and the proposed education goals, targets and indicators, on and the UN General Assembly Open Working Group.
UNGEI’s efforts to support these processes – through the work of the UNGEI Secretariat and the individual efforts of GAC members and other partners – are a continuation of its role as a flagship for EFA and as a key catalyst helping countries progress towards the global education-related development goals.

The 2014 Global Education for All Meeting in Muscat, Oman, was the last global meeting of all EFA partners before the 2015 World Education Forum. A primary aim of the meeting was to develop a joint vision for education beyond 2015. UNGEI, along with the Governments of Canada and Norway, successfully advocated for consistent and thorough consideration of gender in the proposed education targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the final Muscat Agreement, four of the seven proposed targets were revised to include particular attention to gender equality or particular attention to women and girls. Building on that success, UNGEI agreed to lead a consultation on gender-responsive indicators for the Sustainable Development Goal on education, as the basis for a response to the proposed indicators drafted by the Technical Advisory Group of the EFA Steering Committee.

Since 2007, UNGEI has engaged with the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) to strengthen its focus on girls’ education and better integrate gender considerations. In 2011 and 2012, UNGEI commissioned background research on gender issues related to the thematic focus of the report. Recently, UNGEI has focused on enhancing its partnership with the GMR and building expertise within its team. For the 2013/14 report, UNGEI and the GMR team collaborated in writing the Gender Summary, and jointly launched the 2013/14 Gender Summary of the GMR during the Commission on the Status of Women to mark International Women’s Day. With UNGEI’s support, the 2013/14 Gender Summary was also available in French and Spanish. Reports from the GMR team reveal great interest in the Gender Summary based on the number of times the Gender Summary had been downloaded from the GMR website: 11,100 times between its March 2014 launch and June 2015.

For the 2015 report, UNGEI chose to invest directly in the GMR team to strengthen its capacity to integrate questions of girls’
education and gender equality across all aspects of the report. This involved funding and integrating the services of a consultant on a temporary assignment to work directly with the GMR team from June to December 2014.

These are a few examples of how UNGEI acted on its vision and advanced its priorities in 2014. They are described in this annual report, together with other accomplishments of UNGEI’s partnership model. The report is organized around three outcome areas – policy advocacy, building and sharing evidence, and enhancing partnerships and capacity – and lays out key examples of momentum and achievement, with a focus on efforts at global and regional levels.
Convening partners, creating opportunities for advancing key priorities

Policy advocacy is one of UNGEI’s core strengths. The partnership has a rich policy advocacy agenda, designed to further equality in education:

**UNGEI Policy Advocacy at a Glance**

- **Policy Priorities**
  - An Enhanced Focus on Marginalized and Excluded Groups
  - Increased Number of Girls Transitioning to Secondary Education and Post-Primary Opportunities
  - Improved Learning Outcomes for Girls

- **Advocacy Approaches**
  - Collective Advocacy
  - The Reduction/Elimination of School-Related GBV
  - Coordinated Action
  - Sharing of Good Practices
  - Evidence Based Solutions

To advance these policy advocacy priorities, the UNGEI Secretariat identifies openings for action and leveraging, such as key meetings, important discussions and potential partners for advocacy and action. Whether developing a research paper or articulating key context and an advocacy position among opinion leaders and decision-makers, Global Advisory Committee members further UNGEI’s policy advocacy priorities in their respective areas of influence. The goal is to coordinate a stronger push for – and greater results in – furthering girls’ education and gender equality.
Government Middle School, Jethui, Hajipur, Vaishali, Bihar, India, March 2014: Shalu Kumari studies in the 4th grade at the Government Middle school in Jethui Hajipur in Bihar.
In 2014, UNGEI created and acted on important openings to advance its policy advocacy priorities, with particular momentum in the area of reducing and eliminating school-related gender-based violence.

**POLICY ADVOCACY PRIORITY: THE REDUCTION AND ELIMINATION OF SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a violation of human rights and a significant impediment to girls’ school attendance and achievement. Around 246 million girls and boys around the world experience school-related violence each year. The lack of comparable data across countries and on various kinds of violence in schools makes it difficult to estimate the scale and scope of SRGBV. However, research on violence against women and girls indicates that girls are more at risk of sexual violence, harassment and exploitation, while boys are more likely to experience physical violence. Violence experienced in and on the way to school affects children in different ways, ranging from low self-esteem and depression to school avoidance, low participation in class, inability to concentrate in school and on homework, and dropping out.

UNGEI played an important role in increasing dialogue between agencies and organizations, and supporting joint advocacy to raise awareness of SRGBV as both a gender and an education issue.
USAID is a long-standing advocate and leader of efforts to end school-related gender-based violence. As early as 2003, USAID was active in systematically documenting and reviewing information on the prevalence and consequences of SRGBV. That year, USAID launched the Safe Schools Program, designed to help teachers, community members and students prevent and respond to SRGBV.

USAID is committed to eliminating all forms of SRGBV in all school systems where it works around the world. However, the lack of research on SRGBV and a common framework for understanding and measuring SRGBV, as well as a lack of awareness in the development community, continue to be major challenges to achieving this goal. USAID launched the Opportunities for Achievement and Safety in Schools (OASIS) programme in 2014 with the aim of closing those gaps. In particular, OASIS aims to develop a framework for measuring and monitoring SRGBV. With this framework, researchers and development partners are expected to have a clearer path for investigating SRGBV, monitoring and evaluating programmes, and building evidence to drive policy and establish the efficacy of interventions in different parts of the world.

Additionally, USAID has taken a number of steps to support the Global Partners Working Group on SRGBV. In 2014, USAID began a two-year partnership with UNGEI to fund the Working Group Coordinator. The agency leads the Research Task Team within the Global Partners Working Group and is an active member across all areas of focus.

Momentum in 2014 sprang largely from two distinct threads of advocacy work: collaboration with Education International (EI), the global federation of teachers’ unions, and partnering with UNESCO and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring together leading education actors – academics, donors, civil society organizations and multilaterals – to identify opportunities for collaboration and action.

In April 2014, UNGEI, along with UNESCO and the Government of France, gathered 30 development agencies and researchers to lay the groundwork for a Global Partners Working Group. The group would ignite stronger efforts against SRGBV, help establish global standards for responding to the problem and promote evidence gathering to help monitor trends and improve practices.

The Global Partners Working Group on SRGBV was subsequently launched in October 2014. The coordinator of the Global Partners Working Group on SRGBV is hosted by UNGEI. The coordinator supports the work of the 3 Task Teams: advocacy, global guidance and research and manages the e-resource centre on SRGBV. The UNGEI website hosts this expanding resource centre of SRGBV-specific materials. UNGEI co-chairs the Working Group with the UNESCO Section of Health and Global Citizenship Education.
An Advocacy Task Team was set up within the Working Group. And in November 2014, UNGEI, EI, UNESCO and the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) released a joint statement on the Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

The theme of the International Day of the Girl Child, on 11 October 2014, was ‘Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the cycle of violence’. While the UNGEI Secretariat provided technical support and helped develop messages to convey during key events hosted by UNICEF, the lead UN agency for the Day, UNGEI GAC members and UNGEI regional and national partnerships also engaged in targeted advocacy around SRGBV. The power of these partnerships and connections amplified a call to reduce and eliminate this violation of human rights:

- A reception in honour of the International Day of the Girl Child in Bangkok, hosted by Plan International, brought together key stakeholders to renew commitment to eliminating and reducing SRGBV.

- In the Gambia, the national UNGEI network held a special event in a rural setting that connected 200 students and parents in an intergenerational dialogue and highlighted good practices in girls’ education.

- In Sierra Leone, the day was commemorated by a weeklong media advocacy and sensitization campaign. Girls around the country participated by writing poems about their experiences and the negative impact of Ebola on education in the country in general and on girls’ education in particular. They also encouraged each other to counter these barriers by taking full advantage of alternative education opportunities, such as the Emergency Radio Education Programme provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

- In Paris, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, along with Plan International France, hosted a policy roundtable called ‘Learn Without Fear’. The UNGEI Secretariat and the West and Central Africa UNGEI regional partnership participated. The outcome statement from the event formed the basis of a resolution that was later presented by France, with the support of the Global Partners Working Group, to UNESCO’s Executive Board, and which passed in April 2015 – the first-ever UN resolution on SRGBV.

In terms of SRGBV efforts at the regional level, throughout 2014, UNGEI’s regional partnerships helped drive forward advocacy and evidence building in important ways. In West and Central Africa, a
Zainab ABDUL-RAHMAN (17) started school 3 years ago in Ghana.
Advocacy into Action

On this International Day of the Girl Child, I call on all governments to take action to end all forms of violence against girls in all parts of the world. Together, we must create a world where violence against women and girls is never tolerated and girls are always empowered to reach their full potential.

— United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 11 October 2014

On the International Day of the Girl Child, UNGEI East Asia and the Pacific launched a social media campaign to mobilize policy-makers, the education sector and youth with an infographic available in Bahasa, Bengali, Burmese, Chinese, Filipino, Khmer, Korean, Sinhala, Thai, and Vietnamese, as well as in English, French and Spanish.

An infographic on SRGBV and Marginalization, (http://www.ungei.org/resources/index_5860.html) created by the UNGEI East Asia and the Pacific regional partnership, effectively documented progress, best practices and further support needed in order to reduce SRGBV in the context of marginalization in China, Fiji, Indonesia, Micronesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

A four-country project on SRGBV in Burkina Faso, Côte D’Ivoire, Mali and the Niger, funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the catalyst to a regional dialogue supported by the UNGEI regional focal point and the UNICEF regional office in Senegal. By bringing the countries together, different partners were able to share knowledge and experience, thus fostering the beginnings of a strong regional nexus of expertise and action on SRGBV. Building on the success of this work, three additional countries in the region are expected to launch projects to address SRGBV in 2015, with financing from France. Over the long term, the project aims to strengthen capacity of the education systems to prevent SRGBV (including through the development of local protection and reporting systems), mobilize communities and parents and empower girls and women. Regional coordination, evidence building and advocacy will continue to be a key feature of the work.

In East Asia and the Pacific, SRGBV has been identified as a key priority by member organizations and for the UNGEI partnership. During the Regional Gender Forum held in August 2014 in Bangkok, five countries shared their experience of SRGBV, which highlighted the specific nature of SRGBV in the region. The East Asia and the Pacific partnership also created an SRGBV infographic and translated it into 10 local languages, along with a series of gallery posters featuring work around SRGBV and marginalization in China, Fiji, Indonesia, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste.
The UNGEI EAP partnership was also active in building capacity of regional actors to better understand key determinants related to reducing and eliminating SRGBV. For example, a landmark report, *School-related Gender-based Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region*, was prepared and launched. And in response to the need to increase partnering and cross-sectoral work to more deeply address the stereotypes and social norms that lead to SRGBV, the regional partnership and key partners in the regional UNGEI SRGBV working group commissioned a curriculum tool for use in lower secondary grades. The classroom programme, teacher’s guidance note and extensive glossary are expected to build the capacity of teachers to address SRGBV and gender equality in the classroom. The tool was created in 2014 and will be piloted and refined in 2015.

But we shouldn’t be satisfied. Because while the benefits of primary education are real and meaningful, we know that if we truly want to transform girls’ lives, if we truly want to give them the tools to shape their own destinies, then primary education often just isn’t enough. At that point in a girl’s life, it is no longer enough to simply talk about building schools and buying supplies, because when it comes to educating adolescent girls the real challenge isn’t just about resources, it’s about attitudes and beliefs. It’s about whether fathers and mothers think their daughters are as worthy of an education as their sons. It’s about whether communities value young women for their minds, or only for the reproductive and labor capacities of their bodies. It’s also about whether all of us are willing to confront the complex, sensitive issues that keep so many adolescent girls out of school – issues like early and forced marriage, and genital cutting; issues like domestic violence and human trafficking.

POLICY ADVOCACY PRIORITY: INCREASED NUMBER OF GIRLS TRANSITIONING TO SECONDARY EDUCATION AND POST-PRIMARY OPPORTUNITIES

The participation of boys and girls in both lower and upper secondary education has increased rapidly since 1999; overall, gender disparities are narrowing. The situation varies by region, however. In sub-Saharan Africa and in South and West Asia, girls are still more disadvantaged in secondary enrolment, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, boys are more disadvantaged. The most extreme cases of disparity are still at the expense of girls, though. Girls remain particularly at risk of having their education disrupted at the time of transition to secondary and post-primary opportunities due to factors including child marriage, school-related gender-based violence, conflict and instability, and lack of a gender-sensitive environment and curriculum.

For almost 14 years, UNGEI has worked closely with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to help countries develop and manage effective school systems where both girls and boys can attend school, remain in school and learn. Since 2012, UNGEI has been the lead agency supporting the implementation of the GPE Strategic Objective 2: All girls in GPE-endorsed countries successfully complete primary school and go to secondary school in a safe, supportive learning environment. An UNGEI-GPE initiative on gender-responsive sector planning was launched in late 2013 and was in full force through 2014. As part of this initiative, a Gender Analysis Guidance was piloted in Eritrea, Guinea and Malawi, with support from UNGEI regional focal points. The guidance will help national education decision-makers identify the extent to which their education systems are ready to address gender concerns and monitor progress in gender and education. Developing the tool jointly with GPE, Plan International and UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning has provided UNGEI with multiple ways to engage with stakeholders at global, regional and national levels to further education systems transformation.

At the regional level, UNGEI East Asia and the Pacific worked closely with the Ministry of Education in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to integrate the gender perspective into planning for the education sector. Building on UNGEI’s collaboration with Plan International and the 2013 Gender Review of the Laos Education Sector Development Plan, UNGEI, with Plan and UNICEF,
supported official endorsement of the Gender Disability and Inclusion Technical Working Group. Continued action by the group is expected to help shape the country’s forthcoming Gender Action Plan. Plan International co-chairs the Gender Disability and Inclusion Technical Working Group with the Ministry of Education Inclusive Education Center and has been a key driver of these efforts.

In 2014, a number of UNGEI partners sought to address the educational needs of pregnant teens or teen mothers as a way to further the priority of getting an increased number of girls to transition to secondary education and post-primary opportunities.

In Sierra Leone, the Ebola epidemic caused school doors to shut for 1.8 million children. A comprehensive assessment of the Ebola recovery efforts in Sierra Leone conducted by Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision, and with the support of UNICEF, consulted over 1,100 girls and boys aged 7–18 years. Most of the 617 girls interviewed believed that the higher incidences of teenage pregnancies and increased exposure to sexual exploitation and violence were a direct result of no longer having access to a safe school environment. Pregnant girls faced further marginalization because government policies barred them from taking national exams.

Progress in countering this was made with strong advocacy to change the policy from partners including the Sierra Leone Girls ‘Education Network (SLeGEN) and Girls’ Education Movement (GEM) chapters. Ultimately, positive outcomes began to take shape after the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology created a task force focused on the special needs of pregnant teens and physically challenged children, including access to health facilities, educational support during pregnancy and accelerated learning, to enable them to catch up.

In Uganda, UNGEI partners’ Go to School, Back to School and Stay in School campaigns continued to seek reentry of pregnant girls and young mothers, as provided for by the country’s official policies. In 2014, a total of 2,948 girls returned to school thanks
Camfed is an active UNGEI GAC member dedicated to fighting poverty in sub-Saharan Africa by supporting marginalized girls to go to school, succeed and lead. In 2014, Camfed directly supported 518,290 marginalized children in Ghana, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe to go to school, including comprehensive support for 118,247 marginalized girls to attend secondary school. Girls’ secondary school completion rates in Camfed-supported areas are consistently higher than national averages despite these girls’ more disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., 92.5 per cent completion rate in Camfed-supported areas in Ghana, compared with 62 per cent nationally, and 97 per cent in Camfed-supported districts in Zimbabwe, compared with 75 per cent in non-partner districts). Pass rates among girls receiving Camfed support are high (e.g., 85 per cent pass rate in Camfed-supported areas compared with 73 per cent nationally in Malawi’s 2013/2014 Junior Certificate of Education examinations).
inequalities and gender gaps typically widen in marginalized groups – so it is the disabled girl, the poor rural girl, the aboriginal girl and the girl in a country in conflict and crisis who is least likely to attend school, remain in school and learn.

Poverty, gender inequalities and disability interact to place girls at particular risk. A survey of 3,706 primary school children aged 11–14 years in Uganda found that 24 per cent of disabled girls reported experiencing sexual violence at school compared with 12 per cent of non-disabled girls. Children affected by HIV and AIDS, orphans and children from families affected by HIV and AIDS are at higher risk of bullying, sexual violence and exploitation in school.

Poor girls in rural areas have a more difficult time participating fully in the classroom and tend to have lower scores in reading and mathematics compared to boys.

Even though much of UNGEI’s policy advocacy work is directly or indirectly designed to raise awareness of the need for strong learning outcomes and for inclusion of marginalized children, UNGEI expects to further develop its policy advocacy work around these priorities in the coming years.
A big leap forward as the Good Practice Fund takes off

UNGEI aims to expand the evidence base around what works to improve access to and quality of education for girls, and to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience. The partnership was extremely active in this area in 2014, in ways that fed directly into furthering its policy advocacy agenda and also stimulated action by partners and stakeholders to expand core knowledge around girls’ education and gender equality.

UNGEI’S GOOD PRACTICE FUND

As part of its commitment to be a knowledge broker around girls’ education, in late 2013, UNGEI launched the Good Practice Fund. The Fund is designed to provide an opportunity for good practices – especially those that are lesser known among development practitioners – to be systematically documented and shared within and between countries and regions.

The Good Practice Fund received 320 applications. The positive response showed a real need for reflecting and reporting on experience, and recognition that for many small organizations, this is a luxury rather than a standard part of their work. The applicant pool provided a snapshot of the extent of activity and innovation in girls’ education and gender equality. Three regions accounted for the majority of applications for sharing experiences: Eastern and Southern Africa (34 per cent); South Asia (27 per cent); and West and Central Africa (24 per cent). The majority of applications were from a small number of countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda and Tanzania – accounting for nearly 70 per cent of all applications.
Grant recipients were selected in three rounds of review, in which the GAC task team played a key role. Ultimately, 17 organizations were awarded funds through the Good Practice Fund to document their work.

UNGEI partnered with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to provide technical support to the awardees, including templates and guidance as well as one-on-one help as needed. The aim was to strengthen the skills of participating organizations to define key elements of success (what works) and identify lessons and results, in addition to promoting peer learning among the grantees.

ODI-supported documentation and dissemination of good practices will take place throughout 2015. ODI will also provide a summary of lessons learned and good practices across the range of experiences documented through the Good Practice Fund.

The benefits of establishing the benefits of establishing the Fund have already multiplied, in 2014, the West and Central Africa UNGEI partnership adopted the Fund’s criteria for good practice and adapted the approach to their region. The WCAR Good Practice project focused on the experience of the five key partners – Plan WCARO, Aide et Action, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA) and UNICEF – in advancing girls’ education and gender equality. These organizations combined efforts to create a framework for sharing knowledge and experience in order to coordinate activities and supports. Their final report highlights the best practices of relevant partner organizations in the field of girls’ and women’s education by laying out some of the strategies, initiatives and processes that have worked well.

**PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE AROUND MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT**

Sound menstrual hygiene management policies are key to keeping girls in school when they reach puberty and are therefore also central to UNGEI’s advocacy priority of increasing girls’ transition to secondary education and post-primary opportunities. Many girls do not attend school during their menstrual period due to a lack of clean toilets that provide privacy and proper disposal facilities for sanitary towels. A recent study conducted by UNICEF in Sierra Leone found that 21.3 per cent of girls responding reported missing school when on their menstrual period. Data collected from UNICEF programme
countries also revealed that a mere 50 per cent of primary schools in developing countries have basic sanitation and water facilities.

An important way to promote effective MHM policies is to build the evidence around the current situation and on effective practices and policies. While MHM was a new area of focus for UNGEI, in 2014, the partnership was increasingly active in promoting evidence building and knowledge sharing about MHM. After securing CND$7.3 million in funding from the Government of Canada in 2013 to strengthen evidence and establish standards in MHM practices, the UNGEI Secretariat and UNICEF also worked with Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health and Emory University to prepare for the 3rd Annual Virtual Menstrual Hygiene Management in WASH in Schools Conference in October 2014. In addition, UNGEI developed a gender analysis module for an Emory University course on how to do formative research related to MHM, which was a central feature of UNICEF’s 14-country WASH in Schools for Girls programme.

At the regional level, in South Asia, UNGEI worked closely with UNICEF’s water, sanitation and hygiene team to support the WASH in Schools for Girls programmes in India, Nepal and Pakistan. The goal is to increase understanding of current MHM practices and incorporate gender-sensitive MHM into current WASH programmes. Key outcomes include completion of pre-testing, design of an MHM toolkit in Pakistan, and partnering with the Department of Education in Nepal to promote sanitation programmes.

**THE GOOD PRACTICE FUND: A PREVIEW OF TOPICS**

Topics of a few of the forthcoming case studies show the variety of approaches and contexts in which work around girls’ education and gender equality is moving forward:

- **LEAVE NO GIRL BEHIND:** Lessons from promoting primary education for girls living with disability in Bangladesh
- **RIGHTS-BASED LEARNING FOR BUILDING LIFE SKILLS IN PAKISTAN**
- **REACHING GIRLS LIVING AND WORKING ON THE STREETS IN NAIROBI:** Learning and livelihoods for girls and their families
- **TWENTY YEARS OF INNOVATION ACROSS A CONTINENT THROUGH GENDER RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY:** Learning lessons from FAWE
- **INCREASING EDUCATION OUTCOMES BY REACHING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM:** Empowering rural Kenyan girls though reproductive health and hygiene
- **LOW-COST COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN GHANA:** Documenting effectiveness and building sustainability
- **CIVIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT:** Leadership and confidence as a foundation for girls’ education in Tanzania
- **A SAFE SPACE FOR LEARNING AND REBUILDING IN GUINEA:** A welcome centre for pregnant girls and young mothers and their babies
ADVOCACY AND ACTION FOR BETTER MONITORING

In 2014, UNGEI was actively engaged in a series of events focusing on data, evidence and tools for monitoring gender equality in education. The UNGEI Secretariat presented a brief on education at the Data2X Expert Group meeting on gender data gaps, hosted by the UN Foundation Data2X Initiative in Washington, DC, in February. With USAID, UNGEI also co-hosted a working session on Monitoring Gender Equality in Education that same month.

THE EDUCATION FOR ALL GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT GENDER SUMMARY, created with substantial direct support from UNGEI, was launched on International Women’s Day during the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2014.

11,100: The number of times the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/2014 Gender Summary was downloaded between March 2014 and June 2015.
Strengthening the Global Advisory Committee, renewing the regional networks

UNGEI’s underlying story in 2014 was one of revitalization and renewal of its partnerships at all levels.

GLOBAL PARTNERS

UNGEI governance reform was in full swing in 2014, with the newly established Steering Committee in place and working to strengthen ownership and effectiveness of the Global Advisory Committee. Under the leadership of Vanya Berrouet, representing the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, the Steering Committee launched a campaign to expand the GAC by bringing in new members with new skills, and representing new stakeholder groups. In 2014, this included CARE, the international NGO dedicated to fighting poverty through empowerment; FHI 360, a non-profit development organization focusing on using integrated solutions to address development problems; the Comparative, International and Development Education Centre (CIDEC) at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education; and the Youth Advocacy Group of the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative (YAG-GEFI). Each of these organizations offers its expertise, as well as new perspectives, to further UNGEI’s mission. In December 2014, the GAC also agreed to move forward on three engagement strategies in 2015 to help further strengthen the partnership – country level actors; youth; and academia/research organizations, with a focus on Southern academics.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

UNGEI continues to engage audiences through its social media channels, which are growing at an impressive rate: The number of Facebook followers increased by 95 per cent between August and December 2014 and now stands at over 100,000.

“When you invest in a girl’s education, she feeds herself, her children, her community and her nation,”

ERNA SOLBERG,
Prime Minister of Norway, DAVOS, 2014.
Past collaboration with academic institutions has been very rewarding for UNGEI, in particular in terms of building knowledge and analyses and creating a solid foundation for evidence-based advocacy. In 2014, UNGEI made a concerted effort to strengthen partnerships with academics. In addition to bringing academic partners into the GAC, UNGEI also collaborated with BAICE (the British Association for International and Comparative Education) to strengthen research and writing skills of local researchers based in East Africa – and plans were made for a similar process in South Asia, to be carried out in 2015.

CIDEC is the first academic institution to be represented on the GAC. CIDEC quickly became active in UNGEI discussions and meetings, providing feedback on post-2015 gender targets and indicators, and amplifying the knowledge and messages of UNGEI through presentations and talks in its own academic milieu, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. UNGEI expects CIDEC to help open a gateway to greater engagement with scholars and scholarly institutions in the southern hemisphere.

**UNGEI PRIORITIES LEVERAGED THROUGH GAC MEMBERS: EXAMPLES FROM 2014**

In 2014, Plan International continued its collaborative work with UNGEI, in particular through efforts to raise the profile of SRGBV, an issue demanding global attention. The organization led in-depth field research through multi-country studies, such as ‘Hear
Adelaide Sosseh has been a member of the UNGEI Global Advisory Council since 2005, and currently sits on the Steering Committee. Adelaide represents the Africa Network Campaign of Education for All (ANCEFA), an umbrella organization of national coalitions established in 2002.

What are you hearing from the national coalitions about current girls’ education issues?

The main challenge is the completion rate and transition from primary to secondary education, especially the completion of six years of primary education. In most countries a high percentage of girls start primary school (about 90 per cent) but by primary six, their numbers have dwindled down to about 20 per cent. This is the picture across much of Africa.

Major factors causing these rates include poverty, and traditional factors, such as early marriage and girls needing to work in the household. Another serious concern is violence in and around schools. This issue has been complicated more with all the conflicts across the continent and attacks on schools, which affect and target girls in particular. The main example we all know about is Nigeria, but we see similar situations across Africa.

The quality of education is another important issue. Often girls attend school yet do not have the necessary skills or competencies to survive in modern economies. This is linked to a great shortage of teachers (approximately 2.1 million more teachers will be needed by 2030 in sub-Saharan Africa), and a clear need for more female teachers so girls can have role models. Teachers face many challenges with limited capacity to manage in the environment in which they find themselves. This lack of resources means that often teachers are not willing to work in rural areas where the need is great.

How are the national coalitions dealing with these issues?

Every country is different and chooses to focus on different issues. In terms of advocacy, some focus on fee-free education, while others focus on mechanisms for increasing learning outcomes. Girls’ empowerment is another major focus. Often girls are told they should be seen and not heard, but many of the national coalitions have adopted the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) concept of stand up and speak out in order to change this viewpoint and empower girls to do just that. Many national coalitions also focus on the health aspects such as providing sanitation, AIDS education and tackling early pregnancy.

How does UNGEI fit into the work that ANCEFA is doing?

UNGEI is a very helpful advocacy partner to ANCEFA. UNGEI has access to some advocacy channels that ANCEFA does not. Through UNGEI, members of ANCEFA can be sure their voice and their issues will be represented.

Everybody keeps saying that the national level is the heart of UNGEI, and most of the national coalitions are able to tap into the UNGEI networks at this level. However, the UNGEI networks at the country level bring in a wider partnership outside the national education coalitions’ initial reach. They encourage collaboration on many cross-cutting areas such as health, protection and poverty alleviation, areas that are beyond the scope of education but still affect girls. Yes, this partnership has been valuable.

Our Voices’ and ‘Promoting Equality and Safety in Schools’. Plan presented these research findings at the high-level panel event for the 59th Commission on the Status of Women. As an active member of the Global Partners Working Group on SRGBV, Plan chairs the Advocacy Task Team working with other members to develop resources and tools that contribute to global advocacy and policy efforts. Plan and UNGEI also worked together effectively when responding to the consultation on the proposed post-2015 indicators. This response focused on expanding the conversation around measuring gender equality in education beyond parity, and bringing a focus on measuring SRGBV as a key barrier to education.

World Vision was active across all of UNGEI’s policy advocacy priorities in 2014. The Improving Girls’ Access through Transforming Education (IGATE) project in Zimbabwe – where World Vision works as a member of an 8-member consortium — is one example of this. IGATE supports marginalized girls through comprehensive,
community-based solutions. Its focus is addressing SRGBV through empowering girls and parents using strategies including Girls’ Clubs and Mothers’ Clubs and improving learning outcomes through Reading Clubs and teacher training. The programme promotes girls’ transition to secondary and post-primary education by reducing barriers of distance through the Bicycle Education Empowerment Program and bolsters families’ abilities to sustain girls’ post-primary education through Village Savings and Lending Groups. In 2014, seven of nine programming approaches, which are designed to foster change in attitudes and behaviour among all actors in a community, were rolled out in 10 of Zimbabwe’s 59 districts.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) continued to partner with UNGEI across a range of UNESCO’s areas of work. The Section of Learning and Teachers represents UNESCO on the GAC and the Steering Committee. In 2014, UNESCO’ Section of Health and Global Citizenship Education partnered with UNGEI and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to initiate a new network on SRGBV, the Global Partners Working Group on SRGBV. Building on a longstanding relationship with the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report, the GMR and UNGEI produced the GMR Gender Summary, and on the occasion of International Women’s Day, launched a policy brief on SRGBV. Further work commenced in close cooperation with UNGEI and USAID to look at conceptualizing and measuring SRGBV. Through its International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO also worked with UNGEI, GPE and Plan International to develop a Gender Analysis Tool, designed to help countries prepare gender-responsive education sector plans. UNESCO also closely engaged UNGEI in the post-2015 education agenda process, ensuring gender issues are reflected throughout. At the regional level, UNESCO continued to actively engage in the East Asia and the Pacific UNGEI, as co-chair of the partnership.
REGIONAL DYNAMISM SHAPES THE UNGEI OF TOMORROW

In 2014, there was significant progress at the regional and national levels in strengthening and building partnerships to advance girls’ education among national governments.

In fact, regional partnerships drove much of UNGEI’s dynamism in 2014. The four regional partnership networks – in West and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, East Asia and the Pacific and in South Asia – each found ways to renew their commitment to promoting girls’ education and gender equality.

In West and Central Africa, an UNGEI regional workshop in July 2014 brought together NGOs and national government representatives of nearly every country in the region, the UNGEI Secretariat, UNICEF, and regional organizations, including FAWE, Plan International, Aide et Action and ANCEFA. The goal of the meeting was to revitalize regional and national partnerships around girls’ education. The group shared understandings of current trends in girls’ education status in the region, identified specific regional challenges to girls’ education and gender equality, and shared updates on the strategic environment for education reform. One result was the establishment of a common roadmap for collaboration and partnership in the region – so crucial given the persistence of gender inequality in the region despite years of significant efforts.

The WCAR partnership also continued to explore political and institutional barriers to girls’ education through research originally begun in 2013 with four countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, the Niger, and Mauritania), and in 2014 expanded to include four more (the Congo, Mali, Senegal and Togo). The findings have been startling and have highlighted critical gaps in the ability of national systems to address the education needs of girls. Plans are underway to translate the methodology and country findings in order to share the approach for use in other regions.

The network of experts and organizations that forms the heart of the UNGEI regional partnership in East Asia and the Pacific continued to grow in 2014. One outgrowth of this, and an event central to the year, was the Regional Gender Forum held in Bangkok in August 2014, organized jointly by UNGEI East Asia and the Pacific and UNICEF’s regional office. The Forum brought together civil society organizations, NGOs, UN agencies and five national governments. Discussions focused on SRGBV and issues...
of marginalization. The Forum was a great platform for information-sharing (lessons learned, case studies, best practices); it resulted in strengthened collaboration among UNGEI partners in the region and greater commitment to country-level partnership work.

UNGEI East Asia and the Pacific also began documenting the situation for girls and boys with disabilities in the region and its impact on their right to education. A draft working paper geared towards policy makers, curriculum developers, programme officers and researchers outlined some of the major obstacles in the region surrounding gender, disabilities and education. One of the key findings is that girls with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups when it comes to educational opportunity at all levels; they are also at higher risk for school-related gender-based violence. Despite this, funding for special needs education appears to be channelled more readily to boys, leaving girls facing greater difficulties in accessing education services and resources. Additionally, education strategies and programmes targeting girls rarely take the needs of girls with disabilities into consideration. The UNGEI office continues to work with partners to strengthen the working paper.

In South Asia, UNGEI welcomed Sanaullah Panezai as the new regional focal point, more than one year after the retirement of the previous regional focal point. The UNGEI partnership in the region focused on strengthening national-level UNGEI networks. Several Gender in Education Forums helped build evidence, share knowledge and strengthen awareness around issues relevant to each specific country context.

For years, the South Asia Regional Partnership has been extremely active in creating knowledge products. This practice continued in 2014. And the partnership also launched the Girls’ Education in Afghanistan Campaign, key theme of celebrating the 25th Anniversary on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in South Asia.

At the country level, UNGEI Pakistan carried out a rigorous evaluation of Young Champion’s Initiative (YCI). YCI was a flagship initiative of UNGEI South Asia from 2009 to 2013, involving youth as role models to promote girls’ education. The evaluation critically assessed YCI, while engaging key stakeholders and UNGEI local partners, and drew lessons for future programming. The Young Champion’s Initiative as a means to address the issue of out-of-school children, particularly its focus on girls, was highly relevant in the context of Pakistan.

The UNGEI partnership in Nepal was able to document good practices in girls’ education and gender equality there in 2014. And in Afghanistan, UNICEF, other partners and the Ministry of
Education launched the Girls’ Education in Afghanistan Campaign, a key theme of celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in South Asia. The campaign focused on key progress made in girls’ education and gender equality in Afghanistan during the last 25 years and framed a programme priority agenda to advance girls’ education in the country.

The UNGEI regional partnership in Eastern and Southern Africa was reactivated in 2014. Key partners include the UNICEF regional office and the UNGEI regional focal point, the UNESCO regional office, FAWE and Plan International. These partners agreed on an ambitious plan to enhance collaboration and leverage their various strengths as they move towards the future. In 2014, the piloting of the UNGEI-GPE Gender Analysis Tool in the region introduced gender-responsive sector planning and created new relationships with country actors. The tool was piloted in Eritrea, Malawi and Guinea. The country-based piloting was found to provide valuable learning opportunities for the government and other participants in the process, as well as assisting the development of the Gender Analysis Tool itself.

Going forward, the UNGEI partnership in Eastern and Southern Africa aims to continue building cohesiveness in advocacy and action efforts by developing common advocacy messages, joint studies and reports to influence the regional focus on girls’ education and gender equality.