

UNGEI Child Protection Code of Practice

Introduction

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a partnership embracing the United Nations system, donors and civil society organizations. The goal of UNGEI is to improve the quality and availability of girls' education in support of the gender-related Education For All (EFA) goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): eliminating the gender gap in primary and secondary education, and ensuring that by 2015, all children, boys and girls alike, can complete a full course of primary schooling and have equal access to all levels of education.

The UNGEI partnership promotes strategies that put the rights and needs of the most disadvantaged, including girls and young people, first in education policies, plans and budgets. It advocates for a cross-sectoral, holistic approach with balanced investment in education across the life-cycle, including early childhood education and development for children of poor families and literacy and empowerment of women and young people. The UNGEI Global Advisory Committee (GAC) develops and disseminates information on integrating gender equality into national level processes to all UNGEI partners, particularly government ministries and civil society organizations.

To further these objectives, the UNGEI GAC has developed this Child Protection Code of Practice to galvanize UNGEI's efforts to promote gender equality in education, and in particular to ensure that the rights and needs of vulnerable children are fully met.

Basis of the Code of Practice

UNGEI bases this Code of Practice on principles enshrined in many binding international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; United Nations General Assembly Resolution S-27/2: A World Fit for Children; the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). These principles include putting children first, ensuring their right to education, protecting them, and ensuring their participation. Providing education is a critical strategy for protecting children, especially girls. UNGEI therefore stresses the right to education for every child.

Regional human rights instruments have been developed to reflect regional values more strongly than the UN instruments and to allow for different understandings of individuals' rights and responsibilities to society. Regional systems vary in their approaches to child rights; some have specific mechanisms for challenging violations of rights, while others set up monitoring bodies to interpret how a particular treaty applies to child rights.

UNGEI recognizes that members of its partnership may have their own child protection policies and codes of practice to guide their engagement with children. This Code of Practice is meant to complement UNGEI partners' existing child protection policies and codes of conduct.

The Code of Practice

Rider

UNGEI encourages partners to ensure that the UNGEI Child Protection Code of Practice is in line with organizational policy/practice (which supersedes this Code) so that the rights and needs of vulnerable children are fully met. UNGEI further recommends that partners without an organizational code of conduct adopt these minimum standards to guide their work.

Child Protection

UNGEI encourages its partners to:

- Incorporate this Code of Practice into their strategies, structures and operational practices
- Ensure that no one associated with an UNGEI partner uses that connection for purposes contrary to UNGEI's mission or to the Code of Practice
- Increase their staff and associates' awareness of child protection issues
- Ensure that their operational practices do not increase children's vulnerability, and that project/grant/partnership conditions include appropriate safeguards
- Use their partnerships with governments, development agencies, communities and families to identify conditions that render children vulnerable to abuse and work for the enforcement of laws and adoption of best practices to promote child protection
- Overall, within the scope of their mandate, work to create safe and supportive environments for children.

Communications about Children and Use of Images

UNGEI recognizes that communicating children's stories is an important part of its partners' work. Since images of children are often exploited and children are vulnerable to trafficking and abuse, UNGEI is committed to child protection and encourages its partners to respect children's dignity and identity through:

- Responsible use of children's images and stories
- Awareness of the extra confidentiality and protection needed by children when communicating their stories (e.g., children orphaned by or living with AIDS, victims of abuse)
- Getting specific consent from children and their parents/guardians (for at-risk and vulnerable groups, e.g. orphans, children with disabilities, ...) for use of their images and stories, after explaining the context and content in which they will appear
- Complying with relevant international, national and local legislation or codes governing children's images or interviews
- Respecting children's privacy in interviews and project visits.

This list is not exhaustive, and partners are encouraged to pursue communications strategies that are safe for children.

Groups Protected by this Code of Practice

The Code of Practice protects the following groups:

Children

All children, defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as being under 18 years old, are protected by this Code of Practice.

Young People

As children mature through their teenage years, we recognize that they may not view themselves as children. Some 16-year-olds may be mature, handle responsibilities and be starting to take their independent place in society. This is a two-way process: young people engage with the world in a more adult way as they mature, and society also begins to treat them less like children and more like adults. However, we recognize that this is a process; young people are vulnerable at least until they are 18 and may need protection into their early 20s.

Application of Code of Practice

- a) This Code of Practice applies to all current and prospective members and partners of UNGEI and will serve as a basis for evaluating potential members.
- b) The GAC shall oversee and support the partnership in implementing this Code of Practice.

Review

This Code of Practice will be reviewed by the partners and ratified by the Global Advisory Committee periodically, as necessary.

Sources

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Note: The UNGEI Secretariat will develop mechanisms for making this Code of Practice operational and disseminating it in consultation with UNGEI Regional Focal Points.

*Adopted by the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee, 13 June 2008
Revised by the UNGEI Global Advisory Committee, 7 December 2009*