



*UNGEI United Nations Girls' Education Initiative*

### **What is UNGEI?**

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a partnership of organizations committed to the goals of narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and ensuring that, by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to free, quality education.

UNGEI was launched in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal) by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The flagship of the Education for All (EFA) movement that focuses on girls' education, it embraces the United Nations system, governments, donor countries, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and communities and families. UNGEI provides stakeholders with a platform for action and galvanizes their efforts to get girls in school.

UNICEF is the lead agency and Secretariat for UNGEI. A Global Advisory Committee is composed of key partners who share in the planning, decision-making, guidance and accountability of UNGEI. UNGEI Focal Points in different regions facilitate the coordination of girls' education strategies and interventions at the country level.

To learn more about UNGEI, visit [www.ungei.org](http://www.ungei.org)

### **What UNGEI stands for**

The world community failed to meet the 2005 target for gender parity, and UNGEI is determinedly committed to accelerating action on girls' education and revitalizing the broad social mobilization and high-level political action that is needed to ensure that every girl, as well as every boy, goes to school. To achieve this, national citizens will need to pressure governments and key decision-makers to live up to their commitments and take concrete steps forward. Under the larger umbrella of promoting gender equality,

UNGEI works for the removal of barriers to learning, such as school fees and other education costs, and for access to education in emergency situations. It promotes strategies that give priority to the needs of the most disadvantaged, including girls and women, in education policies, plans and budgets. It advocates for a cross-sectoral holistic approach with balanced investment in education across the life cycle, addressing early childhood development and education for children of poor families, as well as literacy and the empowerment of women and young people.

### **Partners**

Current partners at the global level include UN agencies (ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, among others), the World Bank, donor agencies (Canadian International Development Agency, Danish International Development Assistance, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, UK Department for International Development, USAID, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, among others), non-governmental organizations (including CAMFED International, Campaign for Popular Education Bangladesh, Forum for African Women Educationalists, Global Campaign for Education and World Vision). Other partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Academy for Educational Development.

### **GirlsEd-Net**

*GirlsEd-Net* is an online knowledge network on girls' education that aims to facilitate dialogue and information-sharing among UNGEI partners and a broad range of constituencies at the global, regional and national levels. Some of this network's main activities include a monthly electronic newsletter, information sharing announcements and eDiscussions. To sign up, visit us at [www.ungei.org/listserve/index.html](http://www.ungei.org/listserve/index.html).

# Facts & Figures on Girls' Education

In addition to its benefits for girls and women, education is a uniquely positive force with a wide-ranging impact on society and human development. Educated girls can better protect themselves against HIV, trafficking and abuse, and are more likely to grow up to have healthier families and send their children to school.

## Out-of-school children

- There are 115 million children out of school – the majority of them, 62 million, are girls – and 77 million children not enrolled in school. The difference represents the millions of children who are enrolling in but not attending school.
- Children from the poorest household are three times less likely to be in school than their counterparts in the richest households.

## Gender parity

- There are now 94 girls in primary school for every 100 boys, up from 92 in 1999.
- Of the 181 countries with 2004 data available, two thirds have achieved gender parity in primary education.
- The gender gap remains particularly large in Afghanistan (44 girls in school for every 100 boys), the Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, Pakistan and Yemen.

## Illiteracy

- There are 781 million illiterate adults, two thirds of them women, worldwide.

## Early childhood

- Children whose mothers have no education are more than twice as likely to be out of school as children whose mothers have some education
- In developing countries, 75 per cent of the children not in primary school have uneducated mothers
- One additional year of schooling for 1,000 women helps prevent two maternal deaths.
- Early childhood care and education establishes a solid foundation for learning and makes both girls and boys ready to attend school at the right age. It also improves parents' and caregivers' readiness to send their children to school by equipping them with deeper knowledge and skills.
- More girls can attend and complete school if other children they need to care for are receiving early childhood care and education; this is particularly crucial for children affected by HIV and AIDS.

## HIV and AIDS

- If all children received a complete primary education, around 700,000 cases of HIV in young adults could be prevented each year.
- Women represent 62 per cent of the 15- to 24-year-olds living with HIV and AIDS globally
- The burden of AIDS care falls especially heavily on women, and can limit educational and economic opportunities for women and girls.
- Higher education levels for girls are associated with a reduced risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- 15.2 million children under age 18 have lost one or both parents to AIDS; 12 million of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Violence

- Girls between 13 and 18 years old constitute the largest group exploited in the commercial sex industry. It is estimated that around 500,000 girls below 18 are victims of trafficking each year.
- Female genital mutilation/cutting affects 130 million girls and women globally and places 2 million at risk annually.
- In some cultures, the preference for boy children results in prenatal sex selection and infanticide of girls. In India, there are 933 Indian women for every 1,000 men, reflecting 40 million 'missing' women.

## Emergencies

- More than 80 per cent of the world's 35 million refugees and displaced people are women and children.
- Emergencies put women at risk of extreme sexual violence and abuse. In Rwanda, 2,000 women, many of whom were survivors of rape, tested positive for HIV during the five years following the 1994 genocide.