**Message from the Regional Secretariat**

All in all, this has been a good year for UNGEI in the region. We noted several steps towards institutionalisation of country partnerships, as well as a trend towards “deepening” and “widening” of partnerships to sub-national levels and wider constituencies, as well as strategic planning events to re-focus and further contextualise country partnerships.

At the same time, staff turnover within UNICEF, escalating conflict in Afghanistan and political instability in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan resulted in a slowing-down of UNGEI activities. With new governments in place in Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal, we look forward to accelerated progress under UNGEI in the coming year.

From the South Asia UNGEI Secretariat, many thanks for giving us this opportunity to work with you as we strive to promote girls’ education and gender equality in education in South Asia. Best wishes for peace, joy and prosperity during 2014 and beyond.
NEWS FROM COUNTRIES WITH
UNGEI PARTNERSHIPS

AFGHANISTAN

What is happening now?

❖ A training programme on gender responsive budgeting in education was organised by the Afghanistan Girls’ Education Initiative (AGEI), as an effort to reduce gender disparities in education, enabled the sharing of knowledge and helped build capacity of government counterparts from the ministries of education, finance and related departments such as the girls’ education unit, teacher education department and the global partnership for education (GPE).

Coming up…………

❖ Expanding the AGEI partnership by co-opting representatives from on-going programmes in girls’ education and strengthening linkages with GPE.

❖ Review and discuss at the next AGEI meeting, the UNGEI-GPE statement of intent and work-plan signed at the global level and come up with strategies to strengthen country level collaboration between AGEI and GPE.

BANGLADESH

What is happening now?

❖ The Young Champions’ Initiative (YCI) was integrated/mainstreamed into the government work-plan as a strategy to promote secondary education for girls.

❖ Ten YCs were trained to field-test the Young Champions’ Training Manual (TM), which is an adapted and contextualised version of a manual developed by the regional secretariat. The final manual is ready for use by the directorate of secondary and higher education (DSHE).

Coming up………..

❖ Train 240 YCs (adolescents, radio personnel, journalists) as master trainers (MTs) for the training manual.

❖ Develop scripts on adolescent issues based on the YCs’ TM to implement YCI through interactive radio programmes aired from 10 Community radio stations jointly with the communication section. These actions are expected to help mainstream YCI into the secondary education system and orient more than 2 million young people on adolescent issues through electronic, community radio programmes, print media and also by involving young journalists from 10 renowned newspapers.

❖ Conduct a study on the causes of high dropout of girls at various levels in secondary and tertiary education, especially those from disadvantaged groups and remote areas, map the bottlenecks into a data base for informed programming and strategic partnerships.
BHUTAN

What is happening now?

❖ Study visit to Nepal was completed by a delegation of adolescents and young people from Bhutan, including representatives from the ministry of education (department of youth and sports), to learn more about the successful youth to youth radio programme “Chatting with my Best Friend” (SSMK) with a view to applying the model in Bhutan

❖ Proposal has been submitted to the government to establish an UNGEI partnership that will focus on young people to promote gross national happiness (GNH) in all sectors including education

Coming up

❖ Hopefully, an UNGEI country partnership in 2014 …

INDIA

What is happening now?

❖ Discussions with state governments are on-going on incorporating recommendations from the report on “Partnership for Girls Education and Empowerment” in India, a joint activity that was completed in partnership with ROSA

Coming up…………

❖ Incorporation of recommendations of completed studies into work-plans of state partnerships

❖ New partnerships

❖ Gender audits

NEPAL

What is happening now?

❖ A national level conference, the first of its kind, of Gender Focal Points (GFPS) focused on equity in education, and involved policy makers, political leaders and officials from various ministries. GFPS from 32 districts, center level line agencies and members of the Girls’ Education Network (GEN). The combined effort of several partners of the network helped make this event successful. The conference ended with a declaration and adopted the terms of reference for district level GE Networks and gender focal points

❖ Over one hundred young women and men from various backgrounds, including celebrities from the media, performing arts, sports, literature and entertainment, gathered for a national conference on gender equity, inclusion and quality, raised awareness about the positive role of young people in promoting equity and began the process of scaling up the young champions’ model at central and district levels

❖ International Day of the girl child was celebrated in partnership with the government and other stakeholders

❖ Coming up…………

❖ Implementation of partnership plans at central and district levels

❖ Expansion of the GE network and linkages with existing networks in equity and girls’ education

❖ Implementation of recommendations from the conferences of GFP and young people

❖ Revival of the parliamentarians’ initiative with newly elected parliamentarians and inclusion of male parliamentarians and other political leaders

❖ Scaling up of the young champions’ initiative.
What is happening now?

- International Day of the Girl Child was celebrated at federal and province levels, included radio talk shows, drawing and essay competitions. At the federal level, UNICEF and UNESCO under the Pakistan Girls’ Education Initiative (PGEI), organized an exposition under the theme “Innovating for Girls’ Education,” which created a platform for CSOs, academia and other interest groups to show-case their work. The event was attended by over 25 organizations and over 100 participants.

- PGEI coordinated and organized 4 national and provincial consultations with policy makers, parliamentarians and key representatives from standing committees of education, to review national and provincial progress on the implementation framework and strategy for Article 25 that legislates free and compulsory education for children.

- PGEI contributed to the ongoing GPE supported Education Sector Planning process in the county to identify effective strategies for girls education.

- Continued advocacy for increasing the budgetary allocation for girls education.

- Ongoing evaluation of the young champions’ initiative including the PGEI partnership and the parliamentarians’ caucus.

Coming up………..

- Finalization of the evaluation report and a plan to implement recommendations of the report.

- Continue advocacy activities with regard to implementation of Article 25A.

- Continue to advocate for gender sensitive education policies and strategies in sector plan development and review processes.

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