Program report on

'Equity in Education: Advocacy through Girls’ Education Network, Young People and Political Leaders'

Gender Parity Index

By Educational Pages

Dillibazar, Kathmandu

Submitted to UNICEF Country Office

Pulchock, Lalitpur
Background

The United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) was officially launched in Nepal in 2008 jointly by the government of Nepal to strengthen the loose network advocating for issues on girls’ education formed by UNICEF in 2002. Currently the UNGEI network exists at national and district levels with the name “Girls’ Education and Gender Equity Network” which is popularly called the ‘GE Network’. The network has been actively involved in mainstreaming the UNGEI agenda into the government’s plan, working through existing structures and building upon the common vision and goal of all partners working for gender and equity.

The government has mainstreamed girls' education and gender equity network incorporating the network's activities in 'Red Book', which it’s establishment was initially supported by UNICEF. The government appointed Gender Focal Points (GFPs) within the Ministry of Education and its agencies including all 75 districts. Now the network has its own Terms of Reference (TOR) and budget. It is the result of former female CA members' advocacy and lobby in support of UNICEF and Educational Pages.

The network’s achievement has been successful not only in raising awareness about gender equity at the grassroots level but also for having a striking presence in reforming policy. It has been successful in bringing all stakeholders to a single arena. The movement of female CA members, political leaders, and young champions has become the strength of the network which works in favor of advocating for education for girls and socially excluded groups. This initiative was acknowledged as a good practice in the 2011 UNGEI Evaluation. In that same year, a high-level consultation on gender equity and girls' education of South Asian region was held in Kathmandu through the leadership of Nepalese Women CA members, jointly with the DOE/MOE, UNICEF and Educational Pages. The consultation resulted in the Kathmandu Declaration which focuses on the lobby and advocacy of gender-sensitive policies. Its implementation is conducted through partnerships to create progressively gender-friendly school environments while encouraging girls’ empowerment and their active participation at all levels of schooling.
Based on the declaration, Nepal also set plans to conduct a caucus on education at the policy-making level.

A national level conference for GFPs on equity in education was organized in December 2012. It was the first of its kind jointly organized by the Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF, UNGEI and other GE-Networking members. The conference participants included policy people, political leaders, high-level government officials from different ministry, gender focal points from 32 districts, center level line agencies and GE Network members.

The conference discussed the GFPs and GE Network’s successes and challenges and came up with suggestions to strengthen the gender focal point system. Action points were also developed for the GE Network from center to district level.

This year Nepalese youth icons gathered to advocate for enhancing equity and quality in the public education system. The Conference of Youth Icons held in Kathmandu on the 21st of May 2013 mobilized youth from different areas to promote education and reduce disparities.

Based on the plans and priorities set by the UNGEI Nepal Chapter, along with the recommendations made by country evaluation, the program was designed to expand and build the capacity of the UNGEI partnership. The main activities are to advocate and lobby policy makers and implementers for gender equity and social inclusion in educational policy and practice from district level to regional level.

The key players engaged in this project include Educational Pages, one of the active members of the Girls’ Education and Gender Equity Networks, in close collaboration with the Department of Education (chair of the Girls' Education and Gender Equity Network (UNGEI Nepal Chapter) with support from UNICEF (Co-chair of Network). Educational Pages provides technical support in a two-prong approach – one at the policy level and the second at the execution level under the project.

**Objectives of the project:**
The main objectives of this 3 month project are to:
1. Support the Girls' Education and Gender Equity Network (UNGEI Network) at the center to districts level; and 

2. Engage policymakers, politicians, former female CA members' network and youth to ensure equity in education

Activities and achievements:

1. Support to the Girls' Education and Gender Equity Network (UNGEI Network) from center to districts level

This program focuses on expanding, mobilizing and enhancing the capacity of Girls' Education and Gender Equity Network members to ensure gender equity in practice in the most vulnerable areas. The program is also focused on enhancing the wider partnership among the girls education network and develop partners' mapping to fulfill the partnership plan.

- To explore the situation of gender equity and to develop common work of action among all level GE Networks, a national level conference on equity in education of GFPs was organized jointly by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, UNGEI and other GE-Networking members including Educational Pages. The conference was held at Kathmandu from 19-20, December 2012 along with policy people, political leaders, and high-level government officials from different ministries. There were approximately 150 participants from 32 districts, center level line agencies and GE Network members. It was the first conference of the gender network and also the collective work of the gender networking member organizations.

The national conference acknowledged the progress made towards gender equity in education, however it also recognized
that much more needs to be done, especially for the most marginalized and multiple-disadvantaged girl child. A declaration was issued at the end of the conference. Action points were prepared by district education offices and other line agencies. The conference also adopted the terms of reference for district level GE Network and gender focal points.

Educational Pages has been engaged in disseminating the Kathmandu Declaration from the Gender Conference in eleven districts – Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Rautahat, Sarlahi, Parsa, Bara, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Kapilbastu.

All the district education offices disseminated the Kathmandu Declaration among the respective district GE Network members. Most of the district focused on the enrolment campaign on the most vulnerable VDCs where the situation of girls is still very poor. The district level network also identified the hard core group where equity is low. Many of the districts able generate synergy and expand the partnership for reducing gender disparity in district and in VDCs. The districts have also develop district level equity plans and areas of work for the coming year. All of these effort have helped to increase access to school for girls, united efforts in favor of girls education, multiple-disadvantaged groups, and socially excluded people. Entirely the activities of the network member including the secretariat (District Education office) helped to reach the unreached.

- Likewise Educational Pages has been engaged to support Department of Education to support on the network activities at center level as well.
- The Girls' Education Network and Gender Equity Network developed a roadmap for partnerships among its members. Based on the government’s gender equity strategy paper developed in the year 2006, the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, UN agencies, teachers, media and I/NGOs have been working for reducing gender disparity in education for long. They are, however, working under different plans and programs.
There is a lack of proper mechanisms and guidelines to link the programs of network members. This is causing duplication of efforts and a repetition of programs aimed at improving girls' education.

To make a roadmap for the wider partnership, the network members jointly developed the GE Network partnership plan. The plan would maximize the use of resources by coordinating among stakeholders and exchanging information to achieve goals. The members would exchange and manage the resources, skills and experiences. The plan will also be helpful for removing duplication in works and introducing innovation in programs. The partners will initiate joint effort for implementation of national strategy in accordance with plan.

Educational Pages has supported the Department of Education to map out the partners activities based on the partnership plan. The network members have incorporated their activities regarding the gender equity in the partnership plan. Attached herewith is the table of partners activities developed base on the partnership plan.

2. Engaged policy level people, politician, women former CA members' networks and youth to ensure equity in education

This program aims to create high level involvement on the policy reform process. Policy level people such as political leaders, former CA members, education focal points of political parties, educationist, former ministers and secretary, think tank, youth icons etc. were the targeted groups for this purpose. Conference, caucus, meeting and bilateral talk has been done to engaged the groups.
Educational Pages in support from UNICEF and the Department of Education has been conducting policy level dialogue in education since past some years. The dialogue was initiated by ex-CA members (female) under the UNGEI banner. The female CA network focuses on gender equity in education and conducts various level of advocacy from gross root level to policy.

It was realized that it would be more fruitful if all the political leaders and political parties gave more attention to this issue. To generate and to get more strength in policy level advocacy for free and compulsory basic education for all boys and girls without any discrimination, all the political party has been agreed starting caucus in education to explore issues in education and to overcome it. Similarly, based on the Kathmandu declaration, Nepal has also set plans to conduct a caucus of policy people on education. The first caucus was held at 14th October, 2012. It was a new and first experience for Nepal. The caucus was organized to discuss micro issues of free and compulsory education focusing to girls and disadvantaged groups. Political leaders from major political parties and their education committee member, former constituent assembly members and the government officials were the core members of caucus.
At the caucus, political leaders committed to developing common understandings on educational issues. They also planned to meet on a regular basis to discuss educational reformation. The caucus also recommended running small group discourses as well.

Based on the mandate on the caucus and the meeting with the Ministry of Education in support of UNICEF and Educational Pages organized a meeting of former education ministers, former education secretaries and think tanks of education. Political leaders, former secretaries of the MoE, former ministers for education and former women leaders for gender equity were engaged on the issues of Post 2015 in education and equity. The discourse focused entirely on running SSRP (School Sector Reform Plan) and post 2015 issues. Through the discourse of high level people the government got feedback on SSRP and the issues to be focused on post 2015. The meeting developed synergies between political parties and the government officials for the preparation of post 2015 issues in education.

- Likewise Nepal initiated female CA members' movement on girls’ education and gender equity since 2008 in collaboration and support of UNGEI, Ministry of Education/Department of Education, UNICEF and Educational Pages. The movement voiced its concerns on policy-making, media and parliament. In 2011, a high level parliamentarian consultation on gender equity and girls' education of South Asian region was organized in September 2011 in Kathmandu in leadership of Nepalese Women CA members. The consultation issued Kathmandu declaration to be carried out for gender equity and girls education throughout the region. SAARC (South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation) countries have a similar education structure, including entry qualifications and age, duration of courses, and instructional management system. Mostly the countries
of this region are facing problems like access, especially of girls, high rate of dropout of girls, low enrolment of girls, and substandard quality of education.

The Kathmandu Declaration highlighted the importance of greater south-south networking and co-work for gender equality throughout the region. For the regional benefits Nepalese former CA member network was engaged to raise common concerns on achieving basic education in the region and to develop recommendation for the upcoming SAARC summit. Fortunately, The Eighteenth SAARC summit is also supposed to be held in Kathmandu. The feedback from the members of same caucus, who have kept organized themselves even after dissolution of Constituent Assembly via girl education and gender equity network, would be beneficial to the SAARC summit.

- Education and employment is directly linked, but there is a huge gap in the education system and employment opportunities. Inequalities between boys and girls have been placed as another social barrier from education to employment. National census reports show the huge disparity in higher education between girls and boys. The percentage of women among higher education degree holders is only 25.

Young people have great potential and can be critical enough to change the system; their attention needs to be drawn to educational reform. On 21st of May 2013, a conference of youth was organized to share the situation of education of the country (focused on gender
equity, Inclusion and quality) and find out the role of youth for reducing disparities from education and employment. It has also helped to advocate against gender discrimination from their area of work from now until post 2015. The youth icons who participated in the conference were between the ages of 16 to 40 years and were already actively involved in their respective areas of work.

The youth icons have been gathered and talked about the current situation, identified their role in education and equity and also made recommendations to the concerned stakeholders.

**Overall Achievements:**

1. It is very hard to say that a single intervention/program made changes in each particular field but due to girls and women focused programs of all GE Network members, the following numerical results have seen in the focused district.

   a. **Increased in Female Teachers**

   **Primary Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
<th>Siraha</th>
<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
<th>Sarlahi</th>
<th>Rautahat</th>
<th>Bara</th>
<th>Parsha</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2064</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>25.8</td>
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<td>24.4</td>
<td>26.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2069</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **Basic Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
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<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
<th>Sarlahi</th>
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<tr>
<td>2064</td>
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<td>22.9</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
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<td>33.0</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>32.6</td>
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</table>

   **Secondary level**

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<th>Year/District</th>
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<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
<th>Sarlahi</th>
<th>Rautahat</th>
<th>Bara</th>
<th>Parsha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2064</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2069</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   b. **Increased in Girls' Enrolment**

   **Enrolment rate of girls in focused districts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
<th>Siraha</th>
<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
<th>Sarlahi</th>
<th>Rautahat</th>
<th>Bara</th>
<th>Parsha</th>
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<tr>
<td>2064</td>
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<td>72.8</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2069</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the last six years girls’ enrolment increased very rapidly. Rauthat has made wonderful progress by lifting up the girls’ enrolment by 24.6 percent within the six period of time where the lowest incensement of 11.7 percent has been made by Siraha. Likewise, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Bara and Parsa have achieved the growth of girls’ enrolment by 16.3, 22, 23, 15.9 and 20.6 percent respectively. However, districts have made wonderful progress but still the net enrolment rate is below the national average.

c. **Increased in Girls' Promotion Rate**

Promotion rate of girls in focused districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
<th>Siraha</th>
<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
<th>Sarlahi</th>
<th>Rautahat</th>
<th>Bara</th>
<th>Parsha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2064</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>62.8</td>
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<td>62.9</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2069</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The promotion rate of girls in the Parsa district increased to 84.3 percent from 56.6 percent by these six years. Around 28 percent growth on promotion has been achieved in this short period. Other six districts also have achieved 16 to 24 percent growth on promotion rate of girls. By the running year all seven districts have achieve or very near to national level of promotion rate of 84.5.

d. **Reduce in Repetition of Girls’**

Repetition rate of girls in focused districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
<th>Siraha</th>
<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
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<th>Bara</th>
<th>Parsha</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2064</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2069</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These districts have made progress on repetition rate. Rauthat has narrowed down its repetition rate to 8.8 from 19.5 percent. All the seven districts have brought down the repetition rate 8 to 13 percent.

e. **Reduce in dropout of Girls’**

Dropout ration of girls in focused districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
<th>Siraha</th>
<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
<th>Sarlahi</th>
<th>Rautahat</th>
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<th>Parsha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2064</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2069</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dropout rates of these districts have rapidly reduced. Dhanusha district brought down the dropout rate of girls from 23.8 to 4.1 percent within six years.

Bara district has achieved very wonderful result on dropout rate by achieving 3.4 percent dropout rate. It is better by 1.6 percent to the national average of dropout i.e 5 percent.

f. **Overall Gender Parity Index on Net Enrolment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
<th>Siraha</th>
<th>Dhanusha</th>
<th>Mahottari</th>
<th>Sarlahi</th>
<th>Rautahat</th>
<th>Bara</th>
<th>Parsha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2064</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The seven districts having low gender parity index were now very near to gender equity. On the basis of net enrolment these districts have 0.96 to 0.99 percent of gender parity where the ration was just 0.79 to 0.96 six years before.

2. The District Education Office along with the GE Network member focused on the most vulnerable areas of districts and carried out enrolment campaign and other promotional activities. The GE Network focused on the VDCs' where girls' dropout/repetition rate is high and girls' promotion rate is low.

For example, Saptari district focused on the following VDCs' viz. Inarwa, Malekpur, Brahmapur, Birpur Barahi, Bathanaha where dropout of girls were 22.5, 22.9, 23.9, 24.7, 32.6 respectively.

Likewise, in the Siraha district were Jighaul, Nahara Rigoul, Itatar, Bhadaiya, Khiruna where the GPI is low. Other districts also ran promotional activities based on the database of girls' vulnerabilities. This database of girls' education status is produced by the Department of Education in support from UNICEF and Educational Pages.

3. Effective partnerships have been developed among the GE Network members from center to local level. The recently organized gender conference of GFPs by the GE Network is one of the best examples. More than fourteen network members were involved in making the conference successful and also active in carrying out the plan of activities developed by the conference. It was placed as an example of network strength and synergy.
4. The Department of Education also developed partnership plans for GE Network members and all the organization working for girls education and gender equity. Likewise, district level network has been practicing partnership approach in GE Networks activities. For example, Parsa District GE Network members found out the weakest VDCs' on girls' education and took over the responsibilities to conduct awareness and enrolment campaign. District Development Committee Parsa agrees to run promotional activities at Panchrukhi and Gamariya VDCs. Likewise, NGOCC parsaa took over the responsibility of Tulishibarba and Jayamangalpur VDCs. The duty of Suryaha VDC's has been taken by District Education Office. In the Bara district one of the network member give orientation to the head teachers and SMC members of the five VDCs' to bring girls in schools and retain them at school.

All the organizations (members of GE Network) are running different activities based on the decision of GE Network meeting.

5. Political leaders, former secretaries of MoE, former ministers for education and former women leaders for gender equity were engaged on the issues of Post 2015 in education and equity in education.

In coordination and support from Educational Pages and UNICEF, Ministry of Education started a discourse with former secretaries of MoE, former ministers for education and former female leaders for gender equity for the
first time. Former secretaries and ministers gathered together to provide feedback to the ministry system on the Post 2015 in education issues. This meeting helped the Ministry of Education to develop political synergies for the post 2015 and for the effective implementation of SSRP.

6. The SAARC Secretariat, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Former CA members' network for gender equity started to talk about the issues to be incorporated in upcoming the SAARC summit. It was also the first exercise from the side of civil society in alignment with Ministry and SAARC secretariat. This meeting found the process of advocacy to raise the basic and primary education issues and the issue of equity in SAARC document that should be submitted on the summit.

7. The several discourses, joint field visits, meetings with government on equity and inclusion by former female CA members' network have shown some good results in favor of women and girls education. The CAUCUS provided recommendations for policy feedback on education act and regulations. The recommendation was focused on ensuring free and compulsory quality education and gender equality in education. Major recommendation also has been addressed in the draft education act.

8. Youth icons of the country became aware on the overall situation of education, employment, youth policy and gender equity. Young people explored their role in promoting equity in education & employment and were motivated to play active roles to improve the situation from the side of their working area. They agreed to form an alliance of youth icons (AYI) representing different field of areas by near future and issued the draft declaration.
Learning

There is still, however, low levels of access to quality basic education for girls and children from socially excluded and economically marginalized groups. The Gender Parity Index of female teachers at primary level is 0.61 and 0.26, 0.16 at lower secondary and secondary respectively. There is still a huge gap in between male and female teacher ratios. The literacy rate of females is also much lower than males. The literacy rate of age 15 to 56 years of male is 72 percent whereas female literacy rate is only 44 percent. The education system in Nepal continues thus to face a great challenge in providing quality basic education to all children. Retention is a significant problem in many communities where achievements have not kept up with average national trends. Nineteen districts, mainly in the Terai and High Mountains have girls’ NER below the national average. Despite much progress in NER in primary level, girls’ transition to lower secondary and secondary level is still a challenge for Nepal. Mostly in the middle Terai (Saptari, Shiraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara and Parsa) position of girls as well as overall education is still below the national average. In these districts enrolment and promotion rate is very low and the dropout is significantly higher although these districts have made exciting progress in the last six years. On average, girls' enrolment rates in primary level in these districts is only 92 percent and promotion rate is around 84 percent. The dropout rate is more than 5 percent on average. Within these particular district situations of education is not significant according the district level progress. For example, Parsa district has 5.4 percent of dropout in primary level but more than 31 Village Development Committees have high dropout of girls' than the district average. One of the VDC Surja has 33.7 percent of girls' dropout rate.

Wrapping up the activities done and result achieved, it seems that despite of much progress over the last few years in the school system of Nepal, more things still needed to be done. Nepal
should focus on the areas of quality, equity and inclusion in education in particular. Here are the some issues which need to be workout further.

- Lack of collective effort for reducing the gender disparity;
- Lack of child friendly and girl friendly environments in the majority of schools of Nepal;
- Lack of micro-planning to focus on the vulnerable core areas;
- Lack of brainstorming among high level political and policy making people for developing common agendas in education;
- Less participation of youth and women in education sector from policy to implementation level; and
- Lack of serious political commitment in education as a fundamental right of a child.