UNITED NATIONS GIRLS’ EDUCATION INITIATIVE (UNGEI)
Governance Framework

May 2013
The United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), a multi-stakeholder partnership, was launched by the Secretary-General in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar. UNGEI works to improve the quality and availability of girls’ education in support of the gender-related Education for All (EFA) goals, the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to achieve universal primary education, and MDG 3 to promote gender equality and empower women.

**Vision and Mission**

UNGEI is committed to accelerating action on girls’ education to realize “A world where all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realize their full potential and contribute to transforming societies where gender equality becomes a reality.” By 2015, the UNGEI partnership aims to support:
- Countries\(^2\) to achieve measurable change in girls’ education and gender equality; and
- Global and national development agendas to reflect emerging concerns on girls’ education and gender equality, especially for the most marginalized.

UNGEI is committed to responding to the urgency of action needed to tackle issues for today’s generation of girls. It believes in strengthening linkages and complementarity with other partners, networks and coalitions to maximize resources and results for girls’ education and gender equality.

**Core Values and Principles**

UNGEI embraces the following core values and principles, reflecting our mission, and guiding our decisions and actions:
- Respect the principle of equality and non-discrimination;
- Embrace democratic governance through transparency, accountability and participation;
- Collaborate to leverage advantage based on mutually supportive roles among partners; and
- Decentralize functioning to promote and support flexible and responsive decision-making and action at the global, regional, and country level.

**Partnership Objectives**

The main objectives of UNGEI relate to:

1. **Policy Advocacy:** Use its collective voice to raise awareness of the importance of girls’ education and to influence policy discussions in favour of increased investments and focus on eliminating key barriers to girls’ education and promote gender equality.

2. **Capacity Development:** Build capacity and strengthen institutional development of the partnership approach at the global, regional and country level to accelerate progress on girls’ education. This may include gender analysis and audits to inform development of education sector plans as well as their implementation and monitoring.

3. **Knowledge Management:** Strengthen the evidence-base on effective and good practices in facilitating girls’ education and gender equality across regions and countries; and enhance our understanding of what works, and how successful approaches can be replicated and brought to scale.

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\(^1\) The governance framework is informed by: a) the existing TOR for the Global Advisory Committee; & b) Original concept note and the consolidated contributions of the working group who supported the review process. Please also refer to the accompanying 2-pager – “Contextualizing the Governance Framework” for a brief overview.

\(^2\) Countries include those which: a) currently claim a national partnership; b) those who may initiate one; & c) GPE countries that are/may be supported by UNGEI;
I. Global Advisory Committee (GAC)

The GAC is the highest level of organizational leadership and provides guidance to the partnership on strategic policy direction and accompanying strategic plans. It engages in policy advocacy on behalf of the partnership. It also provides an enabling mechanism for soliciting membership engagement in the partnership as well as advocating for the partnership in external fora.

The members of the GAC include multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies, inter-governmental agencies/inter-agency networks, private sector and related foundations, civil society organisations and networks, academia, and related networks.

The GAC membership is institutional and comprises of up to a maximum of 30 organisational members; and each organisation/network is represented by one person.

In addition, the GAC will actively promote the participation of representatives of girls and young women\(^4\) and other UNGEI partners active at the country level, including governments, on a

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\(^3\) While acknowledging the regional and country level partnerships in the overall structure of UNGEI, this document is restricted in its focus on reflecting and outlining the governance framework for the global partnership. In keeping with the spirit of a decentralized mode of working, UNGEI is flexible by design and actively encourages its regional and national partnerships to organize themselves based on their specific needs and context to achieve our common goals. The global governance framework can inform and guide the process.

\(^4\) The Youth Advocacy Group (YAG) is a recently constituted body to support the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative and comprises of a network of dynamic young women and men across the globe. This may be a good platform to leverage to support UNGEI’s mission.
rotational basis during the GAC annual meetings to ensure that their voices, expertise, and experience inform UNGEI’s work.

To achieve UNGEI’s outcomes, the GAC members commit to allocating designated time and additional resources, if the latter is relevant, to the work of the GAC. In addition, member agencies are encouraged to reflect their contributions to UNGEI visibly in their own strategies and plans as well as communication in external fora.

The GAC meets on a semi-annual basis: one virtual meeting and another face-to-face meeting. In order to ensure continuity and efficiency, organizations may send an alternative to meetings if the designated representative is not able to attend.

**The main functions of the GAC are to:**

**Set Strategic Direction:**
- Be knowledgeable about the partnership and the strategic-level issues it is facing;
- Be actively involved in establishing the partnership’s strategic direction, including setting longer-range priorities and informing the annual plans, which are aligned and responsive to the shifting realities of the development context;
- Provide technical leadership through support of capacity-building and knowledge management functions through participation in specific task teams as and when required; and
- Set annual expectations for its own performance that are supportive of the partnership’s strategic direction and plan and report on it.

**Policy & Partnership Advocacy:**
- Act as policy advocates for accelerating girls’ education and promoting gender equality in keeping with UNGEI’s emerging priorities in relevant fora;
- Be active and visible ambassadors for the partnership, playing a key role in advancing a collaborative approach to advocacy and action - at the global, regional, and country levels; and
- Champion the partnership approach through activating their respective organizational representatives at the country and regional levels to support UNGEI, if and where relevant.

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### II. Steering Committee (SC)

The SC is a sub-set of the GAC. It provides leadership in the implementation of strategic directions by ensuring decisions and operational processes. The SC plays a key role in facilitating communication between the GAC and the Secretariat, and ensuring alignment, understanding and accountability. In addition, it also plays a role in reinforcing the engagement of GAC members with the partnership.

The SC will comprise up to 5 members representing the different development stakeholders. The selection will be through nomination by members of the GAC. Each member of the steering committee is expected to serve for a maximum of a 2 year term.

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5 This could be facilitated, for instance through signing up for UNGEI led advocacy initiatives as GAC member organizations.
6 This is a forward looking document and hence reflects an expanded partnership. Considering that all stakeholder groups are not represented in the partnership in equal numbers, it is proposed that the transition “steering committee” may comprise of a smaller number of members representing select stakeholder groups.
7 The constitution of the 1st Steering Committee will be facilitated by the existing co-chairs in consultation with the GAC and the Secretariat. The call for nomination will be made by the co-chairs and followed up virtually.
8 Care will be taken to ensure that there is an overlap of a minimum of 2 members during the rotation process to ensure continuity and a smooth transition to the next team.
In agreeing to serve on the SC, members and their agencies commit adequate time to support the functioning of UNGEI.\footnote{Regarding the day to day working and division of labour as it relates to chairing of meetings, quorum, and other specific tasks and functions, the SC will develop a specific terms of reference to inform the daily working arrangement.}

The SC will have a rotating Chair\footnote{It is anticipated that the Chair of the transition steering committee will be one of the current co-chairs to ensure a smooth transfer to a new structure.} with convening authority.

The core functions of the SC are to:

**Support the GAC through:**
- Translation of the strategic policy direction and plans into an actionable annual plan for the partnership and related activities at the global level, in collaboration with the Secretariat;
- Provision of oversight and quality assurance of the overall Secretariat functions;
- Effective monitoring of implementation of annual plans against established goals and provide to the GAC a bi-annual update;
- Constitution of time-bound task-teams, when necessary, for specific annual plan deliverables; and provide necessary guidance and direction to progress;
- Facilitation and monitoring of the GAC annual expectations for its own performance that is supportive of the partnership’s strategic direction and plan;
- Advancing the partnership by being visible policy advocates for girls’ education and representing UNGEI in different policy fora;
- Supporting the GAC to play a mentoring role with new members; and
- Provision of support to facilitate GAC members’ active engagement with the partnership.

**Support the Secretariat through:**
- Provision of feedback on the draft strategic plan and approve the annual plan;
- Review and actively support implementation progress on the annual plan at regular intervals;
- Active leadership in convening/during GAC meetings to ensure wide participation of all partners and ensuring action on subsequent follow-up; and
- Facilitation of effective communication between the GAC, SC, and the Secretariat to support functioning of the partnership.

### III. Secretariat

The Secretariat provides technical leadership for UNGEI’s global initiatives, supports regional and country partnerships, and conducts outreach and coordination through knowledge sharing, advocacy and partnership building.

The Secretariat is hosted at UNICEF Headquarters. The Secretariat staff and other operational costs as well as the overall programme budget for UNGEI is currently funded by UNICEF, and are subject to UNICEF business processes and procedures.

The Secretariat reports to the GAC and the Steering Committee on a semi-annual basis on progress against the agreed annual plan.
The Secretariat’s main functions are to:

- Work with key global actors to systematically ensure complementarity and coordination of efforts on girls’ education and gender, with a specific focus on Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the post-2015 discussions;
- Expand the reach of UNGEI through coalition-building, moving beyond the GAC members and especially reaching out to diverse organizations, including as a priority, organizations located in the global South and those working on the broader issue of gender equality;
- Develop, facilitate and implement the UNGEI global annual plan on behalf of the partnership; and prepare the UNGEI Annual Report for GAC members and key external stakeholders;
- Update and maintain the UNGEI website as a knowledge centre to respond to the knowledge needs of the partnership as well as the larger audience on girls’ education and gender equality;
- Provide a platform to share best practice from across the UNGEI partnership and from UNGEI partners;
- Coordinate and produce quality research, advocacy, and communication tools (newsletters, knowledge products and advocacy materials);
- Provide technical assistance to the GAC, SC, and task teams through sharing of reports, policy briefs and research; and administrative support in the organization of the bi-annual meetings (virtual and face to face);
- Establish a mutually supportive relationship with UNGEI Regional Focal Points: support RFPs to deliver at the regional and country level and draw upon their expertise to inform the global discussions; and
- Represent UNGEI at important global, regional and national fora, and/or ensure that UNGEI is represented through different GAC members to ensure visibility for the issue and the partnership.

IV. UNGEI Regional Focal Points (RFPs)

RFPs lead on UNGEI at the regional level, support country partnerships, and are the bridge linking the global to the regional and country level, bringing emerging issues and critical perspectives from the field.

Currently UNGEI Regional Focal Points are UNICEF staff based in UNICEF Regional Offices; and are ex-officio members of the GAC.

The UNGEI functions of the RFPs are:

- Support and strengthen country partnerships committed to advancing girls’ education and gender equality;
- Provide technical and capacity-building support to regional and country partnerships;
- Facilitate the functioning of the regional UNGEI in their geographic area, including the development and implementation of regional annual UNGEI work plans in collaboration with regional partners;
- Strengthen UNGEI country level partnerships in their engagement with Local Education Groups (or other education sector donor and government groups) to promote the development and implementation of gender responsive education sector plans;

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11 This refers to reaching out to newer partners, those which work in academia and cross-sectoral spaces and women’s organizations, and working with them, and not necessarily including them formally in the partnership.
12 Currently, there are RFPs in place in the following regions: South Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa, & East Asia and the Pacific. The Middle East and North Africa regional office is in the process of hiring a focal point.
• Support the GAC by contributing to the relevant task teams and strengthening them through integration of region-specific analyses and good practices;
• Maintain effective communication with the UNGEI Secretariat on progress made at regional and country levels; and
• Represent UNGEI in regional and country level meetings and events for advancing girls’ education and gender equality, where relevant.

V. Task Teams

Task teams will be constituted from GAC members and are expected to contribute towards the partnership annual plan priorities. These will be created as and when needed.

The teams will function under the overall leadership of the SC and supported by the Secretariat.

While each task team is expected to have unique functions and responsibilities, the following activities are common to all:
• All task teams function under a Chair/Co-chairs and develop a specific terms of reference with clear deliverables, timelines, and identification of additional human and financial resources needed;
• The task team scope and function is developed in consultation with the SC and the Secretariat; and
• All task team deliverables are communicated through a report to the GAC, facilitated by the SC.

VI. UNGEI Champions

UNGEI champions are a group of people identified by UNGEI as being thought leaders in the field of girls’ education and gender equality and who contribute to UNGEI by supporting, inspiring, and challenging the partnership.

The group is expected to be fluid and flexible and will include a diverse set of people, including youth and government representatives who can be invited to participate in events at the country, regional, and global level, when appropriate. The Secretariat will maintain a roster of such individuals who have expressed an interest in supporting UNGEI and its mission.

VII. Role of UNICEF

UNICEF is the identified lead agency for UNGEI and is also a member of the GAC. The roles and responsibilities of UNICEF as the lead agency include:

• Host the Secretariat and support the Secretariat staff costs as well as the RFPs and the operational costs and the overall programme budget for UNGEI;
• Make available UNICEF’s decentralized structure for coordinating regional and country-level work (including monitoring and reporting of activities through regional and country focal points);
• Make available UNICEF’s overall in-house technical capacity to inform and strengthen UNGEI, especially the Education Programme and the Division of Communications; and
• Support UNGEI to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of the GPE, in ensuring gender related equity and inclusion issues remain a focus at the country level as well as on GPE’s global agenda.

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13 Task teams offer an effective mechanism to take advantage of the expertise of UNGEI partners as well support the functioning of a small Secretariat.