

The First Convening of the Global Feminist Coalition on Gender-Transformative Education

A Report





Acknowledgements

This report was written by members of the Global Feminist Coalition for Gender Transformative Education. Special acknowledgement goes to Alinafe Malonje.



Foreword

In 2022 UNGEI undertook an unprecedented project: the formation of the **Global Feminist Coalition for Gender Transformative Education**; a coalition made up of impactful feminist civil society organisations and young feminist activists. When the idea of this coalition came about, it did not have a name but it did have a mission and that was to create a space that not only honoured the work of national and local CSOs and young feminist activists, but a space that learned from their expertise and evidence as well.

All of the members of this coalition are intentional in our work. We are challenging patriarchal structures and we are shifting our perspectives on what it means to fight for gender equality in education. Forming the coalition was the first part of the work, planning a convening for the coalition members was the next big piece. We wanted to plan a convening in New York, alongside the Transforming Education Summit. This convening was to be unique and not just replicate the feel and flow of most corporate or UN events, we wanted to challenge the usual and expected dynamics of most conferences and meetings by creating a space that assured that participants felt **safe, heard and seen**. We wanted to show up as the truest version of ourselves, speak our truth (which often comes from trauma) without fear of being judged and know the comfort of being with and among allies.



It is safe to say that we achieved these goals. Not only by creating a space to learn from CSOs and young feminist activists but also by learning tools and skills of feminist leadership, learning of shared and sometimes not-shared challenges in different geographies and created long-lasting partnerships and friendships between across generations. It is difficult to compress the entirety of the convening into a few pages, it is even more difficult to try to translate the feminist spirit that was felt in that room onto a page. What we can

do, in a few pages, is show how dynamic the activities and conversations held in that room were, how diverse our coalition members are in thought and identity, and how we assured the convening was inclusive, accessible, power shifting and a space for feminist solidarity and care.

Alinafe Surname, on behalf of the Coalition

Background

In May 2022, UNGEI received over 200 applications to an open call to join a Global Feminist Coalition of actors working in and through education. The aim was:

- To meaningfully engage grassroots Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from the Global South as partners in UNGEI's 2023-2027 Strategic Planning process
- To convene and facilitate the meaningful participation and leadership of grassroots feminist CSOs in the Transforming Education Summit (TES)

22 CSOs and 11 young activists were selected, using four criteria:

- Civil Society Organisations that had a reach of over 5000 children in the last five years
- Young Feminist Activists aged 18 – 30 who advocate for gender equality in education
- CSOs and YFAs that are based in developing countries
- CSOs and YFAs that believe in and exhibit inclusive organizing, collective action and feminist movement building

Transforming Education Summit

The Transforming Education Summit took place at the UN Headquarters in New York on the 16th, 17th and 19th of September. With support from the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, six young feminists from the coalition were able to attend and participate in the Summit. These young feminists spoke and advocated for gender transformative education on behalf of the coalition in various influencing moments during the summit. These speaking moments included the following:

- Pashtana Durrani moderated the 'Her Education, My Future: Transforming Education With and For Girls' side event and spoke during the Parallel Session on ending gender stereotypes led by Transform Education
- Laxmi Nepal spoke on the Leaders Day Spotlight Session: Advancing gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment in and through education.
- Isabella Tello spoke during the Youth Declaration Session: Opportunities for action
- Scott Marchack spoke during the Parallel Session on ending gender stereotypes led by Transform Education
- Fernanda Vazquez spoke during the CSE Roundtable on Leaders Day
- Niyati Sharma spoke during the TES Summit Leaders Day Spotlight Session: Transforming the Financing of Education



Key Statistics

- **Regions represented by coalition:**
 - South Asia
 - South-East Asia
 - Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Western and Central Africa
 - Eastern and Southern Africa
 - Middle-East and North Africa
- **22 CSOs in the coalition**
- **Countries that coalition members work in: 32**
- **Thematic priorities represented:**
 - Access and Learning for Never-Enrolled Children
 - Comprehensive Sexuality Education
 - Child Marriage/Labour/Trafficking
 - Climate Justice
 - Humanitarian and Protracted crisis situations.

The Global Feminist Coalition on Gender Transformative Education Gathering

On the 20th and 21st September of 2022, UNGEI convened the first meeting of the Global Feminist Coalition on Gender-Transformative Education. Preparing for this gathering required assisting us (the coalition members) with the visa application process and coordinating with UNICEF country offices in each of the coalition members' respective countries to arrange for travel. In the end, UNGEI managed to bring together 16 of the coalition's civil society members and 9 of the coalition's young feminist activist member, resulting in a total of 25 coalition members at the convening in person and 8 coalition members who participated virtually. The event ensured that we were considering the experience of virtual participants at all stages of the process.

The gathering took place at WeWork and was facilitated by Joanne Sandler and Aruna Rao, who are both members of Gender at Work which is an international feminist knowledge network that works to end discrimination against women and build cultures of inclusion. Our virtual facilitators were Aayushi Aggarwal and Ojonwa Miachi. This gathering needed facilitators that understood the feminist educator experience, facilitators that could use these 2 days of the convening as a chance to open up vulnerable conversation and create a space for learning amongst all participants. Joanne, Aruna, Aayushi and Ojonwa did all of this and more, their facilitation brought our vision to life and created a memorable, introspective feminist experience for our coalition members and our in-person listeners.

Days 1 and 2

In the spirit of sharing power, the gathering was opened by a welcome letter from Antara Ganguli, the Director of UNGEI, as well as a welcome letter from Pashtana Durrani, coalition member. Yona Nestel, from Plan International, also shared some words on behalf of the UNGEI's global advisory group. We had a set of goals that we wanted achieve throughout the 2 days, these were:

- To begin to build relationships and a shared sense of purpose
- To analyze the kinds of strategies and feminist approaches that lead to transformation in education
- To identify core feminist values to underpin our collective efforts
- For participants from diverse regions to share insights and lessons from their work on gender equality in education
- To prepare a joint message to high-level decision-makers about priorities for gender equality in education
- To develop a vision for (1) What UNGEI should be prioritizing as strategic areas to work on (2) How we want different education actors to work together to advance girls' education and gender equality in and through education

Aruna and Joanne facilitated a number of sessions that all worked to achieve these goals. The agenda of the first day included the following sessions:

- A discussion on participant's collective and individual feminist journeys created a space to discuss personal motivation, self care, and sustainable activism. Coalition member Scott Marchant shared, "In our work, a lot of us our witness to a lot of violence. We experience a lot of violence. Speaking about self care is a part of this work... It is feminist it is an activist thing to do."
- A session on 'change stories' where participants identified real stories that they had either experienced or observed, where a problem was identified and a change was made.
- A lecturette and discussion on the Gender at Work framework and how it can be used as a magnifying glass to uncover patriarchy. Coalition members shared anecdotes from their work using the Gender at Work framework.
- A session of presentations where the coalition members made presentations on the situation analyses of their regions. Prior to the convening the coalition members had been arranged into their regional groups: South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa, Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. These presentations answered the following questions:



- Gender parity in school: are we there yet? Is it an accurate barometer for progress on achieving equality between girls and boys?
- What are the top five gendered vulnerabilities faced by girls, boys and LGBTQI children (pre and post COVID)



● A session where coalition members began mapping solutions for five thematic priorities (access and learning for never-enrolled children, CSE, child marriage/labour/trafficking, climate justice, humanitarian and protracted crisis situations). These solutions were written in the form of letters from hypothetical children, to be presented at the convening's closing event.

- A discussion on how we are taking care of ourselves, this allowed the coalition to have an honest discussion on self-care and to generate a list of strategies for self and collective care, self and collective love and resilience.
- A solidarity circle where participants spoke about how and why they became feminists and began the work they do. This solidarity circle opened a space for vulnerable conversation about the sometimes difficult circumstances that began everyone on their feminist journeys. This circle hosted Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General Envoy on Youth, as a guest; she also spoke openly about why she began her work and her own feminist journey.

The coalition finalised the letters to global education leaders on the afore-mentioned thematic priorities and these were presented at the convening's closing event.

Closing Event

The closing event of the convening took place at WeWork on the 21st of September, this event was a chance for UNGEI to host global leaders on Education and to present to them the findings of the coalition. We worked to ensure that the event was intergenerational; Pashtana Durrani was the host and the event was opened with a solidarity statement from Isabella Tello and Fernanda Vazquez. The agenda interweaved letters from us asking for change in the different key thematic priorities and commitments made by key speakers. The key speakers at the closing event were:

- Minister Vicky Ford, UK
- Minister David Moinina Sengh, Sierra Leone
- Leonardo Garnier, TES Special Adviser
- Robert Jenkins, Education Director, UNICEF
- Stephen Omollo, CEO Plan International
- Yasmine Sherif, Director, ECW
- Charles North, Acting CEO, GPE
- Dr. Heike Kuhn, Head of Division, Education, BMZ, Germany
- Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, CEO Lego Foundation

Each of these speakers spoke about their dedication to advancing gender equality in education and the work they have each been doing in their own contexts to this end. Coupling the commitments from the leaders with demands from the coalition was the perfect way to close the convening as it was a real-time representation of the intergenerational nature of the convening. The event ended on a positive note with Dr. Heike Kuhn pledging that Germany will give UNGEI 1 million dollars to continue convening the coalition and Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen pledging that it will match Germany's pledge, bringing the total to 2 million dollars.

The first convening of the Global Feminist Coalition on Gender Transformative Education resulted in demands from the coalition to education leaders, commitments by education leaders and declarations of support for the coalition. The convening created a feminist space for learning and for commitments to advancing gender equality in education to be made, and on top of these successes, we ended the convening with declarations of support, meaning that the coalition was not only impactful, but it is now sustainable as well.

