

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) Global Advisory Committee Management Response to the Evaluation

The Global Advisory Committee (GAC) welcomes the report of the evaluation, which it had commissioned as an independent formative evaluation of UNGEI's work at the global, regional and country levels, ten years after its creation. The purpose of the evaluation has been to (1) establish a baseline for UNGEI against which progress towards achieving results could be measured in the future and; (2) explore the extent to which UNGEI is achieving its goal and outcomes.

The evaluation set out to document achievements and challenges in the three UNGEI outcome areas:

- policy and advocacy for girls' education and gender equality
- good practice identification and dissemination
- building strong partnerships to advance girls' education and gender equality

The evaluation report confirms that over the last 10 years UNGEI has successfully established itself as a recognized partnership and advocate for girls' education at the global, regional and country levels¹. We note that among the main conclusions of the evaluation, the report states that UNGEI's goals remain valid and important and, 'that UNGEI has clear areas of strengths and added value'. The report captures the history and state of the partnership as of February 2012, and, in exploring the accomplishments and challenges faced by UNGEI, it concludes that UNGEI has made important progress toward achieving its intended outcomes. The evaluation also concludes that to remain relevant, effective and forward-looking in the current development context, UNGEI will need to introduce important changes across all outcome areas and at all levels of programming. As an overarching message, the evaluation calls for UNGEI to be strategic, with a more targeted global agenda and engagement at the country level.

The evaluation is a rich and valuable resource to support UNGEI's on-going process of reform. Some of the findings were challenging and require careful consideration of UNGEI's current systems and structures; others fail to capture the full complexity of the partnership,

¹ The evaluation based its findings on interviews with GAC members, global partners and the UNGEI Secretariat, document reviews and a sample made up of five UNGEI partnerships: the East Asia and Pacific region, and four of the 33 UNGEI county partnerships (Egypt, Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda).

and will require further analysis. The GAC accepts the evaluation findings and recommendations as an important contribution to UNGEI's work in 2012 and beyond.

The evaluation highlights the main accomplishments of UNGEI as the following:

- **At the global level**, UNGEI has played a prominent advocacy role for girls' education and gender equality. Through participation in and technical inputs to global education initiatives and events, UNGEI has contributed to the significant shift in the global agenda in support of girls' education and gender equality. This has been captured in high-level commitments, shifts in global dialogue, and in research and documentation. UNGEI also functions as a valuable mechanism for coordination and knowledge sharing among its members, which include civil society, donors, international organizations, and the private sector.
- **At the regional level**, especially the regional partnership in East Asia and the Pacific (EAP), UNGEI has proven to be useful in coordinating regional initiatives and producing high-quality products and resources.
- In 33 countries², UNGEI has supported the establishment of **country-level partnerships** to address national gender issues in education. Country partnerships vary considerably in structure, membership and focus, but play an important role in collecting, synthesizing and disseminating good practice in girls' education and gender equality. Where strong partnerships exist, UNGEI has positioned itself as a valuable and effective player in policy dialogue and advocacy at the country level.

The evaluation report's main recommendations call for attention and change in the following areas:

- **Policy advocacy:** UNGEI can improve its impact and effectiveness through a more targeted approach to advocacy at the global, regional and country levels. Greater attention to current research findings and policy-relevant evidence would sharpen the message and ensure significance and accuracy. Changes in this key area will require a consideration of UNGEI's identity or mandate, scope of influence and sources of knowledge. The GAC will consider specific recommendations made by the evaluation report, including the development of a focused agenda of policy advocacy priorities, collaboration with academic institutions, and the establishment of an advisory panel of key experts. Reform in this area will also require serious review of the role of key stakeholders and partners, aimed at building commitment of all partners to championing UNGEI's message in support of girls' education and gender equality. Opportunities to build links between global-level policy advocacy and country-level partnerships will also be explored.

² Since the completion of the evaluation, UNGEI has been pleased to welcome a 34th national partnership in India.

- **Support for country-level partnerships:** The evaluation set out to define the key elements that make a strong partnership for girls' education, with country-level evaluations providing in-depth analysis of critical factors for success, as well as challenges that affect the strength and vibrancy of the partnerships. Although the sample size of the study was small, and the country contexts very different, the report offers important observations and recommendations about UNGEI at the country level. The report also provides a rich repository of examples of strong programming for girls' education and gender equality. The case study countries identified that UNGEI had been successful in mobilizing commitment, collaboration, and support for girls' education, and that best practices had been identified and shared. They also reported on the capacity challenges faced by country partnerships and the need for improving areas such as technical knowledge on gender issues, gender analysis processes, partnership management/facilitation and communication skills. Through the survey of all UNGEI country partnerships, the evaluation reported that financial resources are seen to be a serious constraint, as are issues of capacity, securing commitment from partners and the insufficient attention to monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation called for a renewed focus on supporting country partnerships, including through the UNGEI Regional Focal Points, a capacity-building plan, a process to identify priority countries, options for addressing country partnerships' needs for financial support, and prioritizing continued work on strengthening monitoring and evaluation at the country level. An improved and strategic approach to support UNGEI at the country level will be a key element of UNGEI's forward agenda. In particular, the role of UNGEI within the local education sector coordination groups will be explored, as will the potential for collaboration with other initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education.

- **Knowledge management:** UNGEI's considerable experience and success in collecting, synthesizing and disseminating good practice at global, regional and country levels is recognized in the evaluation report, and constructive recommendations are provided on improving this area of work. Knowledge management was seen as an area of potential growth for UNGEI. The report suggests that UNGEI explore options for establishing itself as a leading reference on good practice on girls' education and gender equality, to function as a knowledge hub of good practice, delivered for and by partner agencies. UNGEI is currently developing a knowledge strategy, which is fully in line with these findings and recommendations. UNGEI's work in this area may also be strengthened with improved attention to dissemination and the tracking of a sample of its publications.

- **Governance and management:** The evaluation notes that UNGEI's organizational structure has been an important operational basis for its work, and references

specifically: the leadership provided by UNICEF, the role of the UNGEI Regional Focal Points, the support provided by the UNGEI Secretariat and the function of the Global Advisory Committee. The report also raises serious questions about the current effectiveness of the structure and processes. It recommends a review of the membership and functioning of the GAC, a new process to establish institutional-level engagement and confirmation of expectations on the part of all partners, including the UNGEI Regional Focal Points. The report also calls for a greater voice for developing countries in the GAC to ensure that UNGEI's global decision-making is better informed by country needs. We will be consulting the UNGEI partnership on these important recommendations and exploring innovative ways to address the challenges of coordination, guidance, and programmatic and managerial support across a highly diverse, decentralized partnership. We will also continue other activities as part of the on-going institutional review to improve UNGEI's operational effectiveness, including goal setting and decision-making.

The evaluation launched an important process of reform for UNGEI. The Global Advisory Committee will consider the evaluation findings and recommendations seriously as we undertake a process of strategic review and planning, which will be the focus of the Global Advisory Committee meeting in May 2012. Going forward, further work will need to be done to understand the complexity of UNGEI and of the current interplay of development actors committed to girls' education and gender equality. This process of review will guide UNGEI's efforts to confirm its scope, strengthen its practices and revitalize its governance.