Partnership, Participation and Power for Gender Equality in Education

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Prepared as part of the work of the committee overseeing the planning for UNGEI's E4 conference
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Although, over the last ten years, children around the world have had increased opportunities to attend school and benefit from education, nearly a billion people still receive little or no education. The majority are women and girls who face gender inequalities in many areas of their lives. E4 is part of a world-wide mobilisation of partnerships to realise the rights of girls and women to education and training and address the gender inequalities that prevent initiatives from reaching their full potential to transform societies.

E4 brings together activists of all types—practitioners on the ground, national and international policy makers, researchers—who work on gender and education. Together we will engage with each other tackling the question of partnership, participation and power for gender equality in education and addressing the E4 themes of 'Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality'. Through presentations, papers, talks, video conversations, and e-discussions we will review ten years of the work of UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and other organisations concerned with gender and education and bring more voices into the conversation to deepen understanding of policies and practices in education that can support gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This situation analysis, 'Partnership, participation and power for gender equality in education', was prepared for the E4 conference. It gives an overview of what has been achieved in the past decade, and points to ways in which inadequate attention to inequali-ties in power and obstacles to participation have meant the important partnerships established cannot yet fully reach their potential without additional mobilisation of analysis and action.

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conditions that can support change and provide quality schooling. Concerns with expanding access are faced with the difficulties of everyday realities of hunger, unemployment, and lack of adequate conditions for livelihood or health, but the lack of attention to the connections between family livelihood, health, and gender equality in government social policy and the campaigning work of NGOs is an important missed opportunity. Enhancing different forms of participation is a key opportunity for our partnerships in the coming decade, whether through gender mainstreaming or including women in decision making at all levels of policy and practice. There are still major obstacles in realising rights to education, in education, and through education for many millions. Working for gender equality, empowerment and women's rights through schooling is an enormous, but rewarding, challenge.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Worldwide nearly 1 billion people have had no schooling or left school after less than four years. Nearly two thirds are women and girls (Unterhalter, 2009). Although the numbers of children who never go to school are declining, an estimated 77 million children, 55% of whom are girls, are still denied any form of education (UNESCO, 2008, 61). These children come overwhelmingly from the poorest communities in any country and from countries with long histories of conflict. In many countries, children may enrol in school, but are not able to attend regularly, progress to the end of a primary, let alone a secondary cycle, or learn much of value. Women make up two thirds of the estimated 776 million adults, aged 15 and over, who have had no schooling (UNESCO, 2009, 274). The scale of this injustice and the gender inequalities entailed have mobilised a range of actions by partnerships in national and international organisations. The UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is one such partnership, formed in 2000 to help lead this process. At the opening of a new decade, how far have we come?

UNGEI's vision entails work 'to improve the quality and availability of girls' education in support of the gender-related Education for All goals, the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to achieve universal primary education, and MDG 3 to promote gender equality and empower women.' (UNGEI, 2008) UNGEI is 'committed to accelerating action on girls' education and revitalizing the broad social mobilization and high-level political action needed to ensure that every girl, as well as every boy, receives a quality education (ibid). Some aspects of these aspirations have been achieved over the last ten years with opportunities opening up for more girls around the world to go to school and complete at least a cycle of primary education. In the coming ten years, we face many complex challenges in realising a widely shared vision for gender equality in schooling and equitable outcomes for girls and women. How can we take forward learning from countries that have been successful in improving gender equality in education? What kinds of partnership will help those who still face enormous obstacles? How can we deepen the gains made thus far, so that enrolment in school means education of quality for all girls and boys and sustained work in support of gender equality? In supporting a wide range of transformative partnerships in the new decade we need to understand what was difficult and overlooked in the decade that has just passed. Some key challenges are how to confront and overcome particular gendered hierarchies of power, how to overcome the lack of connection between different levels and

forms of policy formulation and practice, and how to build and support participatory processes that involve a wide constituency in confronting gross inequities. What is entailed goes well beyond the task of enrolling girls' names on registers or seating them in class. Taking up the cause of education entails thinking of gender equality, both inside school, and in the complex relationships that can challenge poverty, ill health, fragile livelihoods and lack of adequate participation. Giving substance to gender equality also means tackling violence against girls and women, a key element that perpetuates non-participation in school and fulfilment of education aspirations. All these challenges require insight and refined understanding of processes that are often overlooked or taken-for-granted.

In exploring these issues in greater detail this situation analysis for the UNGEI E4 conference gives an overview of what has been achieved in the past decade, and points to ways in which inadequate attention to inequalities in power, and obstacles to participation, have meant the important partnerships established cannot yet fully reach their potential without additional mobilisation of analysis and action.

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What has been done? Partnerships and Progress

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) gave renewed prominence to the education and training of women (strategic objective 2) and concerns of the girl-child (strategic objective 12). In 2000, governments, multi-lateral organizations and civil society coalitions signed up to the Dakar Platform of Action on Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) was launched in April 2000 to improve global co-ordination of action for quality girls' education as a fundamental human right. Kofi Annan, then UN Secretary General, outlined its remit as encompassing:

> … an expanded and open partnership of the United Nations system, Governments, donor countries, NGOs, the private sector and communities and families, to demonstrably narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005; to ensure that by 2015 all children everywhere – boys and girls alike – will be able to complete primary schooling. (Annan, 2000)

These aspirations have been met in some parts of the world, but not in others. Despite money invested, problems persist. There are still major obstacles in realising rights to education, in education and through education for a many millions. Gender inequalities are deeply entrenched in this denial of rights.

The gender gap in primary education enrolment has narrowed since 2000, but not in all regions. In 2009 40 countries, with the largest complement in Africa, were considered unlikely to meet the goal of gender parity in primary school enrolments by 2015 (UNESCO, 2008, 98). In some countries there has been a narrowing of the gender gap in secondary schooling, but 50 countries still have such large gender disparities in enrolments in favour of boys, that they are unlikely to achieve gender parity by 2015[1] (UNESCO, 2008, 97). Even in countries where more girls than boys are in school, this does not always reflect conditions of gender equality, as girls may be in school because they lack openings in the labour market.

(Despite money invested, problems persist. There are still major obstacles in realising rights to education, in education and through education for many millions.)

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1. This compares to 37 countries with larger numbers of girls in secondary school than boys, and judged far from achieving gender parity by 2015.

Table 1 *How do the best improvers measure up?*

	GPI prim NER 1999	GPI prim NER 2006	GPI prim attendance 2000-07 (F/M)	GPI survial rate to Grade 5 (2005)	GPI sec GER 2006 (1999)	% of girls in lowest (highest) quintile with no education
Ethiopia	0.69	0.92	1 (45/45)	1.03	0.67 (0.68)	84.1 (38)
Senegal	0.88	0.98	1.01 (59/58)	1	0.76 (0.64)	89.2 (28.3)
Yemen	0.59	0.76	0.6 (41/68)	0.96	0.49 (0.37)	n/a
Djibouti	0.73	0.82		n/a	0.67 (0.72)	n/a
Nepal	0.79	0.87	0.95 (82/86)	1.1	0.89 (0.70)	57.9 (28.1)
Cambodia	0.91	0.98	1.02 (86/84)	1.05	0.79 (0.53)	37.1(17.2)

Source: UNESCO (2008) 300-380; UNICEF (2009), 24-27; DHS, 2004; 2005a;2005b; 2005c; 2007

We have not been able to ensure that all children every where will be able to complete primary schooling by 2015. Table 1 shows the two countries with largest gains in improving the gender parity index[2] for enrolment for girls in Africa, South and South East Asia, and Arab states between 1999 and 2006, but also how difficult it has been to maintain these gains in relation to attendance and completion.

It can be seen that while Ethiopia and Senegal have achieved enormous improvements in gender parity in enrolment and attendance, a similar level of improvement in enrolment in Yemen and Nepal does not translate into gains in GPI for attendance, while in all countries attendance rates are a fraction of enrolment. Although Ethiopia's improvements in gender parity in primary enrolment have not been sustained to the secondary level, in Senegal, Nepal and Cambodia there have been dramatic improvements in gender parity at secondary level. But in all these countries the proportion of girls and boys progressing beyond the primary cycle is low. In Yemen dramatic improvements in GPI for primary enrolments are not matched by attendance improvements, and there is very limited gender parity at secondary level. In Djibouti gender parity at secondary level has actually fallen, despite some increases at primary level. For all the best improvers Demographic and Health Survey data show that there are huge gaps between the proportion of girls in the highest quintile with no education and those in the lowest.

These uneven achievements must be set against countries where improvements in the GPI have been very limited since the late

2. That is a measure of the number of girls at a particular level of schooling as a proportion of the number of boys. A gender partiy index of 1 means equal numbers of girls and boys, less than 1 more boys than girls and more than 1, more girls than boys.

Table 2 *Some countries with limited improvements in GPI in primary and secondary schooling*

	GPI prim NER 1999	GPI prim NER 2006	GPI prim attendance 2000-07 (F/M)	GPI survial rate to Grade 5 (2005)	GPI sec GER 2006 (1999)	% of girls in lowest (highest) quintile with no education
Niger	0.68	0.73	0.7 (31/44)	0.92	0.73 (0.68)	93.3 (55.2)
Pakistan	n/a	0.78	0.88 (67/64)	1.07	0.78	83.2 (21.8)
Central African Republic	0.66*	0.72	0.84 (54/64)	0.86	0.4*	n/a
Chad	0.58 (GER)	0.68 (GER)	0.76 (31/41)	0.94	0.33 (0.26)	98.1 (49.2)
Congo	0.95 (GER)	0.9 (GER)	1.01 (87/86)	no data	0.84	17 (1.6)
Cote d'Ivoire	0.74 (GER)	0.79 (GER)	0.85 (57/67)	0.89 (1999)	0.54 (1999)	n/a

Source: UNESCO (2008); 300-380; UNICEF (2009), 24-27; DHS 2005d; 2006;2006/; 2007
*1991 data

In 2009, 40 countries, with the largest complement in Africa, were considered unlikely to meet the goal of gender parity in primary school enrolments. 50 countries still have such large disparities in enrolments in favour of boys that they are unlikely to achieve gender parity in secondary education by 2015.

1990s. In some of these data is out of date or inadequate, making a real assessment of the situation extremely difficult. Many of these countries have had decades of conflict. It can be seen that in these countries the proportion of girls in the lowest quintile without education is enormous in some countries (Niger and Chad) but also considerable even in the highest quintile.

In addition to the children who will never enrol, many will drop out or attend school with such poor provision for teaching and learning that they cannot be judged to have completed primary schooling. UNESCO analyses of attendance show being poor, rural

and a girl mean you are much more likely to be in school irregularly (UNESCO, 2008, 78-9), while studies of attainment in mathematics, reading and writing show there can be vast inequalities between children in the same country (UNESCO, 2008, 112-113). In many of the international comparisons of student attainment (SACMECQ, PISA) there are no noticeable national gender gaps. In fact in some subjects girls do better than boys, but data has not always been analysed to see whether there are marked gender gaps in quality, distribution and socio-economic status. The potential to undertake detailed sub-national analysis looking at

education outcomes and opportunities is illustrated in work by Saito on a number of SACMEQ countries (Saito, 1998; Saito, 2004) and by Onsomu, Kosimbei, and Ngware (2006) on Kenya. These studies show how regional disparities, level of training of teachers, and conditions at home interact to yield lower reading and mathematics scores for girls.

The broad partnership for gender equality in education set up in 2000 and encompassing many different constituencies has had some significant achievements in expanding access to schooling, but it has also faced considerable difficulties in reaching the poorest quintiles, ensuring quality, and equity in post primary transfer and provision. Some of the reasons for this relate to inadequate money, time, knowledge, skill and political commitment to make gender equality in education go more deeply than a question of access (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005; Tikly and Barret, 2007; Subrhamanian, 2007; Chapman and Miske, 2007; Fennell and Arnot, 2007; Stromquist, 2009). Other reasons relate to the complex web of inequalities associated with poverty, climate change, conflict, and inadequate distribution of resources for nutrition, water, health and HIV (eg. Betan-

court et al; Vavrus, 2003; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007; Pappas et al, 2008; UNESCO, 2008; Birdthistle, Floyd et al, 2009; Alderman, Hoogeven and Rossi, 2009; Chipeta, 2009; Unterhalter, North and Parkes 2010). Violence against women and girls, often unremarked and taken for granted, is also known to be implicated in difficulties girls have in accessing or continuing school (Leach and Mitchell, 2006; Reddy and Dunne, 2003; Parkes, Januario and Figue, 2009).

These problems are amplified by difficulties of maintaining connections between different constituencies engaged in action for gender equality and education. While it is envisaged that these connections run with equal levels of openness and attentiveness between global, national and local organisations, in practice this level of discussion and engagement is rare (Unterhalter et al 2009; North, 2009; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead, 2007) . The initial vision of partnership articulated in 2000 was presaged in the Beijing 1995 vision for enhancing access, participation and completion, attending to questions of quality and equality, and addressing intersecting injustices (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995; Unterhalter, 2007). These formulations envisaged horizontal

Many countries have achieved enormous improvments in gender parity in enrolment and attendance, but UNESCO analyses of attendance show that being poor, rural and a girl means that attendance in school is much less likely to be regular.

Partnerships for gender equality in education have faced considerable difficulties in reaching the poorest quintiles, ensuring quality or equity in post primary transfer. Some reasons for this relate to inadequate resources or political commitment, others to the complex web of global inequalities associated with poverty.

connections so that gender and education initiatives would intersect with work on health, livelihoods, initiatives to challenge cultures of violence against girls and women, and increase the participation of women in decision-making and in decent work. But in practice networks of collaboration and joined up initiatives have not always worked well (eg Stromquist, 2008; Aikman, Unterhalter and Boler, 2008; Morley and Lussier, 2009; Roby, Lambert and Lambert, 2008). The aim for partnerships to take forward visions of gender equality in education and improved human rights aspirations regarding girls' education has to be assessed in the light of enormous global inequalities within and between countries, each marked by considerable gender injustice. The current crises associated with the economy and climate change may well exacerbate these conditions of difficulty, but may also offer some significant opportunities.

In renewing the vision for a wide global social justice partnership to engender education for equality and empowerment, this discussion paper looks first at economic, political and social relations that that shape disempowerment and have hampered work to take forward gender equality and human rights claims in education. It next considers the promise of a range of forms of participation highlighting issues that need greater depth of discussion and mobilisation.

Spaces of power and exclusion: Partners who do not meet

> The worldwide concern with expanding access to education has emerged at a time when inequalities within and between countries have been growing. These concerns have struggled to find their place with everyday realities of hunger, unemployment, and lack of adequate conditions for livelihood or health.

The worldwide concern with expanding access to education since 2000 has seen considerable attention in international and national policy-making to building more schools, employing more teachers, in some countries removing fees, in others offering cash transfers to ensure children go to school, and giving concerted attention to the effects of HIV and AIDs on schooling (Glick, 2008; UNESCO, 2008; Lewin, 2009). But this concern has emerged at a time when inequalities within and between countries have been growing, and when structures of global political and economic power have responded very slowly and unevenly to calls for gender equality (Connell, 2009; Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2007; Verloo, 2007; Rai and Waylen, 2008). Advances in supporting a culture of human rights and equality in some parts of the world happen together with gross violations of rights in others. Although in many countries constitutional commitments and key policies affirm the importance of gender equality in education, and similar declarations guide the work of international organizations, in the words of a South Africa head teacher the goals for EFA and the MDGs are 'heard a long way off' (quoted in Unterhalter et al, 2009)These concerns struggle to find their place with everyday realities of high levels of unemployment or under-employment, extensive hunger, lack of adequate conditions for livelihood or health. In many countries inadequate effort goes into supporting teachers or local district education officials to implement the gender equality aspirations outlined for schools (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005; Ames, 2005; Page, 2005; Chapman & Miske, 2008; Fennell and Arnot, 2007; Greany, 2008). In Karlsson's (2010) detailed study of the work of gender officers in Kwazulu Natal South Africa it is evident how little time, policy framing or resources they have for their work.

In some contexts an exclusive focus on girls' education has led to confusion about gender equality goals. Thus, when, as for example in a country like South Africa, more girls than boys are in school, officials come to think

(The challenge remains to understand the complexity of gendered power in local settings, and the educational conditions that can support change and provide quality schooling.)

they have 'done' gender, although issues remain concerning economic, political and social rights, violence, and ideas about masculinity and femininity that undermine equality concerns (Dieltiens, Unterhalter et al, 2009; Morrell et al, 2009). Understanding gender relations and the experiences and needs of the poorest boys and girls are all important areas of policy and practice. The forms of political and economic power in a society might mean that these particular areas of policy and practice are neglected in a general focus on national achievements or enrolling more girls. The challenge remains to understand the complexity of gendered power in local settings and the educational conditions that can support change and provide quality schooling.

Finance for education is a major site of power. But there has generally been little assessment of gender when education budgets and aid flow are scrutinised and the level of service delivery to men and women assessed. Although Poverty Reduction Strategies prepared for the World Bank or the IMF require an assessment of gender in looking at education levels or income, there is little provision for assessing where money in the education budget is spent and whether

expenditure does indeed reach girls and boys, women and men in equal or appropriate amounts and whether spending helps to overcome wider inequalities and conditions associated with violence or merely reproduce them. Gender budgeting holds considerable promise to undertake this task, but has not yet been fully implemented in relation to scrutinising education budgets (Budlender, 2007). The Tanzania Gender Network has done excellent work over more than ten years tracking government budgets, mobilising popular opinion and building capacity to do gender budgeting, however they have not yet looked rigorously at the education budget and income flows to school level. Some preliminary work on this for the TEGINT (Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania) shows very marked differences in financial resources at school level with dramatic consequences regarding quality aspects of education (TEGINT, 2009). Important work on gender budgeting in relation to education and health delivery has been done in Mauritius, with high level support from within government (Verdickt, 2009). However these very favourable conditions are often not easily replicated in other countries. Generally there has been a lack of aid and other financial flows

directed towards gender equality work in education or programmes specifically concerned with aspects of violence against women or girls. Direct budgetary support makes it difficult to track how aid is spent. The money promised in 2000 to support EFA has not flowed quickly or efficiently enough (Mundy, 2006; Riddell, 2007; UNESCO, 2008; Coxon and Munce, 2008) and has not adequately reached the lowest quintile or privileged the gender equality aspects of quality (Rose, 2005; Jones and Chant, 2009; Vandemoortele, 2009, Filmer, 2009).

Broad ambitions for gender equality in education are translated in a very attenuated form into action at local level and, indeed, spaces of reform may themselves become sites of exclusion, where gendered hierarchies exercise power that subordinates women and girls and reinforces inequalities. These processes are evident in some initiatives to reform curriculum, teacher training and school management. Research indicates that assumptions that knowledge of science or mathematics are inappropriate for girls continue to be widespread (Geist and King, 2008; Skelton, Francis and Valkonova, 2007; Athill and Jha). Highly paid or regarded jobs

in teaching are closed to women in many countries (Kirk, 2009; Rathgeber, 2009; Moorosi). Revising textbooks to portray women and girls more equitably and to encourage interest and engagement of men and boys with children and care remains an uphill struggle (Blumberg, 2007; Phirbhai, 2007;Burton). Much work on gender and schooling focuses on interventions, that is limited actions to ensure girls are enrolled in school. This often does not translate into institutionalized arrangements to secure gender equality in curriculum, language of instruction, teacher training, pedagogies in use, or management. In addition interactions with civil society organisations are often limited just to mobilization for enrolment campaigns and not for deeper processes of dialogue and critique. Although a combination of all these strategies (Interventions, institutionalization and critical, reflective interactions) are needed to build gender equitable education, hierarchies and forms of gendered power often mean these connections are not made (Unterhalter, 2007)

Realising quality primary education for all, regardless of gender, entails co-ordinated social policy. But government departments

> Violence against women and girls, often unremarked upon and taken for granted, is known to be a vital factor in difficulties girls have in accessing or continuing school. Education, however, can give girls and women particular resources to challenge gender based violence.

often do not co-ordinate their work well. Privileging enrolment in primary education as the major policy goal may take attention away from or minimise important connections with the treatment of women within a society, ownership of property, opportunities for decent work, and sharing the responsibilities of care (Maslak, 2008, Unterhalter, 2007; Subrahmanian, 2007). In addition, while it is well known that poverty keeps children out of school and that amongst the poorest there are larger numbers of girls than boys out of school (Lewin, 2009), and that lack of adequate nutrition means it is very difficult for children to learn (Hillier et al, 2009), in only a very few countries has comprehensive school feeding been introduced and all school fees and levies been abolished. Although a pilot project in Pakistan, for example (Kazianga et al, 2009), showed how school feeding schemes are associated with important intra-household allocations of food, and systematic reviews of empirical studies show that food for education programmes do support attendance under certain conditions (Adelman, Gilligan and Lehrer, 2008), comprehensive school feeding has not been widely introduced. Often school feeding is only provided in lower primary classes, although older adolescent girls, who do not eat enough, will be much more vulnerable to ill health associated with pregnancy and delivery later in life. The lack of attention to the connections between family livelihood, health and gender equality in government social policy and the campaigning work of NGOs is an important missed opportunity.

Concern at the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and recognition that school was an important site to provide some of the education that could protect against its spread, led to considerable concern with 'joined up' planning in thinking about gender and schooling. But very few countries gave sufficient attention to gender in their education and HIV plans (Clarke, 2008; Idogho, 2008) and realising gender equality in schools in the context of the epidemic has been enormously difficult (Aikman, Unterhalter and Boler, 2008; Filmer, 2008; Morrell et al, 2009). The difficulties of cultures and power associated with masculine and feminine identities in many countries make change particularly challenging.

Gender based violence in and around school is starting to be documented with particular,

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but different consequences for girls and boys (Leach & Mitchell; Parkes et al, 2009). Research indicates the complex relationships associated with gender identities and access to power and esteem this entails. In addition these questions are often cloaked in shame and a processes of silencing ensues which makes the question of policy and practice particularly delicate. Violence in, on the way or associated with school are emerging as important reasons why girls do not attend. However attending and completing school or membership of an adult education group may give girls and women particular resources to challenge gender based violence (Hargreaves and Boler, 2008; Pronyk, Hargreaves et al).

Partnerships for gender equality in education that seek to express the aspirations of the Beijing Platform of Action, require assiduous work to address unequal and unjust structures of political, economic and social power. Intensive work is needed not only on the level of policy and practice within national and international organisations to change and challenge these relations. In addition much more work is needed on conceptual clarifications, empirical studies, and how

research is designed and conducted. More work is needed in higher education reflecting on gender questions and issues of human rights and global injustice and these themes remain far too little considered in approaches to how teachers are trained (Unterhalter, 2006, 2010 forthcoming; Walker, 2006; Morley, Lugg et al; Kirk, 2008).

In three critical areas of education the exercise of hierarchies of power appear particularly acute
•the provision of quality education that places gender equality centre stage
•the ways in which social policy in relation to health, livelihoods, employment and poverty can support gender equality initiatives in schools,
•the problem of violence.

Building partnerships in the new decade will need to develop more sustained analysis and plans for action in these areas.

Partnerships for equality: the promise of participation

Reassessing the partnerships that will drive forward future work on girls' education and gender equality requires considering how this form of organisation can address problems of power exercised in a hierarchical and exclusionary manner, opportunities which do not connect across different areas of social provision, and outcomes that are not an enhancement of rights. At the centre of all these problems appears to lie the question of inadequate participation, restricted opportunities for listening to the demands of those most affected, and a pattern of ignoring the potential of ideas about gender equality, even though a major policy concern is with girls' schooling. Enhancing different forms of participation appears a key opportunity for our partnerships in the coming decade. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved.

Firstly, policy and practice can be more responsive to gender equality concerns and the complexity of the ways in which gender intersects with other areas of discrimination. Gender mainstreaming was identified in 1995 as a key planning mechanism that could help give prominence to concerns with gender in all aspects of an organisation's partnership work. Gender mainstreaming often high-lights the importance of work across different sectors and the ways in which hierarchies operate Experiences of using gender mainstreaming in education departments and NGOs have been mixed (Lind, 2006; Subrahmanian, 2007; Stromquist, 2008; North 2010). The resources needed to carry out and sustain this work have never been adequate. Nonetheless where very clear goals in relation to gender equality outcomes, intensive investments, high level support, participatory structures, long-term mentoring and review are in place important gains have been noted (Unterhalter and Dutt, 2001; Miske, Meagher and DeJaeghere, 2010; Verdickt, 2009; CEF, 2009). Gender mainstreaming, undertaken not as a technical bureaucratic exercise, but as a means of enhancing participatory discussions within education, reflecting on questions of power and the nature of the articulation of education with other social policy areas of health, livelihoods, and decision-making, continues to offer considerable potential to expose and change some of the hierarchies and forms of subordination that have made delivering quality education and redressing violence so difficult.

Secondly, including women in decision-

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> Gender mainstreaming continues to offer considerable potential to expose and change some of the hierarchies and forms of subordination that have made delivering quality of education and redressing violence so difficult.

making at all levels of policy and practice has the potential to end practices of exclusion and silencing. The familiar problem of gender policy evaporation (Longwe, 1997; Cornwall, Harrison, Whitehead, 2006; Brown, 2007) is compounded because of a lack of co-ordinated attention to ensuring women's presence in decision-making bodies related to education. In addition, with some notable exceptions in Latin America and India (where partnerships have been built in the context of literacy campaigns), there has been little attempt to make connections between civil society organisations that campaign on education and women's rights (Stromquist, 2007; Khandekar, 2006). Thus, for example, in South Africa and Tanzania, both countries with important organisations of women that mobilize on a wide range of issues, the demands of women's organizations (regarding reproductive rights, rights at work, or political voice), do not connect very explicitly with the work of women focussed on education (Hassim, 2006; Desai, 2007; Brown, 2008; Unterhalter et al, 2009; Diaw, 2009). Indeed in some settings campaigns which focus only on expanding women's rights to education are seen as a distraction from recognising indigenous rights or reach-

ing the poorest (Paulson and Calla, 2000; Aikman, 1999; Lewin, 2009). Governments generally do not consult with a wide range of women's organisations when reviewing education policy, tending to focus on organisations that campaign on specific education issues, for example the distribution of sanitary towels in Kenya, or the running of girls' clubs. While women's organisations around the world have given prominence to high levels of violence against women, the consequences of discrimination against pregnant teenagers, and in a number of countries have campaigned vigorously for adult women's literacy, these issues appear only sporadically taken up in education departments that deal with schooling; often they are formulated in terms of the problems of girls (Dieltiens et al, 2009; Thomas, 2007; Dunne, 2008). Although in some countries a number of seats in village education committees or local authority structures are reserved for women, and these appear to ensure good outcomes in education provision (Chattopadhay and Duflo, 2003; Clots Figueros, 2007; Wilkinson, 2007), in too many countries there has been insufficient attention to women's participation in decision-making about schooling looking not only at

presence in formal structures, but also the process though which resources are allocated and concerns with gender or injustice come to be articulated.

Thirdly, the potential offered by civil society organisations for enhancing participation in work to support girls' education and gender equality is considerable. In a number of countries particular attention has been given to supporting girls and boys to speak about and plan for how to fulfil their learning needs. Throughout Africa FAWE has organised Tuseme clubs in schools where girls have opportunities to reflect on their aspirations for education and work out strategies to deal with problems they confront (Diaw, 2009). In South Africa the Girls' education movement and the Boys' Education Movement allow for discussions of sexism and ways to overcome this. In many countries the mobilisation of peer educators to share information on HIV has not involved girls and boys in reflections about gender and schooling (Morrell et al, 2009; Dunkle and Jewkes, 2007; Archer and Boler, 2008) NGO or social movement initiatives to build girls' empowerment, reflect on intersecting inequalities and develop a more inclusive pedagogy offer rich possibilities for addressing the question of quality in schooling

(McCowan, 2009 Ballard, Habib and Vallodia, 2006; Conway, 2008). In a number of countries work on women's livelihood and effects of climate change helps support connections between adult education work and quality initiatives in schools (Lotz Sitsika, 2010; TEGINT, 2010). All these examples suggest very promising ways in which civil society can engage with governments to build partnerships that are concerned to keep substantive gender equality under review, offer spaces of participation to the most marginalized, and highlight particularly important social reform in areas, such as post-conflict, HIV or climate change.

Although in the past there have been missed opportunities for the women's movement and the education movement to connect, the new decade offers some important opportunities to rebuild joint campaigns from the global to the local level. Momentum is building for a major, well resourced structure to deal with gender and women's issues in the UN. UNESCO's consultation on Beijing + 15 is taking place as we complete this analysis eliciting a lively discussion (see http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=47037&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). In opening the debate the Director General of UNESCO noted how

> Including women in decision-making at all levels of policy and practice has the potential to end practices of exclusion and silencing.

> The potential offered by civil society organisations for enhancing participation in work to support girls' educaiton and gender equality is considerable.

gender equality was to be one of the priorities of the organisation's work 2008-2013 and noted

> Closing this [education gender] gap is one of the most urgent challenges of our time. Behind the statistics lie individual stories of deprivation and discrimination. They carry national and global consequences that are far too often ignored or relegated to the periphery of political concerns. And yet we know that gender equality in education and training is a potent driver of women's empowerment. It is one of the most important catalysts of social change and integration, a lever of poverty reduction and a driver of socio-economic development. (Bokova, 2010)

The DAW ECOSOC Expert Group consultation has pointed out how a return to the participatory human rights framework of the Beijing Platform of Action with its concern with the education of girls and women connecting to other aspects of social change will give a substantial boost to achieving the MDGs (DAW, 2010). A number of education campaigns have highlighted the importance of gender issues, although their capacity to keep this as a major focus over many years of work often needs sustained support (Unterhalter and North, 2009; CEF, 2008) . Similarly, a number of campaigns led by women's organisations have made demands for education, bringing out the importance of establishing a connection to environmental and livelihood issues. The AWID Forum, an important mobiliser of feminist action, has highlighted the importance of building and sustaining links with young women, the huge range of ways in which they mobilise and the diverse opportunities for educational transformation these offer (AWID, 2008) . All these examples suggest the idea of partnerships is moving in many directions, networking together different constituencies and promising some major advances in thinking and action.

Major issues that cut across the ways in which we understand participation for gender equality thus concern:
• the interconnection of education, health, water, nutrition and HIV
• the effects of climate change
• mobilisation to combat violence
• the intersection of poverty and other inequalities
• sustaining quality schooling and rights through education.

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Conclusion

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 gave great prominence to the importance of expanding provision of education for girls and women over their lifetime as a key means to challenge discrimination and injustice. In 2000 the launch of initiatives at the global level (the MDGs, EFA, UNGEI) continued to give prominence to questions of girls' schooling at national and local levels and a very wide range of policy change was put into practice. This paper has both charted some of the achievements of those undertakings and highlighted some processes that made progress difficult: the pervasiveness of unequal power and the difficulties of sustaining participatory partnerships across a broad front. Nonetheless enormously creative and diverse initiatives are underway, despite the harshness of the present moment, so marked by inequality, conflict, and threats associated with climate change and economic recession. This conference will provide a significant platform to learn from each other and take action collaboratively. Working for gender equality, empowerment and women's rights though schooling is an enormous, but rewarding, challenge. We cannot underestimate the power of what we can do in and through education. It is a hugely rich environment from which ideas about equality have grown and will continue to flourish.

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