Making the IATF-Adolescent Girls work in Asia Pacific region:

Inter-agency mechanisms for promoting adolescent girls in the Asia Pacific Region (Education)

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Based on the presentation made at the UN Interagency Task Force on Adolescent Girls Strategic Planning Retreat (UN Foundation, New York, 12-15 May 2009)
The regional challenge in education: growing disparities

• Focus remains on understanding disparities and addressing specific issues with specific responses: *evidence-based planning and advocacy*

• Analyzing gender in education as it is affected by other variables: wealth, location, ethnicity/language, broader society

• Disparities in education widens significantly in post-primary education level to the disadvantage of girls in most cases (but also of boys in some countries)
Regional collaboration and partnerships to promote education for (adolescent) girls and gender equality in education
Interagency regional mechanisms for promoting girls/women’s education and gender equality

1. **Regional Thematic Working Group on EFA** (Chaired by UNESCO):
   - EFA regional coordination, monitoring, and assessment
   - Technical support sub-group for EFA Goal 5 (gender equality)

2. **UNGEI (UN Girls Education Initiative): EFA Flagship** (Lead agency UNICEF; EAP level co-chaired by UNICEF/UNESCO)

3. **Regional Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment** (co-chaired by UNIFEM & ESCAP)
   - Joint statement on the Impact of the Global Crises on MDG progress

4. **Asia-Pacific Youth Network (AP Youthnet)** (ILO-led cyberspace networking)

5. **UNESCO Programme-based regional networks/platforms**
   - Gender in Education Network in Asia Pacific (GENIA) (Education)
   - Women’s/Gender Research and Studies Network in Asia and the Pacific (Social & Human Science)
Joint/Collaborative regional actions

• **Advocacy**
  - Joint sessions and statements
  - Development of advocacy guidelines, brochures
  - Girl Champions campaign
  - Photo contest

• **Capacity Building & Technical/Policy advice**
  - Facilitation at EFA Coordinators’ meetings (policy dialogue)
  - Joint seminars, panel sessions
  - Joint trainings (e.g. GM, Gender statistics, GRB, etc)
  - Mid-Decade Assessment (EFA Info)

• **Research**
  - Good practices on girls education;
  - study on school-to-work transition in Southeast Asia
  - Cross-sectoral analysis and issue papers on girls education in South Asia
  - Gender impact of economic crisis
UNESCO programme-based regional platforms for girls/women’s education and gender equality

1. Gender in Education Network in Asia Pacific (GENIA) (Education Sector)
   - Publication of advocacy brief series
   - Support research on gender issues in education
   - Thematic training for Gender Focal Points of MOE
   - On-the-job mentoring and technical supports in Gender Focal Points to mainstream gender in MOE

2. Women’s/Gender Studies Network in Asia and the Pacific (Social and Human Science Sector)
Regional UNGEI

- The Regional UNGEIs of East Asia & the Pacific and South Asia are partnerships of UN agencies, NGOs/CSOs, bilateral donors, regional bodies, and academic bodies.
- United by the common purpose:
  - To achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals
  - To eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education
  - To achieve gender equality in education
- Launched in May 2002 in EAP, 2006 in SA
- Works within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, Dakar Framework for Action, the Beijing Platform for Action and the World Fit for Children
Networking of Networks

Gender equality in education

RTWG-EFA
UNGGEI
SEAMEO
EFA Coordinators
HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
GENIA (UNESCO)
AP Youthnet (ILO)
Gender/Women Research Network
Challenges and lessons learnt in interagency collaboration and partnership at regional level
Challenges to collaboration/ partnership

• Limited human & financial resources vs. huge and different regional coverage
• Different roles and responsibility/authority of regional level offices of agencies
• Various programming cycle and funding modalities
• Limited information and knowledge sharing by non-education sector partners
• Donors – no or decreasing regional presence
Lessons Learnt at regional level

• Broad-base advocacy as comparative advantage of collaborative interagency regional efforts
• Advocacy should not be for the sake of it, but needs to be linked to upstream planning and policy development work at national levels;
• Need to work towards common objective and goal, and speak with “one voice”
• Partnership and collaboration can be done even without additional/specific funds (technical expertise available at regional level)
• Flexibility in cooperation modality facilitated success
Lessons learnt (cont’d)

• Purpose of network should not only be for information sharing but also for technical and resource sharing
• Consensus and agreement doesn’t happen over night – need patience and to maintain regular communication among focal points
• Dynamic catalyst or «pulling-force» essential (coordinator/focal point) for success
• Commitment and support of heads of agency as critical (RDT, UNCT, RCM, etc)
• Core group + wider audience for building broader consensus
Regional presence in IATF AG

• IATF started being very global – NY planning meeting was the first time for regional representation (but only Asia-Pacific)

• Regional offices of the participating agencies have yet to be fully engaged
  – Different communication channels and information sharing systems among the IATF agencies
  – Different priorities for the agencies at the regional level and also at national levels
Recommendations at the NY planning meeting for the regional engagement

- Involve the regional partners immediately and influence regional level existing programs (this is critical and lesson learnt in the HIV IATF).
- Undertake mapping of regional agency focal points and existing activities
- Share joint statement & including regional offices at the country level.
- Further discuss regional advocacy campaign.
- Coordinate with regional bodies on MDG reporting. (eg: ESCAP)
- Share lessons learned and experiences between countries at the regional level.
What needs to be done to operationalize IATF-AG at regional level

- Identify regional level contacts for IATF
- Mapping regional networks/activities for tie in to advocacy
- Establish sub-working group task force on adolescent girls at regional level
- Such sub-working group/task force on adolescent girls can serve as regional inter-agency technical support team to countries (many agencies have tech experts in regional offices)
Potential role for the region level offices and inter-agency collaboration mechanisms

• Joint identification and selection of pilot countries
  ➢ IATF to expand the country coverage over the next 4 years from 4 today to 20 countries by 2015 (what is the regional balance implication?)

• Defining the regional level outcomes and priority areas of intervention for supporting country level actions.

• Providing technical and policy advocacy for the cause of adolescent girls through the various regional mechanism for inter-agency coordination in support of girls education and gender equality.