

Addressing challenges in achieving gender equality in education

International Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education

4-7 June 2016, Beijing, China

The International Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education, organised by UNESCO Paris, was held in Beijing, bringing together international delegates, representatives of the Chinese government, and teacher training institutions in China. Also present at the seminar were awardees of the UNESCO Prize for Girls and Women's Education and the UNESCO Confucius Prize who shared inspiring experiences in promoting gender equity in education.



The International Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education, organised by UNESCO Paris, aimed to, amongst other things, highlight the role of girls' and women's education in reducing poverty and inequalities, improving health, and accelerate economic growth and development.

The seminar explored the “*potential opportunities to address existing challenges to achieve gender equality in education and provide a platform for dialogue on girls' and women's education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and specifically on SDG4.*”

The objectives of the seminar were to -

- highlight the role of girls' and women's education in reducing poverty and inequalities, improving health, and accelerate economic growth and development
- present good practices on the themes through regional and national perspectives
- propose actionable strategies to contribute to the objectives of SDG4-Education 2030 relating to the promotion of girls' and women's education and gender equality
- contribute to China's national consultation on SDG4-Education 2030



ASPBAE's Cecilia Soriano (L) participated in the conference and presented the partnerships undertaken by UNGEI to promote gender inclusive policies and programme implementation in education.

As a member of the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) – East Pacific Regional Office, ASPBAE presented the partnerships undertaken by UNGEI to promote gender inclusive policies and programme implementation in education. It focused on UNGEI's work in (1) knowledge-sharing (2) capacity building, and (3) supporting governments in integrating the gender dimensions in their education sector planning. A key contribution of UNGEI is the development of the Connect and Respect Toolkit which provided a much-needed guide for teachers and non-formal educators in ensuring an inclusive, non-discriminatory, and empowering learning environment for all, whether in school or non-formal settings.

The delegates shared experiences in promoting girls and women's education from the community, national and regional arenas which provided a diversity of inspiring and doable good practices. From Indonesia, Dr. Ella Yulaelawati, one of the winners of the UNESCO Prize, presented her work on gender mainstreaming in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) in both the curriculum for children and in raising awareness of parents.

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Participants of the workshop went on a field visit to community learning centres in Beijing that offered courses for both children and adults.

From Zimbabwe, another awardee, Evernice Munando, Director of Female Students Network Trust, showed how students in the university and community have been mobilised and their leadership harnessed to collectively work against gender violence.

The session on '*promoting lifelong learning for girls and women through literacy, formal and non-formal education*' challenged the delegates to ensure that adult literacy and learning, especially for women, is not neglected as we rally governments on rolling out

the SDGs. Ulrike Hanemann, of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, making a case for education outside of the schools said, "*we should remember that SDG4 is working towards lifelong and life-wide learning, where education is provided through different means, including non-formal and informal education*".

The UNESCO awards ceremony was the culmination of the seminar. The winners of the UNESCO Prize for Girls and Women's Education were awarded by the Chinese First Lady, Peng Liyuan, and UNESCO Director General, Irina Bokova. The 2016 UNESCO Prize for Girls and Women's Education was fully supported by the government of the People's Republic of China. ASPBAE is keeping its fingers crossed for women's adult education programmes!

ASPBAE was represented in the conference by Cecilia Soriano, ASPBAE Regional Programmes and Operations Manager.

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