



Consultative meeting to developing a strategic plan for mainstreaming gender in education

The gender unit in MoES (Ministry of Education and Sports) is developing a strategic plan for gender mainstreaming that highlights the issues in gender in education. In relation to this, the gender unit organized a consultation workshop for national level stakeholders on developing a gender in education strategic plan.

The workshop was intended for stakeholders to make contribution to the strategic plan development that will guide implementation. The workshop was held on 29th- 30th July at Royal Suites hotel Buogolobi.

The Director of Basic and Secondary education opened the workshop and appreciated all for attending the workshop. The director was anointed as one of the champions of gender issues and he promised to work towards addressing gender issues.

The workshop was facilitated by Nordic Consulting group and attended by Ministry of Education (MoES), Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), Ministry of Finance, Planning and economic development (MoFPD), donors/ funders and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) among other stakeholders.

The consultants presented results of the regional consultative process. The results showed the regional analysis of gender issues in schools. The findings were from Tororo, Mbale, Moroto, Napac, Gulu, Nwoya, Kalangala, Kanungu and Masaka districts. **Please find the full presentation here.**

Reactions to the presentation

- Members suggested the issues pointed out should be more specific as some of them were general. For example, the presentation pointed out that “special needs for women” led to absenteeism in schools. Members suggested that this could be more specific and point towards menstruation.
- Members suggested that the issue of drugs should be addressed as it is a serious problem in schools.
- It was pointed out that some schools have structures that are not utilized. Some schools have counsellors that do not carry out services due to lack of structures to follow. Members also suggested that schools should hire professional counsellors instead of using teachers. This was because most students fear teachers and may fail to approach the teachers when having issues at school. Most schools lack a gender desk thus children have nowhere to take gender issues.
- Issues in ECD (Early Childhood Development) were not included in the research yet ECD also has gender issues. The findings showed that ECD mainly had female teachers but no more was discussed on the subject. Members noted that in ECD centres, the materials used for play time are sometimes according to the gender. Boys are given cars while girls are given toys, Girls could grow up thinking that their role is to have babies. In plays, boys act as doctors while girls act as nurses. The little children start thinking that the boys are always better than the girls.
- It was suggested that the issue of child headed households is included in the strategic plan. Parents go to work leaving the children mostly under the care of the elder who ends up missing school.

- It was suggested that population is a crucial issue that should be included in the strategic plan. Members suggested that this could be reduced by more girls enrolling and completing school.
- It was noted that the issue of ignorance of children's rights should be included as a gender issue.
- The issue of cross-gender came up as an important issue that has been neglected. The hermaphrodite children drop out of school due to stigma.
- Members agreed that the issue of teacher education should be included
- It was agreed that public service should revise the criteria of marking "hard to reach" areas. Members noted that many districts are hard to reach yet are not considered as hard to reach and do not receive the allowance.
- It was also noted that stigmatization of child mothers is an issue that was not pointed out in the presentation.

SWOT Analysis

The workshop did a SWOT analysis to outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that affect MoES in dealing with gender in education.

Strengths

- Gender related policies that support gender
- Existence of the gender unit in MoES
- Line ministries supporting gender
- Donor commitment
- Gender task force with representation

Weaknesses

- Inadequate human resources and limited capacity at national level.
- Inadequate attention to ECD and adolescence reproductive health
- The gap between policy and practices.
- Low levels of knowledge and skills in gender analysis among staff in MoES departments
- Poor attitude of and limited use of data by staff in the MoES.

Opportunities

- CSOs work towards addressing gender issues
- Improving ICT which helps in information sharing
- Media pushing gender issues in education leading to awareness
- Several stakeholders working together to achieve gender equity in education
- Ministry of Finance and economic development emphasizing gender mainstreaming of the budget

Threats

- High population growth
- Cultural beliefs and practices
- The gap between MoES and Public service on deployment and mobilization. Poverty

- Inadequate budget allocation to gender issues and reducing government funding to education
- Lack of political will
- Gender being taken as a crosscutting issue
- Parental neglect of education

The priority issues

Members discussed in groups and came up with priority issues that the strategic plan will focus on. It was agreed that for practical reasons, only a few of the various issues could be addressed. The issues that were prioritized are as follows;

- Higher dropout rate /low transition rates for girls.
- Inadequate capacity to address gender issues at all education levels and institution
- Negative cultural attitudes at all levels
- Few girls and boys with disabilities access education
- Fewer girls take science subjects due to negative attitude
- Limited funding to gender. Constraints within the sectors
- Guidance and counselling does not adequately address gender related challenges and the needs of boys and girls.

Vision, Goal and Objectives

The members worked in groups to formulate a constructive vision, goal and objectives for the strategic plan. Members agreed that though the language could be changed, the concepts identified would formulate the vision, goal and objectives.

Vision

“All Ugandans attaining equitable quality education that maximizes their potential to contribute to their communities.”

Goal

“To enhance the capacity of the education sector to address gender issues and achieve equitable and quality education.”

Objectives

1. Collect, analyze and disintegrate gender comprehensive user-friendly and up to date data in the education sector by 2018
2. Key actors and decision makers in the education sector of gender issues to apply skills in gender analysis, mainstreaming, research and documentation.
3. Education structures and systems to effectively respond to the emerging gender concerns at all levels.

The facilitators appreciated all members for the ideas and noted that a draft report would soon be circulated. Members were urged to analyze and give feedback when they received the draft report. The consultants informed the members that the strategic plan will be finalized by the end of August.

The meeting closed on 30th July at 5:30pm.