



Workshop on female teacher study and the reviewed National Strategy for Girls' Education

The Gender Unit in the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) organised a workshop on 16-17th October at Hotel Triangle. The workshop discussed the “Female teacher study dissemination” and “review of the national strategy for girls’ education.”

The workshop was opened by the Permanent Secretary (PS) MoES, Dr Rose Nassali Lukwago. The PS noted a number of issues in her opening remarks;

- ❖ The position of the girl child has remained the same over the years. This is the position of being a disadvantaged citizen despite national and international interventions.
- ❖ There is a need to be more practical. We need to go back after workshops and implement the agreed positions.
- ❖ There is a lot yet to be done about people’s attitudes. For example in BTVET girls are expected to go for sewing and hairdressing courses and are rarely encouraged doing bricklaying.

The PS informed the workshop that she was committed to fully support girls’ education.

THE STUDY ON PRIMARY FEMALE TEACHERS’ TRAINING, RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT IN UGANDA

The study was presented by Mr Mulyala Cuthbert. The objective of the study was to establish factors leading to low female participation in primary schools. This study was carried out in 2012 during the first term.

The study was conducted in Kayunga, Namutumba, Kabarole, Mbakle, Katakwi, Nakapiripirit, Amuru, Amolator, Arua, Hoima, Kanungu and Kiruhura districts to represent the regions in Uganda.

The study looked at many aspects of the female teachers starting with the time spent in PTCs (Primary Teacher Colleges). The study showed that the challenges facing female teachers start in colleges. These include challenges like water shortage, sexual harassment, high pregnancy rates, inadequate training, power shortages, big and congested classes, bullying and overloading students with non- academic work such as digging. The student teachers in PTC s also shared that they had many fears, including not being able to get a school to teach in.

Some of the challenges faced by female teachers in primary schools

- ❖ Lack of accommodation & poor school accommodation with no privacy
- ❖ Inadequate maternity leave
- ❖ Not staying with family
- ❖ Intimidation by male teachers or head teachers.
- ❖ Sexual harassment
- ❖ High cost of living

- ❖ Work overload
- ❖ Delayed payments and deletion of teachers off the pay roll with no explanation
- ❖ Non provision of lunch at school
- ❖ Denial to teach upper classes
- ❖ Lack of gender sensitive sanitary facilities like latrines, and bathrooms

Discussions regarding the study

- ❖ Family planning could help solve many challenges that female teachers face. The study showed that many female teachers fail to go for further studies because of the many dependants they have to look after, yet this can be solved by family planning.
- ❖ As shown above, student teachers have fears and it was felt that the solutions given in the study should have addressed the student teachers' fears.
- ❖ Pictures in the study could have added a great impact
- ❖ Adding more teachers in a school is not an automatic solution to teacher scarcity. Instead there should be a focus on adding well equipped teachers.
- ❖ Formation of SACCOs for female teachers helps the teachers to handle some financial difficulties.
- ❖ Guidance and counselling offered to the female teachers can help address some of the challenges.
- ❖ Female teachers who have disclosed their HIV status should be assisted by reducing their workload.
- ❖ Leadership positions are mostly given to the male teachers thus preventing female teachers with an opportunity to enrich themselves. However, it was noted that in some schools there are no female teachers to take these positions as they prefer working in urban areas.
- ❖ The senior woman position should be institutionalised in school. In cases where there are no female teachers to take up this role, a female leader respectable in the community should assist with the girls.
- ❖ The challenges faced by female teachers with disabilities should be captured.
- ❖ Laws on professional conduct of teachers should be tightened to curb issues of sexual harassment.
- ❖ Stakeholders in education like the local government should be accountable and not all challenges should be blamed on MoES

THE REVIEWED NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION (NSGE)

The reviewed strategy aims to deal with challenges girls face and was presented by Prof. Josephine Ahikire.

During the research to review the strategy, it was realised that there is a limited level of awareness about the existence of the National Strategy for Girls' Education. The strategy was completely unheard of in the districts visited. For the few stakeholders who knew about the strategy, there was limited utilisation. Some people interviewed on the limited use argued that the NSGE was not a living document thus could not be practically used.

The review was prompted by :

- ❖ Upcoming demands such as quality of education
- ❖ New policies like sciences, life skills, and skilling Uganda needed to be included thus the need for a more holistic National strategy for girls.
- ❖ Persistent gaps like teenage pregnancy
- ❖ Widening the coverage of the NSGE in terms of adequacy and full coverage of all education
- ❖ Take stock of how the strategy has guided sector activities.

Significant progress of the reviewed NSGE

- ❖ Increased access to primary education
- ❖ Emphasis on quality education
- ❖ Remarkable high level networks working on girls' education like FENU, FAWE U, GEM, UNICEF among others.
- ❖ Open commitment to addressing issues of sexuality and menstruation as a public/ school issue.
- ❖ Attempts at sex disaggregation
- ❖ Enhancing Private Public Partnerships
- ❖ Boys included in girls' issues. In some schools, boys are included in projects for making sanitary towels

Making the revised NSGE practical

- ❖ There is a plan for wide dissemination in 2014 through leaflets, posters, drama competitions and the media. Dissemination will also take place at district level.
- ❖ Invite more stakeholders to input to the strategy, these will include religious leaders, cultural leaders among others.
- ❖ Institutionalise the gender unit in the MoES.
- ❖ Research on how other countries are handling gender equality.
- ❖ An all encompassing strategy including all subjects.
- ❖ Clear mechanisms for reaching out to parents, men and communities
- ❖ Emphasis on mentoring for girls to be key actors agency focused strategy
- ❖ Concrete capacity building programmes.
- ❖ Focus on key challenges
- ❖ It should be implementable with core outputs and measurable indicators
- ❖ It should be reader friendly, with language easy to read by the common man.

Discussions regarding the strategy

- ❖ Concentrate on causes rather than outcomes. For example, stakeholders concentrate more on pregnancy rather than curbing sexual immorality. Girls may be sexually active without becoming pregnant, however they could acquire STD s, AIDS and poor performances in studies. Instead of addressing pregnancy alone, girls should be empowered to say "NO" to sex.

- ❖ Upscale male involvement. In some instances, this should be made personal, instead of just talking about “girls” talk about “daughters” and fathers will feel an instinct to reach out to the girl child.
- ❖ Organise an annual event to appreciate all those doing great work for the girl child. This could also help in disseminating for the strategy.
- ❖ Find a way of engaging with cultural leaders. Get their ideas on the strategy and continue involving them in the fight to achieve girl child education. Cultural leaders have influence and a strong hold on communities yet they have not being engaged.
- ❖ Engage more with communities to change the mindsets of people whose deeds unknowingly inhibit gender equality. For example, girls are given dolls to play with while boys are given cars and other powerful objects.
- ❖ Issues that are in the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to solve should be directed to MoES.

The time frame for the NSGE is 5 years from 2014- 2018. Midterm evaluation of strategy will be carried out within the 3rd year of implementation.

Closing remarks

All who attended were appreciated for the active participation. The education advisor UNICEF, Mrs Rosemary Rwanyangye in her closing remarks noted that the study on female teachers was important because we always focus on children at times forgetting the teachers. She emphasised the fact that more stakeholders, such as cultural leaders, should be brought on board in the struggle to achieve gender equity in girls’ education. Mrs Rosemary informed the group that UNICEF remains committed to the cause of basic education and gender equality.