



**Gender Equality in Education: Shaping the Global Policy Dialogue
Roundtable Meeting Side-Event at the Learning for All Ministerial Summit
April 19, 2013**

Call to Action

The new millennium was marked by the launch of two ambitious global development frameworks – the Education for All (Dakar Framework for Action) and the Millennium Development Goals. Both firmly positioned girls' education and gender equality at the centre of the global education and development agenda. These statements claimed education as a fundamental human right, and also an enabling right and the **key to empowering women and girls to fully develop** and participate in the political, economic and social progress of their societies.

Having committed to these goals, developing countries and donors made enormous shifts in their policies and funding structures, mobilizing human and financial resources to support girls' education.

As a result, today more girls are in school than ever before. In fact, the large majority of the world's girls attend school into early adolescence, and the share of girls in the out-of-school population in developing countries has witnessed a substantial decrease, from 58 to 53 per cent.

Yet our expectations to achieve major gender equality gains in education have not met. Our goals were simply not ambitious enough. And even those less than ambitious education goals remain unfulfilled. In some of the countries that participated in this week's Learning for All Ministerial meeting, for example, more than 50 per cent of girls still do not complete primary school. The largest proportion of the poorest girls who have never been to school live in these countries. Across the world, transition to and completion of secondary school for girls is a major challenge.

Today too many girls are prevented from making their own choices, determining their own futures and are subjected to violence and exclusion. Furthermore, disadvantage builds on disadvantage. Poor girls living in remote areas are the most

educationally disadvantaged. Girls with disabilities from ethnic minorities, and living in emergencies and conflict affected states even more so.

While the challenges we identify are generally recognized in global and national planning commitments – in plans and strategies, degrees and even laws -- there is an urgent need to move from policy to action. As we begin the 1,000 day countdown to the MDGs, we call for more immediate and coordinated action to accelerate girls' education.

Specifically,

- We call on the Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, to ensure that girls education and gender equality in education remains a priority towards achieving the MDGs and in the development agenda beyond 2015;
- We call for a new standard for girls' education ensuring a minimum of ten years in a safe and supportive learning environment, with ambition for opportunities for life-long learning. This includes:
 - Learning that fosters girls' aspirations and agency in social, political and economic life;
 - Well trained and supported female teachers; as these are known to be role models of what is possible for girls;
 - Strategic efforts to combat gender-based violence, which includes child marriage and other forms of abuse; and
 - Broad community engagement with the participation of girls;
- We call on the Special Envoy to support the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and the Global Partnership for Education, with their partners, in working together to create a platform for advancing girls' education;
- We urge governments and their CSO and development partners to ensure Education Sector Plans systematically address gender inequalities and provide a minimum of ten (10) years of quality education for all girls; that is supported by adequate funds and implementation strategies; and
- We invite you to pledge your support to these commitments through the work of your agencies, countries, and affiliations so that all girls have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.