

Feminist Civil Society and Young Activists Gathering

Concept Note

In September 2022, UNGEI will convene a civil society gathering of grassroots, feminist CSOs working to advance gender equality in and through education in New York. The objectives of this gathering are twofold, and complementary:

1. To meaningfully engage grassroots CSOs from the Global South as partners in UNGEI's 2023 - 2027 Strategic Planning process;
2. To convene and facilitate the meaningful participation and leadership of grassroots, feminist CSOs in the Transforming Education Summit (TES).

Background and rationale

UNGEI is a global, multi-stakeholder, intergenerational partnership and platform for gender equality in and through education. The only intergovernmental entity with this mandate, UNGEI catalyzes action locally and globally for girls' education and gender equality in education. A critical aspect of UNGEI's mandate is to convene and elevate national and grassroots actors. Through its Global Advisory Committee, UNGEI brings together national experts to build global momentum for girls' education and gender equality around the world. UNGEI also hosts Transform Education, a global network of young, feminist activists for education equality.

In 2022, UNGEI will embark on a process to develop its 2023-2027 strategy and portfolio. The purpose of this journey is to review and update UNGEI's priorities, understand the needs and gaps in the ecosystem, identify growth opportunities and build new, and strengthen existing partnerships. The process is an opportunity to increase its visibility and raise funds for an institutionalized presence that can fully deliver on its powerful and unique mandate.

The Transforming Education Summit (TES), led by the current UN Secretary-General, will be convened in September 2022. TES will mobilize action, ambition, solidarity and solutions to transform education between now and 2030. The TES preparatory process will be advanced across three intersecting workstreams: national consultations; thematic action tracks; public engagement and mobilization. Despite the widely acknowledged, gendered impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and persistent gender gaps in education access and learning among the most marginalized children and youth, gender equality is not sufficiently addressed in the TES Thematic Action Tracks. UNGEI is well-positioned to mobilize its diverse, intergenerational partnership to promote gender equality in TES, and elevate the voices of grassroots civil society actors and young feminists.

Convening process

In September 2022, UNGEI will convene 21 feminist education civil society actors (working at national or grassroots levels) in New York. Young, feminist activists below the age of 30 will represent at least 25 percent of this group. [The Gender at the Centre Initiative \(GCI\)](#) alliance will be represented, in addition to ensuring a diversity of regions, languages, viewpoints and geographies. To break down silos in the

gender equality and education movements, the CSOs within this group will be working on a diversity of gender and education issues and related rights - including education in emergencies, school-related gender-based violence, SRHR, disability rights and LGBTQI+ issues.

Influencing opportunities for TES (e.g. the Thematic Action Track #1 Discussion Paper, national consultation process, and pre-summit), and preparatory work for UNGEI's Strategic Planning process will take place in May and June. UNGEI Global Advisory Committee members, alongside the 21 grassroots civil society actors, will harness the power of collective action to make a unified impact on TES. UNGEI GAC and grassroots feminist CSOs will collaborate through virtual consultations to build solidarity, think through joint gender/education priorities and asks, and offer mutual guidance and support to ensure their voices are heard and priorities are elevated through TES. This group will have three key objectives:

- Recognition of gender equality across each thematic Action Track, and within TES events, discussion papers and outcome documents;
- Meaningful participation of diverse, national, grassroots, feminist actors and gender experts in TES consultation processes;
- Advocating with one voice around girls' education and gender equality in and through education.

The September convening moment in New York will mark a culmination and celebration of this work. It will solidify the solidarity and collective action that has been built.

Value proposition

To transform education, we cannot do business as usual. Transforming education means dismantling traditional power structures, and breaking down institutional and thematic siloes. Transforming education entails institutional recognition of civil society and young feminist activists as essential national actors, in addition to government ministries. For more than two decades, UNGEI has been at the forefront of the most pivotal global moments for gender equality and girls' education.

To fulfil TES' commitment to national consultations and meaningful youth participation, UNGEI is offering this proposal to mobilize national and grassroots feminist civil society education actors. The voices of those who have long been in the background need to be put at the forefront. This is the only meaningful way TES can deliver on its commitment to be participatory throughout and not just in national consultations chaired by Ministries.

Grassroots feminist CSOs are often excluded from high-level spaces. Through this process, UNGEI will offer the feminist CSO group the support, guidance and resources needed to influence TES and ensure their priorities, demands and voices are heard. The impact will be substantial and not just on TES. UNGEI and its Global Advisory Committee will benefit from a revived and diversified partnership with the additional representation of national, feminist CSOs working to advance gender equality in and through education. The enhanced and long-term participation of national, feminist CSOs in global education platforms and spaces will strengthen cross-sectoral and intergenerational collaboration, help break down thematic siloes and power structures, and ensure a more collaborative and feminist approach to the transforming education agenda.