

International Day of the Girl Child Theme 2013 ***Innovating for Girls' Education***

Innovation: a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions

The fulfilment of girls' right to education is first and foremost an obligation and moral imperative. There is also overwhelming evidence that girls' education, especially at the secondary level, is a powerful transformative force for societies and girls themselves: it is the one consistent positive determinant of practically every desired development outcome, from reductions in mortality and fertility, to poverty reduction and equitable growth, to social norm change and democratization.

While there has been significant progress in improving girls' access to education over the last two decades, many girls, particularly the most marginalized, continue to be deprived of this basic right. Girls in many countries are still unable to attend school and complete their education due to safety-related, financial, institutional and cultural barriers. Even when girls are in school, perceived low returns from poor quality of education, low aspirations, or household chores and other responsibilities keep them from attending school or from achieving adequate learning outcomes. The transformative potential for girls and societies promised through girls' education is yet to be realized.

Innovation will be an important strategy in addressing the nature and scale of barriers girls continue to face and in ensuring they receive an education commensurate with the challenges of the 21st century. As the world evaluates gaps in achieving the global goals for gender equality in education and defines an agenda post-2015, it is critical that innovation is harnessed to improvise solutions that are not only more creative, but also more effective, efficient, sustainable and just in achieving demonstrable results for improving girls' education.

In recognition of the importance of fresh and creative perspectives to propel girls' education forward, the theme of International Day of the Girl Child for 2013 will be: **Innovating for Girls' Education.**

Smart and creative use of technology is one route to overcoming gender barriers to girls' learning and achievement, but innovation in partnerships, policies, resource utilization, community mobilization, and most of all, the engagement of young people themselves, can be important catalyzing forces. All UN agencies, Member States, civil society organizations, and private sector actors have potential tools to innovate for and with girls to advance their education. The following are just some of many examples:

- Improving public and private means of transportation for girls to get to school—from roads, buses, mopeds, bicycles to boats and canoes
- Engaging young people in monitoring and holding school systems accountable for ensuring the integrity of school facilities and functions and the safety and learning of girls
- Collaboration between school systems and the banking industry to facilitate secure and convenient pay delivery to female teachers and scholarship delivery to girls
- Provision of science and technology courses targeted at girls in schools, universities and vocational education programmes
- Corporate mentorship programmes to help girls acquire critical work and leadership skills and facilitate their transition from school to work
- Revisions of school curricula to integrate positive messages on gender norms related to violence, child marriage, sexual and reproductive health, and male and female family roles
- Deploying mobile technology for teaching and learning to reach girls, especially in remote areas
- Using traditional and social media, advertising and commercial packaging to publicize data on gender disparities in education, the underlying causes, and actions that can be taken for change

The International Day of the Girl Child 2013 will provide a platform to highlight examples such as these – and many more – of ongoing work and achievements, as well as raise awareness of the importance of innovation in advancing girls' education and promoting learning and empowerment.