Build Your Network for Promoting Gender Equality in Education

Target audience: All

This tool contains general information and guidelines on building/joining a network to promote gender equality in education.

What is a network?

A network is a web of individuals or institutions communicating together and working towards achieving a common goal, such as promoting gender equality in education.

Who can build a network?

Anyone with a common interest and goal can build or take part in a network. However, usually networks are built by and gather people with commonalities; they can share the same interests for a specific theme or work area; they can belong to the same profession, etc.

Why do we need networks in the area of gender in education?

- Gender is a cross-cutting theme so the network could involve people from other disciplines, as well.
- Gender issues are multi-sectoral in nature and, therefore, need a multi-sectoral response.
- Advocacy for gender equality in education is stronger when its supporters are united.
- Gender issues can be controversial and complex. They need to be open for discussion so that solutions can be sought with the largest inputs.
- The sense of belonging to a community motivates individuals to do more.
- Gender equality in education is one of the commitments that the international community made in Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, and in order to fulfill this commitment, international cooperation must be strengthened in experience and information sharing. Networking is useful for this purpose and also effective for monitoring the progress in achieving the EFA Goal in different countries.

Typical tasks of a network

- Exchanging knowledge and experiences with other members.
- Sharing research findings and practical lessons learned from the field and their implications for policy development.
- Identifying key issues related to gender in education that need promotion and/or attention from Policy-makers.
• Joint comments and proposals on policies, plans and legislative initiatives.
• Sharing and distributing materials/resources, organizing trainings on a regular basis.

How do we make networks successful?

• Motivation of all network members is crucial. It can only be sustained if the network has clear objectives that have been subscribed to and shared by all members.
• Joint activities carried out through the network should benefit all members. A truly voluntary and autonomous modality of joint activities should be sought.
• Members should communicate on a regular basis.
• The perception that the network is an asset in achieving individual members’ goals is also essential.
• Dependency on any network founder (financially, intellectually and otherwise) should be gradually removed.

How can you build your network?

• Discuss and build your project (with common goal and objectives) with colleagues or potential members.
• Select the key people who will be in charge of the network’s management or define the mode of network management (instead of one management centre, it could be possible to rotate that responsibility among the members).
• Choose a medium of communication (face-to-face meetings, email discussions, website, letters, etc.).
• Seek financial and material assistance from your organization/office or potential donors.
• Start small: organize meetings, online discussions or small activities on one specific topic.
• Advertise your network to draw in more members.
• You may also join an existing network.