Hello!

Welcome to Gender Wire! It’s a newsletter highlighting current gender trends and issues, for people pushing forward gender equality in education in Asia and the Pacific.

Last month, UNESCO held a landmark consultation on the widespread abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students in education settings. LGBTI students face extensive abuse and discrimination. For instance, 98% of LGBTI people surveyed in New Zealand identified being verbally or physically abused at school or university. The psychological and intellectual costs of this abuse mean that LGBTI students are more likely to drop out of school and to contemplate or engage in self-destructive behavior. U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO David Killion said “Discriminatory attitudes are often learned in schools, so this is where they must be fought. UNESCO is helping schools across the world teach tolerance... and I’m glad to see that the organization is developing new ways to combat homophobic attitudes.” Read more of Ambassador Killion’s comments here.

The consultation held in Brazil allowed participants to share examples of good policy and practice from around the world. These will be published by UNESCO this year to share and expand on the outcomes of the consultation. The consultation is the first event within an ongoing process through which UNESCO, in partnership with others, is seeking to ensure safe, secure and inclusive learning environments for all. Read more about the outcomes of the Rio Consultation on Homophobic Bullying and Education for All here.

Discrimination and stereotypes in education must be addressed if gender equality is to be achieved. In line with this, many articles in this month’s Gender Wire question ongoing gender stereotypes in education, seeking ways to identify and dismantle these. Just A Quick Question discusses how negative stereotypes relate to recurrent gender discrimination. The One Good Practice a Month section provides a useful tool for addressing gender
inequalities in science and math education. Would you like to share a great case study of ways to identify and address gender stereotypes in education? Please send it through to the APPEAL Gender Team at gender.bgk@unesco.org

And to start the new lunar year with a refreshing and colorful tone, we are very pleased to share the UNGEI Asia-Pacific 2012 calendar. Please let us know what you think by leaving a comment at the bottom of the page.

Happy New Year, Bonne Année and Masaganang Bagong Taon!

Fuchsia, Adrien and Ayin

The Value of an Education for an Indian Girl: Pratham
10-year-old Parvati from New Delhi on the value of her education.

Empowering Girls in Nepal: Rukmini Foundation
The Rukmini Foundation on removing the financial barriers to education for girls in Nepal.

OPPORTUNITIES
Two vacancy announcements from UNESCO Kabul office:
Consultancy – TVET Specialist and Higher Education Specialist
Application deadline for TVET: 2 February 2012
Application deadline for Higher Education: 15 February 2012

WHAT’S NEW?

India: Basic Shortages Plague Schools Including Just 1 in 3 Girls Toilets Working
The 2009 Right to Education Act, which makes education compulsory for children between ages 6 and 14, has come under fire for its attention to school infrastructure rather than learning results. Saumya Roy argues that the basic shortages which still plague schools in India should remain the focus of education policy. 63% of schools are still without working toilets and just a third of girls toilets work. 81,617 schools did not have a single blackboard. At least 42,000 government schools operated without a building.

India: Eve Teasing: Assault or Harassment by Another Name?
Young women throughout the world continue to face daily unwanted attention and sexual harassment. These security issues are of grave concern to parents and can result in girls not attending school. In the State of Maharashtra, there is an increasing determination to stamp out “Eve teasing”, as it is called there, for good.

Pakistan: Gender Based Violence in Tribal Regions Results in Girls Not Attending School
Northern Pakistan’s women and girls risk mutilation if they are found outside alone. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan links very low school attendance by girls to threats by the Taliban. “Not a single girl got admission to ninth class in Bajaur, FR [Frontier Region] Kohat and FR Lakki Marwat during 2009-10 due to Taliban threats,” and no girls went to college in Bajaur, FR Lakki Marwat or FR Peshawar.”

Pakistan: Girls are Becoming Agents of Change in the Fight for Education
In Kabal, Samira Ahmed, aged 12, is helping to run classes for girls who are not able to go to school. “I feel I must do something with my life. Things here must change, otherwise lives for girls and women will never ever change.”

Afghanistan: Member of Parliament Fawzia Koofi Speaks of her Birth and her Mothers’ Determination to see her be the First Girl Child in her Family to Attend School

Melissa Bollow Tempel: It’s OK to Be Neither: Teaching That Supports Gender-Variant Children
After recognizing that gender socialization starts early, one Wisconsin kindergarten teacher is making an effort to tear down gender stereotyping of children by telling them “It’s okay to be neither.” Tempel writes her story
about the kids she’s taught and how she goes out of her way to make them feel accepted no matter how they look, even if they’re a girl who wears hoodies from the boys’ department.

**USA: New Study Finds Boys’ School Performance Significantly Affected by Family Situation**
A study into the gender educational achievement gap has found that girls appear to be more resilient than boys in preventing problems at home from affecting their behaviour in school. The Trouble with Boys study, based on decade-long data from 20,000 US children, found that school-based factors were not particularly significant. By the time the children were 10 or 11 the "gender gap" between boys and girls displaying behaviour problems in school was twice as big for those brought up by single mothers as those from traditional families.

**Global: ‘Geek’ Perception of Computer Science Putting off Girls, Expert Warns**
One of the world’s leading computer scientists, Professor Dame Wendy Hall, has warned that girls are increasingly shunning computer science at school and university, a problem that is getting worse in the UK, despite huge efforts from the scientific community to address the issue. Hall believes that a cultural obstacle of girls perceiving computing to be "for geeks" is the cause of the scarcity.

**Global: New Research on How to Improve Gender Equality in Math and Science**
A recent US study found that sex-segregated classrooms disadvantage girls in science and math class, and the journal Science suggested they actually increase gender stereotyping and legitimize institutional sexism.

**Global: UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education: Social Misconception that Girls Are Not Entitled to Education**
Reflecting on the progress seen in education, Kishore Singh says girls’ education improved significantly in 2011, even though girls still comprise more than half of all children out of school. “One of the biggest impediments [to gender equality in education] is the social misconception,” says Mr. Singh. “Girls in many developing countries are still viewed to be not equally entitled to education.”

**Global: Barriers to Achieving Universal Basic Education by 2015**
Kevin Watkins argues that universal basic education will not be achieved by 2015 without increasing aid from donors, increasing innovative investment in public education and confronting the public attitudes to gender that result in more than 6 million more girls being out of school than boys.

**Asia: UNICEF Launches Schools For Asia To Improve Education For Millions**
UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and tennis star Serena Williams launched an international fundraising which aims to improve the access and quality of education for the 26 million out of school disadvantaged children living across Asia and the Pacific. The Schools for Asia campaign will help the most marginalized, excluded or otherwise vulnerable children, including girls and children from poor families and of ethnic minorities.

**NEW ON THE SHELF**

- **Girls’ Right to Education**, UNICEF Regional Office South Asia
  Resource Tool Kit for people working in education presents a synthesis of key issues related to disparities in education in South Asia and potential strategies to overcome or reduce these disparities. The synthesis provides an account of dynamics which challenge the fulfillment of the right to education for all children and examples of interventions to help alleviate it. It also includes the voices of children, parents, teachers and education workers through direct quotes collected through qualitative research.

  The 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report will focus on skills development for marginalized groups, including girls and young women. What this paper clearly indicates is that while there is a lack of reliable information and statistics to analyse the impact of these forces on girls and young women, especially those from marginalized groups, and that there is a near absence of well-documented and evaluated interventions and strategies to address skills development among marginalized youth. Case studies are included on training for rural economic empowerment in Pakistan and the Philippines.

- **A Place At The Table: Safeguarding Women’s Rights In Afghanistan**, Oxfam International
  This Report considers the ways to preserve the important gains that Afghan women have made in the ten years since the western intervention in Afghanistan. Report recommendations call upon the Afghan government to intensify efforts to promote female access to education; and the international community to intensify support to promote access to education, and ensure this support will continue at current or increased levels even as international military forces prepare to withdraw.

- **Asia-Pacific Human Development Report Background Papers Series “Cross-national indices with gender-differentiated data”**, UNDP
  Report analyses how to use indices of gender-differentiated data to measure gender disparities. Relying on a framework that synthesizes key guidelines concerning the methodology of measurement, this paper offers an
ONE GOOD PRACTICE A MONTH

Improving Gender Equality in Math and Science by Addressing Stereotypes
One key factor in differences in boys and girls results in math and science, is the stereotype that math is a “boy thing.” This view has been found to be held as early as first and second grade. New research suggests that programs should target girls much earlier than previously, and gender should be taken out of the equation in teaching about occupations. Rather than saying “girls can be scientists,” we should talk about what scientists do, and ask girls and boys if these are things they would be good at and interested in doing. Read more [here](#).

JUST A QUICK QUESTION

How do Stereotypes Justify Gender Discrimination?
Stereotypes are not inherently negative always but because they are assumptions that disregard a person’s individual and inherent abilities, opportunities and environment, they tend to be prejudicial.

Negative stereotypes hinder peoples’ ability to fulfill their potential by limiting choices and opportunities. They translate into practical policies, laws and practices that cause harm to women on the ground. Examples of the effect of this gender discrimination include gender pay gap, occupational segregation, denial of promotions to leadership – glass ceiling in different professions, increased casualization of women workers and feminization of poverty, trafficking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour killings, violence against women in domestic spheres, work place and public spaces, lower levels of equation and work opportunities.

Men suffer too because conforming to masculine roles of competitive and ambitious self-seeking can put pressure on them and deprive them of joys that can come from parenting and having intimate respectful relationships.

Want to learn how to recognize gender stereotypes? [This tool](#) helps to question underlying attitudes and identify gender labels. It is part of the GENIA toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education.

Want to learn about effective policy responses to counter gender discrimination and negative gender stereotypes? Read more from UN Women [here](#).