

Islamabad, Pakistan, 31 December 2010 - In a concerted effort to address gender disparities in education, Pakistan's Ministry of Education, with the support of the National Commission for Human Development, the UNGEI Secretariat, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and UNICEF, launched the Pakistan Girls' Education Initiative (PGEI) on 9 December at the Pakistan National Council for Arts.

The initiative, which grew out of consultations across the country, aims to address the critical issues of educating girls in a country where many are out of school. Man-made and natural disasters, including the wide-spread flooding in July have exacerbated the situation, with over 10,000 schools partially or fully damaged and almost 2,900 schools now occupied by internally displaced persons.

Education for all

Before an audience of 300, National Assembly Speaker Dr. Fehmida Mirza welcomed the establishment of PGEI as a "step towards creating effective alliances of committed partners at the international, federal and provincial levels in order to create an enabling educational environment, where girls, as well as boys, can flourish and unleash their untapped potential."

"World development models have shown that by educating their women, nations have succeeded in minimizing the maternal and infant mortality risks, improved the community health structures, created employments, enhanced economic returns and transformed human settlements into peaceful, self-respecting and progressive societies," Ms. Mirza said.

Head of the UNGEI Secretariat Cheryl Gregory Faye said that PGEI was the outcome of the effective participation of the Pakistan delegation in UNGEI's 10th anniversary conference, "Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality," held in May 2010 in Dakar, Senegal, and its dynamic membership in the drafting committee of the Dakar Declaration on Accelerating Girls' Education and Gender Equality, the first global declaration on girls' education.

"Through the PGEI network - with its enhanced capability for information sharing, building partnerships among key stakeholders, policy advocacy and assistance to the government of

Pakistan in its response to emergencies - our hope is that each child in Pakistan, girl and boy alike, will complete a high quality education," Ms. Faye said.

Source: [ReliefWeb](#)