

**[Panelist]**

**RE-CASTING GENDER EQUALITY TARGETS FOR BASIC EDUCATION IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA: REGIONALISING POST 2015 DEVELOPEMNT AGENDA**

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In this 21<sup>st</sup> millennium, the world has great expectations in increased visibility of the practical implementation of commitments to deliver on the principle of equity as part of the global mission for the survival of children, especially girls in Africa whereby, like in and South East Asia, education and health have bleakly lagged behind the rest of the world. It is noteworthy that the safety of a child's arrival in this world remains subject to the chance of where s/he was born and whether a family is of good fortune. Often the privileges associated with birth of a child tend to influence direction of inequities that extend throughout and beyond childhood whereby it is estimated that for instance, the richest 20 per cent of the world's women are 2.6 times more likely than the poorest 20 per cent to have a skilled attendant present at delivery and that one-third of the girls that remain out of school come from the most poorest families in the most disadvantaged regions of the world. Hence, in the context of education, regardless of wealth status, gender inequalities that characterize the development of children tend to impact negatively on more girls than boys and comparatively in more diverse ways especially for girls in the African region (UNICEF, 2014).

This paper foregrounds the equity approach which entails the equality framework of opportunities for all children as a moral imperative that will continue to hold the promise to realise children's rights (girls and boys) everywhere in a manner that exceeds what has ever been possible in specific contexts. The paper acknowledges that interaction between equity and equality yields the most effective driver in the pursuance of the rights of every child to, and through, education in which protection, health care, shelter and good nutrition are key complementary components as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) as well as in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999). Because these rights are sacrosanct and hence, non-negotiable for all children regardless of their status in life, the re-casting of strategies to achieve the gender equality and equity targets must consequently

remain a priority in securing the wellbeing of girls and boys through an educational process that is innovative, inclusive, participatory and responsive to individual and societal transformation.

Notably, there was near-panic that was articulated globally at the realisation many of the developing countries including those in the Eastern and Southern African Region (ESAR) as well as those in South East Asia were arriving at the “deadline of Year 2015” with explicit shortfalls of the outlined MDG targets. However, in the recent years, this situation has gradually been rationalised and transformed into a visionary re-orientation of what has become popularly known as the Post 2015 Sustainable Goals. This paper makes a keen focus on educational developments in the ESAR with regard to attainment of the set targets for *quality education that “promotes gender equality and empowers women”* (see MDG3) as well as in the *“elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education”* which remain a priority in the Post 2015 development agenda. Of importance to this focus is the Education for All goal 5 which complements the education development goals by stressing not only the elimination of gender disparities in education but also, *“achieving gender equality in education with focus on girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality”*. Contextually, this paper makes special reference to the ESAR by addressing *what has worked in enhancing gender equality and equity and what has not worked* and locating the discussion within two perspectives that are used to describe education in terms of *progress attained and to be up-scaled, sustained, replicated and challenges to be overcome through targeted and evidence-based interventions as well as through synergic innovations* during Post 2015 era.

Structurally, this paper endeavours to firstly, provide a conceptual discourse around the influence that gender continues to have on education based on the fluid and relational nature that must continue to be contextually interrogated, re-defined and interpreted rationally and sensitively. Secondly, this paper proceeds to interrogate, qualitatively and quantitatively, the gains made through linking education for gender equality with the nexus of human capital investment and human rights investment that seeks to ensure equality of every person regardless of status and without any discrimination. Thirdly, the discussion will weave-in insights from community histories and cultures that have tended to intervene and hamper progress of attainment of the gender targets in specific regions of ESA with explicit implications on gender equality that is now spilling beyond Year 2015. Fourthly, the capabilities approach which resonates the essence of human rights as the basis for nurturing empowerment and agency is foregrounded with the aim of generating discussion on “viable strategic frameworks” for

accelerating attainment of gender equality and equity in education within targeted contexts in the ESAR and in the spirit of Post 2015 Sustainable Goals.