THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING OUR NEXT GENERATION
In celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2013 (11th October)

“Investing in women is smart economics, and investing in girls, catching them upstream, is even smarter economics. If you invest in girls, if you educate girls, if you get girls into jobs, you solve so many problems.”

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
Finance Minister of Nigeria

Innovation is the solution put forward by this year’s International Day of the Girl Child. Innovation consisting of education through partnerships, policies, resource utilization, community mobilization and, most importantly, engagement of young people are all significant catalytic forces for progress. All UN agencies, member states, civil society organizations, and private sector actors have the potential to innovate for, and with, girls and young women to advance their education. Not only this - there is overwhelming evidence that education, especially at the secondary level, is a powerful transformative force for societies and girls and young women themselves. Recent data published by UNESCO proves that “investing in education, especially for girls, alleviates extreme poverty through securing substantial benefits for health and productivity, as well as democratic participation and women’s empowerment.”

In terms of women’s empowerment, educating girls and young women is undoubtedly one of the most powerful tools. Education provides women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence they need to seek out economic opportunities. In this sense both formal and informal education, such as vocational activities and motivational speeches from already-successful-entrepreneurs, is necessary. UNIDO assists developing countries in addressing the discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes in the education system, simultaneously promoting education and skills in order to achieve industrial development through the Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programme (ECP).

How does UNIDO innovate to educate?
By introducing young women and girls to appropriate technologies that increase their productivity; raising awareness and providing training on entrepreneurship, on quality control systems, product certification and marketing; and linking them to international markets where they can sell their products.

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Feature: The Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programme (ECP)

UNIDO the ECP and its umbrella programme, "Entrepreneurship Development for the Youth" work on the understanding that the institutional environment should encourage the emergence of entrepreneurial initiatives with effective, efficient and transparent administrative public services, a gender-responsive business environment and availability of investments funds to start-up businesses.

The ECP, launched in Uganda in 2001, has expanded to several other countries, including Timor-Leste, Rwanda, Angola and Tanzania as well as Mozambique. In the period of 2006-2009, the courses were delivered to a total of 1,397 schools, reaching out to more than 416,000 pupils.

Within these courses, girls and young women are encouraged to take non-traditional entrepreneurial classes that challenge the stereotypes of society and develop a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, business and self-employment.

Gender equality is promoted by increasing opportunities for both girls and boys to make life choices that go beyond limiting norms about gender, for example education. UNIDO’s key activities include creating an enabling environment for female entrepreneurs to thrive, and promoting the use of clusters and partnerships to facilitate access to information, technology, and markets for youth and women.

"To create a business where you can make a living, fight poverty – that’s what’s really important" Piassa, 19 year old Entrepreneurship student, Mozambique

Source: UNIDO, Promotion of Rural and Women Entrepreneurship overview
Focus on Mozambique

In Mozambique, the ECP project started as an experiment in a few schools in 2004. In 2008, 18,300 pupils at thirty-nine schools took the entrepreneurship class, exceeding 120,000 after just two years. Mozambique embarked on an ambitious education plan to better prepare young people for entrepreneurial activities and trigger a nation-wide, bottom-up, economic growth process. The curriculum was developed, and has already been implemented, by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the government of Mozambique, with technical assistance from UNIDO and funding from the government of Norway - in 331 schools. 1,654 teachers have been trained and 496,000 pupils are enrolled on the course of which forty-seven percent are female. An overwhelming number of pupils, 127,800, have successfully graduated from the programme so far - with eighty-five percent utilizing their entrepreneurial skills. As the programme is run in accordance to gender mainstreaming frameworks, equal representation between male and female graduates starting SMEs has been achieved. 225 instructors have been trained to pass their skills on to teachers and simultaneously a pedagogical university has been established. Furthermore, the programme is reaching out to young people all over – with pupils from rural and urban areas showing equal commitment to the course.

Felicidade tells her story...

“I decided to start my business because I thought it would help meet my general needs. With a group of friends, who became my business partners, we decided in

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terms of money that each group member should contribute a certain amount each month. We made a budget and a bankroll. We make profits from the sale of homemade cookies. We were already selling cookies for some time, but never considered using the discipline of entrepreneurship to make it into a business. When I had received the entrepreneurship classes, I identified that my problem was the competition- there are many people selling cookies. So, I asked for the support of my brothers to assemble a tent in front of our house in order to sell the cookies all the time. When I'm in class, my brothers are taking care of my business. The business fits well inside my community because there is enough demand for my products. The entrepreneurship course has awakened in me a person who I never thought I could be. The course has taught me how to have dignity in business and how to deal with my clients. I know, and have learned, to overcome difficulties, and also to be aware of my limits.”

Source: “EXPERIÊNCIAS DE ALUNOS Março 2012” Publication by UNIDO, Norwegian embassy, MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO

Below are some examples put forward by the International Day of the Girl Child, of how we – individuals, project managers, member states, civil society organizations, UN agencies and private sector corporations can make a difference in order to educate girls and young women so that we may improve the lives of generations to come:

- Innovation through improving transportation methods for girls to get to school, both private and public, for example, bicycles, canoes, buses and road infrastructure
- Supporting revision of school curricula to actively integrate positive messages of gender norms
- Innovation by means of engaging young people, monitoring and holding schools accountable for integrity functions, safety and the learning of girls
- Innovation by means of encouraging partnerships between school systems and the banking industry to secure convenient pay delivery to teachers and scholarships for female students
- Providing science and technology courses targeted at girls
- Enabling mobile technology in order to reach and teach girls in remote areas
- Using traditional and social media, advertising and commercial strategies to raise awareness on gender disparities in education, the root causes and actions to be taken for long-term change
CLICK HERE TO FIND TEN THINGS TO KNOW ON THE DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

Source: Interactive slideshow, World Bank

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD please visit:

http://www.ungei.org/

The wider debate...For further reading...

- Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls, World Bank working paper
- UNICEF Girl’s Education campaigns
- UNFPA on Empowering Women through Education
- “The girl effect“ - a compelling video on how girl’s education impacts development
- “The girl effect“ - covering up the reality of austerity

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