

**GIMAC**

**17<sup>TH</sup> PRE-SUMMIT CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON  
GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE AU**

**24 – 26 JANUARY 2011**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**PRESENTING BEST PRACTICES: EDUCATION**

**THE FAWE EXPERIENCE**

**(BY MS S DE COMARMOND – CHAIRPERSON FAWE, AFRICA)**

## **WHAT IS FAWE**

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is the leading pan-African NGO working to empower African girls and women through gender – responsive education. We work hand in hand with communities, schools, civil society, NGOs and ministries to achieve gender equity and equality in education in Africa through targeted programmes.

It was founded in the wake of the international conference on Education for All in 1992, by five women education ministers (including myself...), who were committed to make a difference to girls education in Africa. FAWE now operates in over 30 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **OUR VISION**

A world in which gender disparities in education are eliminated and all African girls access education, perform well and complete their studies successfully.

## **OUR MISSION**

To promote gender equity and equality in education in Africa by fostering positive policies, practices and attitudes towards girls' education.

## **THE CHALLENGE**

Twenty years after the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa continues to be adversely impacted by a variety of socio-cultural, economic and political factors. Access to education for African girls is still far below the world average, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels. In many African countries, only one in four girls has a chance of receiving secondary education. The situation is worse at tertiary level. The inequalities have very real negative consequences for Africa's development potential.

## **WHAT IS OUR APPROACH**

Recognising that education is a fundamental human right, FAWE works to transform girls' and women's education across Africa. We believe that empowering girls and women through education brings multiplier benefits not only at individual level, but at community and country level too.

FAWE uses a four-pronged approach to achieve gender equity and equality in education in Africa. Through this approach, we influence government policies, build public awareness, demonstrate best educational practices through effective models, and encourage the

adoption of these models by governments and institutions of education.

### ***Policy Advocacy***

Through analysis of education policies and plans and targeted action research, FAWE works to influence Ministries of Education and other policy-makers to formulate and implement policies that will achieve greater and better participation of girls in education. These efforts encourage reform and facilitate the translation of gender policies into practice.

### ***Community and Grassroots Advocacy***

We undertake vigorous advocacy at community level where many barriers to girls' education persist. Through a range of advocacy campaigns, FAWE raises awareness among stakeholders and members of local communities on the social and economic value of girls' education, in an effort to foster positive attitudes towards girls' education and influence communities to take concrete action to support it.

### ***Demonstrative Interventions***

From its inception, FAWE has recognised the importance of demonstrating what works in girls' education. Accordingly, we employ a number of gender-responsive models in different African

countries to demonstrate that “contexts” can be created that are conducive to girls’ enrolment, continuation and successful completion of the school cycle. Let me take you through at least four models that have recorded remarkable success in various countries where FAWE is trying to make a difference:

The *Centres of Excellence (COE)* – These are gender – responsive schools that offer quality education and pay particular attention to the physical, academic and social dimensions of both girls’ and boys’ education;

The *TUSEME* is a Youth Empowerment Model that trains girls and boys to identify and understand the problems that affect them, articulate these problems and take action to solve them;

The *Science, Mathematics and Technology (SMT)* is a model that aims to increase and sustain access, interest, participation and performance of girls in SMT subjects at all levels;

The *Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP)* is a model that trains teachers to be more gender aware and sensitive, and develops teaching practices that engender equal treatment and participation of girls and boys in schools.

## **REPLICATION AND MAINSTREAMING**

FAWE works closely with Ministries of Education to replicate and scale up its demonstrative models across Africa. We support the adoption of these models locally through our National Chapters and provide technical expertise to Ministries of Education in mainstreaming the models at national level.

## **WHERE DOES FAWE WORK**

FAWE has 34 established National Chapters that operate largely autonomous national NGOs across sub-Saharan Africa. National Chapters work directly with Ministries of Education, Strategic Partners and Communities to ensure that FAWE's programmes and interventions are effectively implemented and fully supported by all Stakeholders. The Regional Secretariat which is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya provides co-ordination and technical support to National Chapters and monitors and evaluates the work of the entire organisation.

## **THE TUSEME YOUTH EMPOWERMENT MODEL**

Amongst the successful models that FAWE has developed, I would like to take this opportunity, to share in greater detail the TUSEME Youth Empowerment Model.

TUSEME is a Kiswahili word that means LET US SPEAK OUT. It is an empowerment process for both girls and boys, to enable them to understand and overcome problems that hinder their academic and social development.

TUSEME was developed as a result of concerns amongst educationalists, parents and other social groups that girls are not sufficiently empowered to cope with life. As a consequence, they do not participate effectively in education processes. This in turn hinders their academic and social development. The factors behind this lack of empowerment include: socialization, negative cultural values and attitudes, and the overall gender construct that places women in inferior positions to men.

TUSEME was initiated in Tanzania in 1996 in collaboration with the University of Dar es Salaam. The objective of TUSEME is to empower the girls in particular to: *Identify and analyse the problems that hinder their academic and social development, speak out and express their views about the problems, find solutions and take action to solve the challenges associated with their academic and social development.*

The TUSEME process is an empowerment model that uses **Theatre for Development (TFD)** techniques. Theatre for Development is a community based process of theatre production that involves research, analysis and finding solutions to social and developmental problems.

The TUSEME process involves the students themselves in identifying their problems, analysing the root causes, speaking out about them using different artistic forms, finding solutions and taking action to solve them. As part of the process, TUSEME Clubs are established in schools.

Recognising its effectiveness, FAWE adopted TUSEME as one programme for the empowerment of girls and boys to combat gender constraints in education. From the year 1999, FAWE started introducing TUSEME in the Centres of Excellence. Over time TUSEME has spread to some 384 schools extending to different countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Tanzania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

In all these countries, TUSEME has proven to be a very effective strategy for building confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem amongst the girls. Their ability to analyse situations, take correct decisions, challenge the systems, decisions and situations that impact negatively on their welfare have all been significantly enhanced. More importantly, girls participating in TUSEME have recorded significant improvement in academic performance. A total of 31,232 students have been empowered in this process (21,862 girls and 9,370 boys). The cases of girls' drop-out due to pregnancies have reduced drastically in most of the TUSEME schools.

FAWE has produced a handbook for Teachers on the TUSEME process: ***Empowering Youth through TUSEME – Let Us Speak Out.***

This handbook has been used to train teachers across the various countries.

Two Governments have adopted TUSEME as youth empowerment model into their National Education Plans. (Kenya into the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme, and Tanzania in the Secondary Education Develop Plan (SEDP). We hope that many other countries will follow suit.

## **CONCLUSION**

Since its inception FAWE has been and is still heavily dependent on funding from highly supportive foreign donor agencies and partners. As we progress towards our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and as we prepare the next Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018, FAWE has to revisit its existence whereby it has to draw up strategies so as to be more self-sufficient and work towards more sustainable objectives. The challenge here is that FAWE is an African organisation, created by African Women, for the future generation of Africa – so my appeal to our African Leaders is: **ISN'T IT TIME THAT FAWE IS DULY RECOGNISED AS A GENUINE PARTNER IN EDUCATION, AND TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER SUPPORTING THIS ORGANISATION MORE SUBSTANTIVELY, SO THAT IT CAN CONTINUE TO PERFORM AN EFFECTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORTING GOVERNMENTS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE EFA GOALS FOR THE**

BENEFIT OF OUR CONTINENT. I pray that I will live long enough to see this dream come true!!

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