Biographies of speakers

Phuong Anh
Phuong Anh is a teacher and a youth activist for gender equality and girls' rights from Vietnam. She is a member of the Champions of Change network and a youth advisor of Plan International, working to amplify youth and girls' voices. Anh believes that a transformative education system is the key for to achieve an equitable and free world for all.

Karen Austrian
Karen Austrian is a globally recognized expert in adolescent health who leads the Population Council’s Girl Innovation, Research and Learning (GIRL) Center. Prior to stepping into this role Austrian led a portfolio of projects designed to empower girls in East and Southern Africa. She develops, implements, and evaluates programs that build girls’ protective assets and is also actively involved in ensuring that evidence on adolescence is synthesized and used by global, national and local stakeholders.

Bhagyashri Dengle
Bhagyashri Dengle is a development professional with over 30 years of experience in the field of development. Bhagyashri is currently the Executive Director for APAC and Policy & Practice at Plan International and is deeply involved in developing transformational strategies to ensure that 45 million girls in Asia and 100 million globally are able to learn, lead, decide and thrive by 2022, through advocacy and gender transformative programmes.

Hari Lamsal
Dr. Hari Lamsal is Joint Secretary and Head of the Planning Division at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Nepal. (TO COME)
Maria Nguyen

Maria Nguyen is a youth education activist and the International Education Officer at Family Planning New South Wales (Australia). She has also worked as a school teacher and has experience supporting students with learning disabilities and difficulties. Maria is passionate about tackling gender-based violence and ensuring that all students have access to quality education about respectful relationships, sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality. She holds a Bachelor of Education and is a member of the SDG4Youth Network.

Alexandra Pura

Alexandra has been working in the social development sector for 30 years, focusing on women’s rights and children’s rights. She has been involved in programming and policy advocacy on a wide range of issues – land and housing, education, livelihoods, humanitarian/emergency, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and management. She has also managed consortia and partnerships – gathering, convening, brokering partnerships, and building consensus based on shared values towards a common goal.

Swetha Sridhar

Swetha oversees the Youth portfolio at the International Planned Parenthood Federation’s South Asia Regional Office, where she works closely with Member Associations to make sexual and reproductive health and rights services more youth-friendly, support the delivery of high-quality and culturally relevant CSE, and foster youth leadership in the region. Previously, she has worked in social policy advisory and advocacy, especially related to SRHR for adolescents and youth, and her work has focused on advocating for the ‘right to choose’, for all peoples, always.

Jorge Ubaldo Colin Pescina

Jorge is the Gender Equality – Education Specialist within the Global Partnership for Education. An education economist with more than 10 years of experience working with international and private organizations in Latin America, East Africa and the Middle East and North Africa, he was previously part of the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) with a focus on improving financing for girls’ education. He also worked in UNICEF’s Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa as an education economist, and in New York as part of UNICEF’s team in charge of Secondary Education.

Elaine Unterhalter

Elaine Unterhalter is Professor of Education and International Development and Co-Director of the Centre for Education & International Development at University College London Institute of Education. From South Africa, Prof. Unterhalter is presently the Principal Investigator on the Accountability for Gender Equality and Education (AGEE) project and has written widely on gender issues in education. Her most recent books are *Education, Poverty and Global Goals for Gender Equality: How people make policy happen* (2017), co-authored with Amy North) and *Measuring the unmeasurable in education* (2018).