

Ensuring Education for Women in Developing Nations

UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

I. Introduction

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is the only committee of the United Nations dedicated entirely to promoting equal rights and ensuring these are respected and sustained. As a global protector of girls and women, UN Women works to meet their needs worldwide. This committee supports UN member states as they work to provide global standards for equality as well as working with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs, and services needed to ensure that these standards are achieved and truly make a difference in the life of every girl and woman (About UN Woman). UN Women works alongside the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) as a way to enhance women's participation in all aspects of life. Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth (UN Women).

The committee needs to work together to draft a resolution to which all countries agree to. All delegates must understand the sensitivity and gravity of the issue. Some possible considerations could be to increase the presence of organizations fighting enforced disappearances in countries that have such cases reported frequently. The committee should look for both short and long term solutions to prevent enforced disappearances from occurring and protect the rights of citizens in all countries. Providing decent education is vital to ensure every girl and woman the ability to work and create a prosperous life for themselves. Unfortunately, there are still 31 million girls, aged 13 years and younger, that do not have access to primary education. For adolescent girls it is similar, with 34 million not attending secondary school (Girls' Education – the Facts). The goal of this committee is to ensure equal access to all level education for girls and women around the world and to boost their participation in many areas of society, thus improving their quality of life. Ensuring female education includes promoting gender equality in regions where machismo is so prominent that woman is denied access to education. It will also include facilitating transport mediums and attendance to schools in rural areas where distance and transportation are the main reason for girls not receiving education.

II. History and Description of the Issue

In the 1960s, fewer than one in ten women went to university, and most studied the arts and humanities. Women who studied science, philosophy and other male-dominated subjects often excelled, but their work did not always gain the recognition it deserved. Very few women continued to postgraduate education. In contemporary society, the situation has changed. According to statistics from UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Service), over 50% of students who entered higher education in 2011 were women; 34% of these women chose to study math or

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science-based subject (including medicine and engineering), compared to 35% of the men in the same year.

Women's Studies developed through the women's movement campaigns and in study groups and workshops. These generated new ideas and research about women, their relationships and their position in the world. Women's contribution and engagement with the world was minimized in most traditional learning. The Women's Liberation Movement unleashed a tremendous desire to learn about women's history, science and the arts, and the work that women had done in the past as well as the present (Education and the Women's Liberation Movement). It was a political alignment of women and feminist intellectualism that emerged in the late 1960s and continued into the 1980s primarily in the industrialized nations of the Western world, which effected great change (political, intellectual, cultural) throughout the world (Women's Liberation Movement). This new knowledge was used to publish and teach feminist courses in every subject and to rethink the constitution of all academic disciplines (Education and the Women's Liberation Movement).

Despite the great expansion of educational opportunities worldwide during the past thirty years, women in most developing countries still receive less schooling than men. Yet there is compelling evidence that the education of girls and women promotes both individual and national well-being. An example is the strong links between a woman's education and her employment and income. Another is that better-educated women bear fewer children, who have better chances of surviving infancy, of being healthy, and of attending school. When women are deprived of an education, individuals, families, and children, as well as the societies in which they live, suffer. When women are adequately educated, everyone benefits. Why, then, do women in much of the developing world continue to lag behind men in measures of educational attainment, including literacy, length of schooling, and educational achievement? (Hill et al.)

Women's education in some countries is banned or limited. A number of questions arise from this statement as to why. The most common reasons behind limited female education are often related to power, money or culture. Power is a major threat to women's education. Men dominating women is not an unusual sight. Although equality has become more prominent and most of the Western World has come to accept this, developing countries are not yet used to the idea. One effective way to exercise power over women is to limit their education. If they do not know of anything different than the life they are living, they will not protest. If a woman does not learn her rights, she will not exercise them. If women do not learn the basic skills of reading and writing, they cannot find a good salary job and stays submissive at home. Limiting women's education is one of the best ways to stop women from thriving become equal because they do not have the skills or knowledge to overcome this issue. Power is one of the main contributing factors to education inequalities in developing countries.

Money is another factor in banning or limiting women's education in developing countries. This is usually due to, again, the power of men over women. A man's education will come before a women's education when a choice has to be made. This decision has dated back through history where men were the sole providers for the family. Therefore, men need education to get a good/high salary income to provide for the family home. Money in developing countries is very important and usually hard to come by, so it is usually put into basic needs of life - food and water, not an education. Culture can influence the limiting or banning of women's education. Religion and tradition are the two main factors to this. Very religious regions can have very traditional views and focus on the importance of purity and religious worship than that of education. Traditionally, men are the sole providers for the family home and women stay at home, cooking and cleaning. This was a fact of life until quite recently. The majority of the western



world encourage this, however, the developing still have quite strong traditions, due to power and money commonly (An Unequal World).

The EFA GMR's World Inequality Database in Education, WIDE, highlights the powerful influence of gender, combined with other factors such as ethnicity and location, over which people have little control but which play an important role in shaping their opportunities for education and life. In 10 countries around the world, no more than half of the poorest girls enter school, and in 10 countries, nine out of ten of the poorest young women have not completed school. Without a step change by the government to give these children and young people the education they need, including a second chance for those who have missed out, they will be denied equal opportunities in work and life forever (Girls' Education – the Facts). The following table shows two rankings of the top ten highest percentages of the uneducated woman in developing countries (left) as well as the top ten countries with the least years of education accomplished by a woman aged 17-22 (right).

Percentage of poorest females aged 7-16 who have never been to school			Average years of education for the poorest 17-22 year old females		
Rank	Country	%	Rank	Country	Years
1	Somalia	95%	1	Somalia	0.3
2	Niger	78%	2	Niger	0.4
3	Liberia	77%	3	Mali	0.5
4	Mali	75%	4	Guinea	0.5
5	Burkina Faso	71%	5	Guinea-Bissau	0.8
6	Guinea	68%	6	Yemen	0.8
7	Pakistan	62%	7	Central African Republic	0.8
8	Yemen	58%	8	Burkina Faso	0.9
9	Benin	55%	9	Pakistan	1.0
10	Côte d'Ivoire	52%	10	Benin	1.1

Figure 1. Source: EFA GMR's World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)

III. International Response and Bloc Analysis

The Department of International Development has been working on women's education to make achieving gender parity in education a priority for the international community. DFID's bilateral funding commitments for basic education averaged at £150 million a year up to 2001. Since the World Education Forum at Dakar and the Millennium Summit in 2000, the UK has significantly

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increased its new commitments for education programs and we will continue to do so. As a result, we expect to spend an average of £350 million a year on education (a total of over £1 billion) over the period 2005-06 to 2007-08. This would roughly double the resources going directly to education programs in developing countries since we first adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition to their bilateral contributions, they expect to spend £370 million through multilateral agencies, bringing their total funding for education over the next three years to over £1.4 billion. They will support governments in their efforts to create political leadership for women's empowerment. National leaders who speak out against gender inequality can have a significant impact. Heads of government in Oman, Morocco, China, Sri Lanka, and Uganda have advocated strongly in support of girls' education. Women leaders have been particularly effective. Ethiopia has benefited from the long-standing involvement of the Minister of Education, who has also been chair of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). Successes in Ethiopia demonstrate the importance of local leadership, as in Yemen, Mexico, India, and Egypt. However, political leadership needs to be accompanied by a demand for change at the grassroots level. Without it, new initiatives may have little support, and policymakers may divert the resources earmarked for girls to other purposes. Government leadership and commitment are known to be critical to ensuring that more girls get into school. Many examples are showing how good policies on girls' education have made little difference at the school level. This may be because they are not prioritized by central or local officials, or because they are not accompanied by extra resources.

Political champions are needed to ensure policies that support better education opportunities for girls are translated into action. Government support is essential to develop policies and plans that reduce the cost of education for poor families. The removal of school tuition fees has resulted in a dramatic surge in enrolment of boys and girls in a number of African countries such as Kenya. The DFID will actively work with countries to remove user fees for basic education. They also support governments to develop policies and plans that reduce the cost of education for poor families. The removal of school tuition fees has resulted in a dramatic surge in enrolment of boys and girls in several African countries such as Kenya. They will actively work with countries to remove user fees for basic education. Removing fees cannot be done in isolation. It needs to be part of a comprehensive program that combines system reform and quality improvement. Resources are needed to compensate schools for the loss of funds and to pay for additional teachers and classrooms. A range of other indirect costs such as textbooks and school uniforms can continue to deter enrolment for poor children, and girls in particular, as is the case in several Asian countries. These initiatives include stipends and scholarships, and conditional grant programs which have increased access for the poor, and particularly poor girls. Other successful initiatives include the provision of free or subsidized childcare for younger children (India and Kenya), and the construction of schools closer to communities to lower transport costs and travel time. In Egypt, this raised enrolment for girls by 60 percent and for boys by 19 percent. (Girls' Education: towards a Better Future for All).

The Campaign for Female Education ([CAMFED](#)) is an international non-profit organization tackling poverty and inequality by supporting marginalized girls to go to school and succeed, and empowering young women to step up as leaders of change. Their African-led movement has already supported 3.3 million children to go to school, with nearly 140,000 young women in their CAMA

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alumnae network leading the charge, multiplying donor investment in girls' education by supporting even more girls to stay in school, and thrive after school.

The mission of [Girls Education International](#) is to expand and support educational opportunities for underserved girls and women in remote and undeveloped regions of the world. Girls Education International envisions a world where educational opportunities for women and girls are equal to those typically afforded boys and men, and thus provide the foundation for healthier and prosperous societies that reflect their unique cultural differences.

[Educate Girls](#) currently operates successfully in over 13,000 villages in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. By leveraging the Government's existing investment in schools and by engaging with a huge base of community volunteers, Educate Girls helps to identify, enrol and retain out-of-school girls and to improve foundational skills in literacy and numeracy for all children (both girls and boys). This helps deliver measurable results to a large number of beneficiaries and avoids duplication or parallel delivery of services.

IV. Committee Mission

Notable advances have been made concerning female education in recent history. In many developed countries, it is normal to see a classroom with an equal number of girls and boys. The rate of women that graduate college has dramatically increased since the end of the past decade until now. Despite these advances, the developing world still struggles to promote equality in education and millions of young women are deprived of their right to it. The goal of this committee is to ensure equal access to all level education for girls and women around the world and to boost their participation in many areas of society, thus improving their quality of life. The mission of UN Woman is to create a world where girls and women can improve their quality of life through education. All girls should be eligible to attend school regardless of their race, age or nationality. Solutions for this issue have to cover lots of different aspects. Transportation and mobility is the main issue for rural girls that live far away from the nearest schools. Either providing transport that takes them to school or building schools nearby rural towns will help more girls to have access to school. Monetary issues also impede impoverished girls the opportunity for a decent education. Granting scholarships, working to reduce tuitions, cheaper uniforms and school material will all boost the number of girls enrolling in schools. Promoting ideals of equality, especially in places where this mindset has not yet been adopted, is also vital for more girls to gain access to education. Other solutions to consider are how to deal with the impact of unstable weather on girls attending school. Matters of insecurity are also highly important. The insecurity that girls might be exposed to on their way to school or even inside school grounds. This topic includes many different aspects to consider and many regions of the world that need to be prioritized.

V. Annotated links for further research

a) General Country Research

[UN Member States](#)

This link provides an overview of each country in the United Nations.

[The World Factbook](#)

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Provides information of all the nations of the world.

b) Committee Links

[UN Women](#)

This is the official website for United Nations Women, where it includes their mission and current events happening.

c) Topic Links

1. Fact sheet on statistics on how education will improve women's lives. Also includes top countries affected by the issue. Lots of short facts.

[Girls' education – the facts](#)

2. Issues that prevent girls from obtaining quality education and how international efforts can help tackle the issue. Very Useful

[Girls' education: towards a better future for all](#)

3. [The World Bank- Girls' Education](#)

4. [Redefining Education in the Developing World](#) by Mark J. Epstein & Kristi Yuthas

Interesting article published in the Stanford Social Innovation Review where it takes an interesting approach to the education model.

5. [Education](#)- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

You can learn more about how to ensure education in underdeveloped nations as one of the 17 Sustainable Goals. In this website you will find useful information that will allow you to dig deeper and discover more information about the topic.

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