



YSDC 2020

BACKGROUND GUIDE: GENDER EQUALITY COMMITTEE

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EQUALITY AS THE PATHWAY TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

“Educate a boy and a girl and you educate the whole nation”

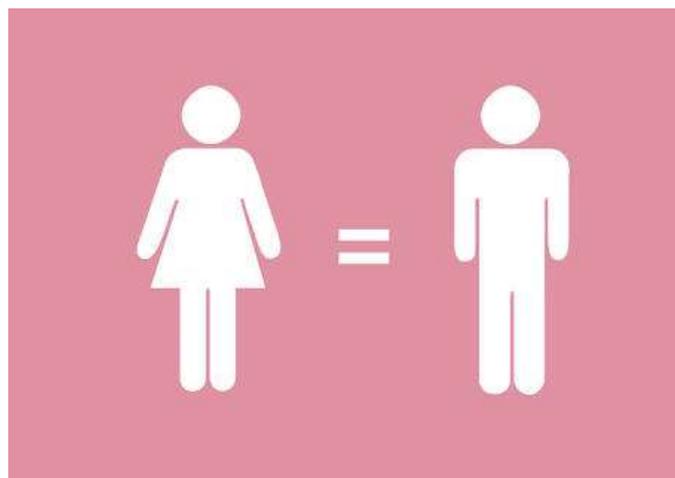


1. INTRODUCTION

Primarily, one can deduce the fact that education is key and can arguably stand as a platform in promoting gender equality in all ramifications of the society amidst all genders. Therefore, it is mandatory and necessary for mechanisms to be kept in place in the ambit of education in promoting gender equality. Equal access to good quality education requires addressing wide-ranging and persistent inequalities in society and should include a stronger focus on how different forms of inequality intersect to produce unequal outcomes for marginalized and vulnerable groups. Globally, girls and women are still much more likely not to get access to education than men and boys despite all the efforts that have been put in place to advocate for their right to education and the tremendous progress that has been made over the past decades. Thus, there is primary focus on girls' access to education, which may also cause people to overlook boys' educational needs.

For organisations like the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO, gender equality is at the forefront and a priority all across the world. Gender equality

is inextricably linked to UNESCO's efforts for the promotion of educational rights and supporting all rights to achieve the organisation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The organisation's SDG 4, via the 2030 Education Framework for Action, aims to '*ensure equitable and inclusive education of equality and to promote lifelong educational opportunities for all*'. UNESCO's SDG-5 aims to empower all girls and women and achieve gender equality. In a recent Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO, the report explored the state of education across the globe, and the steps needed to be taken in order to achieve free, equal primary and secondary education for both boys and girls by 2030. Achieving gender equality in education means that boys and girls will have equal opportunities to realize their full human rights, contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political development. Like Amartya Sen said, "If we continue to leave vast sections of the people of the world outside the orbit of education, we make the world not only just less but also less secure".



Both girls and catered for in

boys are to be reference to

providing a more enabling environment for education, thereby these opportunities have to be equal as this is geared towards societal balance in all ramifications. The evidence that gender equality, particularly in education contributes to economic growth is far more consistent and robust than the relationship economic growth contributes to gender equality.



2. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

The international community has committed through legal and political frameworks to achieving gender equality in all spheres, including education. These frameworks include obligations to protect and secure women and girls' right to education through the elimination of discriminatory barriers, whether they exist or in everyday life, and to undertake positive measures to bring about equality, including in access of, within and through education.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, 1948) recognizes the right to education as a universal right to be enjoyed by everyone. *Article 26* provides for the right to education and that education shall be free, at least in the fundamental stages. It further provides that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) is regarded as the most important treaty in terms of the right to education. *Article 13* provides for the right to education and that education at all levels should be accessible and available to all persons. *Article 14* also provides for the right to education.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation *Convention against Discrimination in Education* (CADE, 1966) is the most comprehensive treaty on the issue of discrimination in education. It is also the only legally binding treaty entirely dedicated to education.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) is the most important treaty in relation to women and girls' human rights. CEDAW applies the rights protected in the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR, 1966), which gives legal force to the rights proclaimed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, 1948), to the specific circumstances of women and girls. It is therefore the most relevant, specific, and substantive treaty in regards to the normative content and legal obligations of states on the issue of gender equality in education.

Article 28 of the *Convention on the Right of the Child* (CRC, 1989) provides for children and young people to have the right to education no matter who they are, regardless of race, gender or disability. *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR, 1996) also includes comprehensive non-discrimination and equality clauses that apply to the right to

education. The United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD, 2006) provides not only that children with disabilities, which includes girls, should not be discriminated against but that they should be able to participate in the general education system.

The issue of gender equality has literally been a major issue in contention since the inception of the 20th century and this fostered the UN to birth the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which gave way to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Millennium Declaration was adopted by the UN Member States in September 2000 by the UN Member States and set out eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. The target of MDG 2 was “to ensure that children universally – including both boys and girls – will be able to complete a full course of primary education by 2015”. Despite the progress made, it was noted that the MDGS had not fully fulfilled its purpose which was what gave rise to the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.



In September 2015, the UN Member States committed to and formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York. SDG 4 seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. SDG 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower

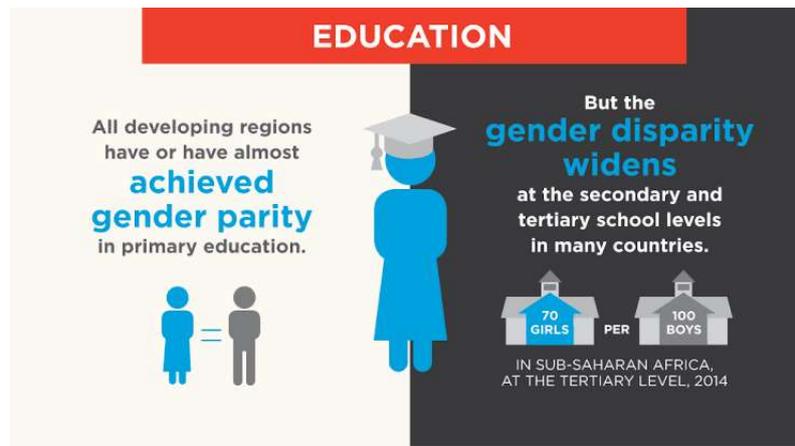
all women and girls. In addition, the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which lays a roadmap for the implementation of SDG 4, was adopted. The Framework for Action aims at mobilizing all countries and partners around the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on education and its 10 targets, and proposes ways of implementing, coordinating, financing and monitoring SDG4, which is Quality Education, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. One can make reference to World Education Forum (WEF, 2015), where it was posited that education is an integral aspect of the society which tends to eradicate all forms of insecurity with regards to gender equality.

The *African Charter on Human and People's Rights* (ACHPR) 1981 provides for the right to education together with an overarching prohibition on discrimination. The *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (ACRWC) 1990 sets out a much broader and more comprehensive right to education than that provided for in the ACHPR. *Article 11* states that every child shall have the right to an education and prescribes measures that states must undertake as part of their efforts to achieve the full realization of this right, including measures pertaining to school discipline and pregnant girls. *Article 12* of the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (2003) provides for the right of women and girls to education and training on the basis of the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunity. The *African Youth Charter* (AYC, 2006) is the first legal framework in Africa to support national policies, programmes and action in favour of youth development. The Charter recognizes the right of every young person to education of good quality and also provides for gender equality.

3. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TOPIC

Gender inequalities at the grassroots, that is, primary school have reduced in recent decades in low-income countries, starting up the fact that it is safe to assume that differences in educational attainment are now limited to secondary and higher education. Even at school enrollment, policy and programmatic focus has also shifted from attainment to school quality and learning. A lot of young people are still not enrolling in primary school (UNESCO 2016a, 2016b). This is why there are Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5 which focus on quality education and reducing gender inequality respectively. It should be noted that progress toward these goals requires a more complete understanding of current global patterns in school enrollment, grade attainment, and learning.

The 2016 gender review accompanying UNESCO's annual Global Education Monitoring Report stated that, "in 2014, gender parity was achieved globally, on average, in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education" (UNESCO 2016b, p.14). Importantly, these global estimates included high-income countries, where school enrollment is nearly universal but where boys are sometimes disadvantaged relative to girls. Based on analyses of Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from 38 low-income countries, Grant and Behrman (2010) found that, on a regional level, gender gaps in primary school completion were fully explained by gaps in enrollment rather than in grade progression. By 1990 to 2006, conditional on school enrollment, gender parity in primary school completion had been achieved in all regions studied, with an emerging female advantage. In other words, at the regional level, once girls enrolled in school they completed as many grades as boys and the 2015 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report echoed this point (UNESCO 2016a). Rather than this advantage simply reflecting the selectivity of girls who had ever enrolled in school, as one might expect, the female advantage in attainment became stronger between 1990 and 2006, as a higher proportion of females enrolled in school. Grant and Behrman (2010) asserted that, if those trends were to continue, a female advantage in grade attainment would likely emerge in many regions and that programs aiming to close gender gaps in attainment should therefore focus on primary school entry. As of 2014, girls made up 53% of the 61 million of children out of school. 15% of the population in Africa are illiterate, and women account for 63% of these illiterate adults.



As of 2020, reports show that there is still a 31.4% average gender gap that remains to be closed globally. The positive increase in the average global score translates into several countries advancing towards gender parity (although often at a slow pace). Educational Attainment gaps are relatively small on average but there are still countries where investment in women’s talent is insufficient. While in 35 countries gender parity in education has been achieved, a few developing countries have yet to close over 20% of the gaps. Ten percent of girls aged 15–24 in the world are illiterate, with a high concentration in developing countries. Further, in these countries, education attainment is low for both girls and boys, which calls for greater investment to develop human capital in general. Even in countries where education attainment is relatively high, women’s skills are not always in line with those required to succeed in the professions of the future. In addition, they encounter barriers to employment in the most dynamic and in-demand occupations.

It is believed that at the current pace, there is still a lot of years before Gender gaps can potentially close. While the increased speed in some regions and countries of the world has reduced the estimated time to close gender gaps, progress remains slow and uneven across countries and regions. Policy-makers and other stakeholders need to further adopt policies and practices to accelerate this process going forward.

4. SUB TOPICS

Gender Based Violence: A significant barrier to the Right to Education

Gender-based violence in schools undermines the right to education and presents a major challenge to achieving gender equality in education because it negatively impacts girls' participation and their retention in school. Violence can act as a deterrent for parents to annul sending their daughters to school because they fear for their safety. According to the Global Terrorism Database, attacks on schools increased 17-fold between 2000 and 2014, and girls' schools were targeted three times more often than boys' schools. According to the former UNESCO Director-General, *Irina Bokova*, "For millions of children and young people across the world, the school environment is not the safe and supportive place it should be. Instead, school days are marred by gender-based violence, which includes bullying, verbal and sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and corporal punishment. Girls are particularly vulnerable". It is not difficult to see that gender based violence, also referred to as School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) which includes a variety of forms of violence ranging from psychological, physical and sexual violence act as detriment to the learning opportunities for both girls and boys. According to the Global Working Group to End SRGBV, it is estimated that 246 million students face such forms of violence each year, severely impacting their learning and their general well-being.



It is not unbelievable to hear stories of girls all over the world who are harassed or face threats daily on their way to school, or those whose teachers or classmates are violent towards them. Thus, it can be seen that in order to enable girls worldwide to have access to quality education and learning, it is important to tackle gender-based violence (GBV), one of the barriers that prevent girls from accessing and learning while in school. Jenelle Babb, from UNESCO's Section of Health and Education, stated that more work is needed on policy and regulatory frameworks that promote safe and inclusive learning spaces and a zero-tolerance approach to violence. Furthermore, she said that, "We need to consider strengthening linkages among the many partners working on issues of school violence and childhood violence, applying a 'gender lens' to violence and interpersonal relationships and dynamics within the school setting." Natko Geres stated the need to understand how to create safe, violence-free learning environments where boys and girls have equal opportunities. Education has a key role to play in transforming the root causes of violence especially GBV. It is an important mechanism for the social, emotional and psychological development of young people. In order to address the issue of SRGBV, It is important what students are taught and how they are being taught. There should be revamp of the existing curriculum to prevent violence and promote gender equality as well as training educational staff in order to provide them with the necessary tools to prevent and respond to SRGBV. Also, there should be establishment of safe spaces where co-curricular interventions can be used as an entry point for addressing SRGBV.



When incidents of SRGBV arise, there should be clear, safe and accessible procedures and mechanisms in place for reporting incidents, assisting victims and referring cases to the appropriate authorities. This includes the availability of easily-accessible, child sensitive and confidential reporting mechanisms, healthcare services including counseling and support, and

referral to law enforcement. It has also been observed that in addressing a complex issue like SRGBV, it begins with a compelling call-to-action for governments, policy-makers, teachers, parents, practitioners, communities and civil society stakeholders. That is, engaging key stakeholders in strategic partnerships. This is needed to understand the perspectives of these different stakeholders, what constrains and enables them to act and what support, training and resources they need.



Poverty as an Obstacle on Education's Pathway to Gender Equality

According to Kofi Annan, “to educate girls is to reduce poverty”. Poverty is a major obstacle to women and girls receiving access to quality education and it is commendable that this was one of the bases for the adoption of the SDGs by the UN Member states. It should be noted that the SDGs were adopted by the UN Member states as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. This is why it is the first SDG that was adopted because of its importance and relevance. It is believed that women are more likely to be poor than men because they are paid less for work and do not have access to education like their male counterparts. Although more girls are in school than ever before, progress has been tough in some developing countries due to high levels of poverty. Children in poor households are likely to be four times out of school than their peers from rich backgrounds, not to talk about girls from poor households. This is coupled with the outdated cultural mentality that girls are not supposed to school and refusing them education will help in saving resources and time. There are families who are interested in sending their children to school but because of low income and lack of funds, it becomes

impossible. Other factors such as providing food for the family, lack of funds to provide school materials and items as well as attending to other necessary issues that may plague a poor family or household contribute to the inability of women and girls to receive access to education. For some of the girls who come from poor backgrounds, their families marry them off even when they are not old enough to be married, in order to make ends meet. These girls serve as sacrificial lambs and it becomes worse for them when they become pregnant and begin to bear children, as this may lead to high mortality rate. It is evident that this factor is also intertwined and linked with other factors that may prevent girls from receiving quality education.

Education can combat the underlying structures of poverty. When women and girls are educated, it provides an avenue for them to devise means that will help in alleviating poverty. Girls' education is critical to escape chronic poverty and to prevent transmission of poverty between generations. Also, because of poverty, male children have more chances of going to school than female children. Not only is it impossible to achieve gender equality without education, but expanding education opportunities for all including women and girls can help stimulate productivity and thereby also reduce the economic vulnerability of poor households. Like Michelle Obama once remarked, "When women are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous."

The Role of Government

Government are the primary drivers of the economy in all spheres, positing the fact that they have a large role to play in addressing gender equality in the society by attaining a more equal, balanced society. Government has to put in place mechanisms, structures to help foster gender equality through education and this can be done by: establishing more schools, inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum etc.

Also, women especially those in with regards to sensitive issues like indeed a lacuna in attaining societal ramifications. Therefore, these educated on their rights, in order to



rural areas are less educated gender equality and it is balance and equality in all women are to be well address the issues of gender

equality especially with regards to political participation, sexual and reproductive health etc. Research has revealed that women suffer more inequality on the basis of gender, therefore, it is opined that there have to be proper mechanisms standards set out in educating these women.



5. Youth at the Centre of the Achievement and Implementation of SDG 5

The future we want is that where every person has equal access to opportunities; a future where by the time the youths attain adulthood, the challenges which we face in this present day will cease to exist. This means that youths have an important role to play in the achievement and implementation of the SDGs. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres in his address at the United Nations Model UN Youth Summit 2019, encouraged present day youths to “Take Action for the SDGs”. Whilst the target year for the achievement of the SDGs stands at 2030, many present day youths do not understand the importance of the SDGs, the issues being tackled, and what the world collectively stands to gain from the achievement of Agenda 2030. All of this is said with the realization that responsibility for this development would have fallen to today’s youths by 2030. Equality is primarily key and must be sustained amidst several societal factors such as Gender, Education etc and beyond

Youths are expected to be a part of the human-driven change making narrative of global development. After all, Anne Frank once said, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world”. Young people are encouraged to find their voice, share it with the world and also thrive in making sure their opinions are put into consideration in achieving a better, unified and more habitable society. Don’t just find your voice, amplify it, in amplifying their voice , youths are to empower themselves in relation to accelerating progress sustainable development and gender equality by engaging in skills development and also be available for fruitful partnerships and beyond.

It is certain that unless young men and boys work together and alongside women and young girls to empower women and girls and eradicate the unjust and oppressive gender-based

stereotypes existing in the past and in our present situation , the realization of true gender equality will still remain a mystery and too difficult to achieve.

Young men and women, being the future leaders today, must join hands now and back gender equality and women's empowerment to its full achievement. We must do so in ways which are empathetic towards the traditional very rigid systems we will change. We must dream up new non-violent strategies to create the world we envision that disarm opposition within the world of the past. Until we succeed in getting the "old order" to recognize the advantages of the new, we must commit ourselves to what might well be a very long walk to freedom and equality for all.

Young individuals, although young can bring to the table a lucid enhancing stance of the realities of gender inequality and an in-depth understanding of the negative impact and-consequences now as well as vast understanding of the change that will result with equal empowerment for all both boys and girls . In proffering solution, youths are to bring to the table a well committed, determined desire to be part of the solution, to really make a positive impact, an emphatic commitment to do whatever is necessary for societal development.

Imagine young men and women working together for equality and advancement for all. Dealing together, young people can break the circle of inequality in all ramifications.



6. CONCLUSION



Looking at the above guide, one should have understood what gender equality is and the relevance of education in achieving gender equality. As young people, it should at the back and in the forefront of our minds that around the world, girls in particular are missing out on education. However, girls who go to and stay in school are less likely to become child brides and victims of violence. They are more likely to advocate for their own rights and dreams. Children especially girls who receive education are empowered to take charge of their futures and contribute to the end of extreme poverty. It is also important to note that boys and men should be engaged in confronting norms and attitudes that perpetuate inequality. Analyzing the relationships between and among girls, boys, teachers and learners can identify the root causes of inequality and suggest systemic, transformative changes to educational systems that will eliminate those causes.



Further Research

Gender equality has always been at the forefront in the global space and despite progress that has been made especially in relation to education, there are still many issues that need to be resolved. Delegates should ask themselves: in the quest to advocate for gender equality, have the educational needs of boys and men been overlooked? If education is the pathway to gender equality, what are the vehicles need to plow this path? Has education really proved to achieve gender equality or are there still loopholes that need to be filled? Apart from policies that are being made, what are practical measures that can be taken to address the issue of gender equality with regards to education? How can technology be a vehicle on education's pathway to achieving gender equality? What are the ways by which youths can be at the center of the achievement and implementation of the SDGs, particularly SDG 4 and SDG 5?

These questions should be considered before the conference, for discussion by delegates during the conference.



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