

Mock MUN 2018 report

Forum: Committee on Education

Issue: Promote the access for women to education

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I. Introduction

Today, 31 million girls are excluded from primary education and 516 million women are illiterate around the world. This issue is even more important, as they are part of the Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such situations can be observed in developing countries or countries at war, especially in the disadvantaged areas of sub-Saharan Africa, West Asia and Oceania. It is interesting to note that the degradation of access to education - in most cases - starts from secondary education. Until primary school, this parity is respected with the account 96 girl enrolled for 100 boys. Several factors could explain this difference. Most are questions of stereotypes such "Women are best staying at home, doing chores". Thus, secondary educations is not a priority for women affected by such sexist views. But the main reason for this inequality remains poverty. When studying, women deprive poor families from free labor. In some countries and the limited financial means of some families do not allow this investment. Admittedly, other factors such as the distance from the institution, marriages, early pregnancies, violence on girls in school spaces, prohibit girls and women from receiving proper education. There are many educational challenges; poverty, job destruction, declining incomes, price inflation; women are the first to be affected by the consequences of the global economic crisis. Moreover, not giving women access to a proper education deprives them from developing a critical spirit to defend their rights. This conditions the female population to a subordinate role in relation to men, even though studies have shown the GDP per capita could increase from 4% to 6% through every additional year of studies for women.

II. Definition of key terms

- **Education:** Implementation of the means to ensure the training and development of a human being.
- **Illiteracy:** The state of the illiterate, person who can not read nor write.
- **Subordinate:** who occupies a lower rank, who depends on another.
- **Equality:** Absence of any discrimination

III. Main actors

Universal access to education, and in particular for women, is one of the main goals of the United Nations. In order to solve this growing issue which is still ongoing today, the UN delegated this task to two of its main institutions: UNESCO and UNICEF.

UNESCO, the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation*, founded in 1946, aims to “contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture and communication in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations”. UNESCO therefore plays a major role in the accomplishing of the SDGs, in particular, goals 4 & 5 which strive to achieve quality education and gender equality, which are at the core of the present debate. UNESCO actively contributes to the promotion of Education for women the *UNESCO Institute of Statistics* (UIS), which regularly publishes or updates statistical reports in regards of the situation of women and education, thus enabling a clearer understanding of the evolution of the issue, and an easier communication of the challenges to overcome via media or the governments concerned.

UNICEF, the *United Nations International Children's Fund* founded in 1946 is an international fund aimed at defending and promoting the founding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In fact, this organisation believes in the power and influence education can have to better the living conditions of all, and therefore of children. The education of young women has a major impact on the short and the long term, in particular on issues such as high child death rates, the place a child occupies in his family, vaccination, and the protection of a child's rights. UNICEF actively participates in the fight for gender equality of opportunity in school through the *United Nations Girls' Education Initiative* (**UNGEI**), international organisation that, ever since its launching at the World Education Forum in Dakar 2000, strives to accelerate education for girls around the world by supporting local governments in a sustainable way to reduce gender discrimination, and through national and international agendas that highlight the growing issues, especially for the most marginalised populations.

IV. Historical contextualisation

The first authorised women to go to school were nobles during the modern era, whereas other classes were completely neglected. It was believed that it wasn't affecting the population hierarchy as by birth these women were meant to be superior to the common male population.

Later, in the middle of the 19th century, France and Spain established a law to make sure there was a girl's school for every town over 500 to 800 inhabitants. However they weren't offered the same courses as boys, but were taught values such as chastity, modesty, and discretion. This was supported by many scientific reports which supposedly proved that women were physically and intellectually inferior to their male counterparts.

Higher levels of education were difficult to access for women and it was only in the end of the 19th century that Norway accepted women in universities (1884). Other countries such as Germany, Spain and Finland then followed.

The first World War offered women an important number of work opportunities and consequently independence, as men were fighting. Women learned about their rights, their capacities. After the war, in many countries, they wouldn't give up all the rights they had gained which gave birth to increasingly important feminist manifestations.

In 1975, equality in education started to get enacted. The Commission of the Status of Women requested for the first time the organization of a conference on women and their condition reuniting 133 governments. Several conferences followed (*World Conference of Copenhagen*, 1980 ; *World Conference of Nairobi*, 1985 ; *World Conference of Beijing*, 1990) to further ensure women equality.

In 2000 the millennium declaration stated the importance of education throughout *goal 2*: Achieve universal primary education; and *goal 3* : Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Again in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals proposed *goal 4* : Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; and *goal 5* : Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

VI. Possible solutions

In order to reach the SDGs, with several actors, it is possible to consider the following solutions :

1. Solutions to lacking infrastructures

- A decentralized policy of governments towards local actors could be proposed, in order to meet the specific needs of the local population.
- An emphasis on budgets dedicated to education by governments, for example by deviating military budgets where they are not needed, knowing that education is a motor of development, when war is more a factor of destruction.
- A reflection adapted to the needs of the female population during the development of the premises.
- Promote an attractive teacher status, with attractive pay and working / employment conditions, in order to increase the number of teachers, especially female, as they can play the role of model for young girls. This will reduce class size and therefore promote specialized and effective education.

2. Engage women in their education, on the path to success.

• Practical teaching as a motor of effective education

- Literacy for women is crucial for a continued education. However, in rural areas, it is not only poorly promoted, but also not necessary for survival. Thus, teaching must

be done in a practical setting, such as income-generating activities by NGOs. Such programs are designed to help women access credit and manage small businesses. In countries such as Togo, Mali, The Gambia, Cape Verde and Sierra Leone, literacy is integrated into the activities of cooperatives or other forms of income-generating work.

- **Involve women in science**

- Scientific disciplines, which often serve as a selection filter for secondary and higher education institutions, present an even higher level of inequality, and this hinders women's participation in sustainable development through inclusive secondary education. It is necessary to change mentalities in order to allow women to find their place in the scientific world. This can be done by governments, which will include policies to popularize science directed towards the female audience, as well as NGOs that can create events and programs for this scientific transition for gender equality. For example, the "Groupe de travail des bailleurs de fonds pour l'éducation en Afrique" (DAE) aims to encourage the participation of girls and women in science. Women will also benefit from UNESCO's 2000+ program whose mission is to encourage the acquisition of scientific and technical knowledge by all.

Key statistics

<http://uis.unesco.org/apps/visualisations/no-girl-left-behind/#lastmile-1>

Sources

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