



CSW Chair Report

Topic 2: Ensuring Equal Access to Education
for Girls in Developing Countries



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Personal Statements

Chair – Irati Herreros

Esteemed delegates,

I am Irati Herreros from the American School of Bilbao. It is with great honor that I welcome you all to this conference as your chair in the CSW committee. I started MUN back in 2021 and I have attended 7 conferences, this will be my 8th, and the first one as a chair. I am excited to take on this new role and guide the debate in a diplomatic and fun way.

I look forward to seeing you all in April!

Kind Regards,

Irati

Deputy Chair – Anamaria Banović

Honorable delegates and guests,

It is an honor and a pleasure to be able to serve as the Deputy Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at this year's annual MUNISS conference. I am 18 years old and currently in 11th grade at the Friedrich-Schiller-Gymnasium in Marbach. So far I have attended two MUNISS conferences, both as a delegate. This will be my first and likely last year attending as a chair, as such I wish everyone a relaxing preparation time and I look forward to seeing you all in April!



Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and is key for social and economic development. However, millions of girls in developing countries struggle for access to quality education. The barriers they face include: cultural norms, economic constraints, and political instability, these prevent them from attending school, limiting their opportunities for personal and professional growth. While progress has been made in recent decades, gender disparities in education remain a global issue that demands urgent attention.

Ensuring equal access to education for girls in developing countries is not only a matter of equality; it's an important step toward achieving sustainable development. Educated females are more likely to escape poverty, contribute to their community, and improve health for future generations. However, several issues, including early marriage, poor sanitation in schools, and insufficient investment by governments, continue to act as barriers. Many international bodies and NGOs have established programs to overcome these challenges, but real and systemic changes remain necessary for long-term solutions.

This topic will require knowledge from different approaches, incorporating policy reforms, financial commitment, and cultural shifts, to eliminate gender barriers to access to education. These safe and inclusive learning environments for girls should be drawn up collaboratively between governments, international bodies, and local communities. The international community supporting these efforts is very valuable, particularly providing corporation through the United Nations.

In Model United Nations (MUN), committees such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) simulate real-world discussions on pressing global issues. As a UN body dedicated to gender equality, the CSW is



looking for resolutions that promote women's rights, including access to education.

Glossary

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): An international treaty adopted by the UN to promote women's rights and eliminate discrimination, including barriers to girls' education, (un.org).

Early Marriage: The practice of marrying girls at a young age, often before they complete their education, leading to a high dropout rate, (assets.publishing.service.gov.uk)

Gender Parity Index (GPI): A measure used to assess the relative access to education for males and females. A GPI of 1 indicates equality, while values below 1 show a disadvantage for girls.

Cultural Norms: Traditional beliefs and societal expectations that influence gender roles, often discouraging girls from pursuing education in certain regions.



Issue Explanation

According to UNESCO, more than 129 million girls are not attending school in the world due to systemic barriers that prevent them from accessing quality education. In developing countries; poverty, cultural norms, political instability, and inadequate infrastructure most affect these girls and serve as barriers for them. Even though there have been international efforts toward equal access to education. Including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Progress is still slow, and many millions of girls continue to be deprived of their learning right.

Several governments and organizations have implemented various policies, such as conditional cash transfers, school meal programs, and community involvement efforts. This was made to encourage girls' education. However, the effects of these activities differ, as gender-culture norms and economic deprivation usually force families to choose boys' education over girls'. They tend to worsen by conflict and dislocation, with refugee girls being most affected. Girls are nearly twice as likely as boys to be out of school in crisis-affected areas, according to the Malala Fund.

Even more complicated situations are early marriages which lead to high dropout rates especially among girls, as well as a poor school environment that does not offer gender-sensitive facilities such as proper sanitation. In 2024, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the most affected regions of girls having significantly lower enrollment rates than boys. Conversely, Latin America and Southeast Asia have made significant improvements regarding narrowing the education gender gap, with increased government investment and community initiatives contributing to success.

Efforts to ensure equal access to education for girls continue, as failure to do so would have severe social and economic consequences. Investing in girls' education results in lower poverty rates, better health outcomes, and increased economic productivity. According to the World Bank, closing gender gaps in education would add \$15 trillion to \$30 trillion to the global economy. Side neglecting this issue would maintain endemic cycles of poverty, increased dependency on foreign aid, and a weakened national economy due to a less-scaled workforce. More so, uneducated girls have



more likelihoods related to child marriage and gender-based violence, thus reinforcing harmful social structures limiting women's rights and opportunities.

At the end of the day, this is a societal problem rather than a problem of girls. Since it affects the economic growth, social stability, and sustainability of development, gender equality in education serves to secure societies together.



Perspectives of Parties Involved

Ensuring equal access to education for girls in developing nations is a matter approached differently depending on the economic status, cultural values, and political priorities of a situation. While some countries work towards integrating gender inclusivity into education programs, others are faced by societal norms that continue to hold back their efforts.

Sweden, Norway, and Canada have vocally supported girls' education and invested heavily in aid programs to boost school enrollment rates in developing countries. Together with UNESCO and UNICEF, they send financial aid for teacher training and building for places hindered by barriers to girls' education. They also pressure for reforms in countries where discrimination against girls in education is legally supported, using diplomatic and economic means.

On the other hand, countries like Afghanistan, Chad, and South Sudan are squashing any attempts toward progressive education by political instability and conflict and conservative social norms. Most notably, Afghanistan has placed restrictions on the education of girls. This action was met with international outrage against the government, with the UN and Western nations calling for the immediate restoration of access to schooling for girls. In many Sub-Saharan African nations, poverty and early marriage remain major obstacles. Families often prioritize immediate financial survival over long-term educational benefits.

Either way, emerging powers' new commitment to gender equality in education is seen in the efforts of India and China in this regard. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) program has raised awareness and led to rising enrollments in schools since its inception in 2015. By instituting laws requiring rural girls to get an education, China has begun to ensure the schooling of girls. However, gender equality remains a work in progress, given the economic and regional inequities facing both these nations.

Changes through policy creating educational opportunities for girls are being pushed through mainly by Non-governmental organizations such as



the Malala Fund, Plan International, and Room to Read. The World Bank and the UNDP also provide funding and expertise to develop sustainable educational policies in developing countries. However, onward implementation will depend upon the commitment of governments to implement equitable education policies and funding to ensure momentum.

Ultimately, while some countries and organizations are out there proactively working to eradicate gender disparities in education, others remain caught in socio-economic struggles, political instability, and cultural resistance.



History of the Topic

The issue of unequal access to education for girls in developing countries has deep historical roots. They arise from the gender norms culturally established, economic deprivation, and political instability. Education itself has for long been treated as a privilege rather than as a right, putting women and girls in conditions of systematic exclusion on cultural and social grounds. However, the emerging efforts to give females equal access to education formed a global pattern for societal developments toward equality concerning education.

- **19th–20th Century:** Initially, in the 19th century, formal education was meant mostly for boys and restricted in Europe, North America, and colonized lands. Many places across Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, believe that girls should be denied education as their primary work is in the household. But early improvements came with industrialization and social movements focusing more on national development education in the late 19th century and early 20th century. In 1921, Marie Stopes International, an early advocate for women's rights, promoted the idea that educating girls could lead to lower birth rates and better economic opportunities. Meanwhile, in Western countries, suffrage movements popularized the importance of education to women's empowerment and slowly brought about changes in policies that opened the doors for girls to basic schooling.
- **1948–1970s:** The turning point came in 1948 when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stated that education formed a basic human right. However, in many developing countries, traditional roles of gender have not at all made for widespread female education. Newly independent African states and Asian countries faced challenges in the 1950s and 60s for the establishment of universal education systems but the males were prioritized for that year due to limited resources. By the 1970s, major campaigns had already begun within the UN and UNESCO towards advancement in female education as a socioeconomic necessity. Countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh made initial efforts in



increasing the literacy levels of girls, but like much else, it remained unmovable because of poverty and aggressive conservatism.

- **1990s–2000s:** The issue was raised at the international level in 1990 with the World Conference on Education for All when governments pledged themselves to make access to schooling available to all marginalized communities, including girls. The establishment of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 added momentum to their commitments, augmenting Goal 2, which states that by 2015, all children everywhere should be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Progress for countries like Rwanda and Ethiopia was through the introduction of free primary education policy, which saw increases in female enrollments. Many areas, especially Afghanistan and parts of the Middle East continued to struggle due to conflict and have adopted policies restricting entry into schools for girls. In 2003, the Malala Fund came into being for global education reform inspired by the near-death experience of the Pakistani campaigner Malala Yousafzai following an assassination attempt in her home country because of her advocacy for girls' education.
- **2010s–2025:** The past decade has seen the intensification of efforts to close the gender gap in education. The introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the same year strengthened global commitments toward gender equity in schooling, particularly in Goal 4 (Education of Quality). Countries such as India, Nigeria, and Indonesia have already taken scholarship programs and awareness campaigns as measures to entice girls toward education. In 2021, the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban saw a sudden and drastic rollback of the rights of women, including shutting down of secondary schools for girls. Inferring into this were also conflicts in the continents such as Sudan and Yemen, which disrupted the education systems, leaving millions of girls learning away from schools. Nevertheless, though such occurrences seem to set back the obstacles, they do not prevent girls from seeing an upward rise in their global literacy rates. Much of this is traced



through initiatives like the UK government's Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) to support disadvantaged communities.



Potential Solutions for the issue:

The UN has made many contributions to addressing disparities in education. The most prominent is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, which called on nations to eliminate barriers to education based on gender. In addition, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) set forth a framework for achieving gender equality, access to quality education being an example.

Most importantly, reaffirmation of the commitment by the world community to education for all was seen in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and especially in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Since then UNESCO, UNICEF, and the UNDP have continued to support governments with funding, policy recommendations, and directly implementing educational programs. The UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) was launched in 2000 to synchronize international efforts, while the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund was created in 2016 to address emergency education needs in areas of conflict.

International organizations in effect promote the education of girls. The World Bank supports Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment projects which finance low-income countries to eliminate family economic burdens such as school fees, and to improve school facilities. NGOs such as the Malala Fund, Plan International, and Room to Read emphasize common solutions that engage the community with mentorship programs and scholarships for girls.

Rwanda and Bangladesh are examples of two countries that have implemented successful policies to realize gender parity in education. The Rwandan government is committed to advance girls' education through a national policy, while Bangladesh has also implemented programs for female students, promoting enrollment rates in schools.



Despite all these initiatives, millions of girls remain out of school, and much more needs to be done to address these challenges.

Suggested solutions include:

- *Expanding Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs):* These are incentives extended by governments and international organizations to families for enrolling and retaining their daughters in school. This has worked well with Brazil's Bolsa Família and India's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programs.
- *Strengthening Legal Protections:* There is a need to enforce laws banning early marriage and gender discrimination in schools so that societal pressures do not push out the girl child. Countries with strong legal frameworks, for instance, Norway and Canada, have integrated gender equal policies in their education systems.
- *Improving School Infrastructure:* Gender-segregated restrooms, menstrual hygiene products, and secure transportation options are practical ways to help encourage girls to attend school, especially in rural settings.
- *Increasing Funding for Education in Conflict Zones:* Organizations like Education Cannot Wait (ECW) advocate investing more in education programs for refugee and displaced girls to keep schooling on track despite the instability in their countries.



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