

Inclusive quality education and lifelong learning – key for gender equality and empowerment of women

Concept note

Side-event to the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Date: Wednesday, 13 March 2019

Time: 08:15-09:30 am

Location: Conference Room 7, United Nations Headquarters

Background

In December 2018, participants at the [Global Education Meeting](#) (Brussels) reaffirmed the international community's commitment under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to quality gender-responsive education and training to achieve the empowerment of all women and girls. The Brussels Declaration reiterated the importance of inclusive quality education and learning throughout life based on the principles of non-discrimination, gender equality and equal opportunity for all, and set out a vision for education that would ensure that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education.

Yet despite unprecedented progress in expanding school enrolment over the last decades and towards the achievement of gender parity in formal schooling, inequalities among and within countries remain. Two-thirds of illiterate adults continue to be women, reflecting the historical and systematic exclusion of girls from education. Some 132 million girls and young women – about 1 in 5 – were still out of school in 2016. Girls in countries affected by conflict are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys. In many contexts, the cost of schooling is too high or the journey to school might be dangerous.

Poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women, are among the many obstacles that stand in the way of women and girls fully exercising their right to participate in, complete and benefit from education.

Objectives

At the margins of the Commission of the Status of Women, the co-chairs of the **Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning (Permanent Missions of Argentina, the Czech Republic, Kenya, Japan and Norway)**, together with UNESCO, will organize a **side-event on “Inclusive quality education and lifelong learning – key for gender equality and empowerment of women”**. The event will explore how to advance the global commitment on gender equality and women's empowerment with a specific focus on the transformative potential of inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for women and girls. In particular, the meeting will seek to:

- share good practices in ensuring targeted policy measures to expand access and ensure the quality of education for women and girls;
- raise awareness of the platforms for global, regional and country networks and partnerships to advance education and lifelong learning opportunities for women and girls; and
- highlight the importance of investments needed to ensure that all girls are equipped to prepare for a better future.

Format

The session will feature an inclusive multi-stakeholder panel discussion bringing together representatives of Member States, young people and key education actors from academia and civil society. The event will conclude with the formulation of key recommendations.

Programme

- H.E. Ms. Jana Maláčová, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic
- H.E. Mr. Dag Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development, Norway
- Hon. Ms. Safina Kwekwe Tsungu, Principal Secretary, State Department of Gender Affairs, Kenya
- Atty. Ms. Carmelita Yadao-Sison, Executive Director, the Commission on Higher Education, Office of the President, Philippines
- Ms. Andrea Droppelmann, Deputy Director of the Multilateral Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chile
- Ms. Gülser Corat, UNESCO Director for Gender Equality
- Ms Linda Liukas, technologist, author, educator

Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning

Established in January 2019, by the Permanent Missions of Argentina, the Czech Republic, Japan, Kenya and Norway, the Group of Friends, advocates for the centrality of education for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The New York-based Group of Friends works to ensure enhanced outreach on the relevance of education and lifelong learning to the three pillars of the United Nations (Human Rights, Peace and Security, and Development) at the UN decision-making bodies such as the UN General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary organs and other United Nations forums.

The Group also raises visibility on key policy recommendations from the [SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee](#), the [Brussels Declaration](#) and other global agreement on education.

The Brussels Declaration, adopted at the recent [Global Education Meeting](#) (Brussels, 2018), outlined the key priority areas to advance the SDG-4 as follows:

1. Making education and training systems more equitable and inclusive “leaving no one behind”
2. Eradicating illiteracy
3. Instituting and strengthening legislation, policy measures and strategic approaches
4. Including migrants, displaced persons and refugees in our education and training systems
5. Providing quality gender-responsive education and training
6. Strengthening education for global citizenship and for sustainable development
7. Providing open, flexible and responsive education and training systems to meet new skill needs
8. Improving teachers, educators, trainers and school leaders
9. Increasing investment in education