



## **Submission by the Global Campaign for Education for the Draft General Recommendation on Girls'/Women's Right to Education**

The Global Campaign for Education welcomes the opportunity to respond to call for submissions for recommendations for the discussions on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on girls' and Women's right to education. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is a civil society coalition with a presence in over a 100 countries which calls on governments to act immediately to deliver the right of every girl, boy, woman and man to a free quality public education. Concerns about education of girls and women has been at the heart of GCE's agenda since its inception and was the subject of the GCE's Global Action Week in 2011. The present submission draws on the past experience of GCE and its members, including past reports submitted on the issue.

### **Why must there be action on this?**

Despite widespread recognition of the right to education in a range of international conventions and treaties, girls and women continue to be denied their rights throughout the education cycle, and still face huge discrimination and disadvantage in terms of access, progress, learning and their experience in schools.

Despite the fact that parity in access to education was to be achieved by 2005, a large number of countries are yet to achieve it. According to the 2013-14 Global Monitoring Report, among low income countries, 20% achieve gender parity in primary education, 10% in lower secondary education and 8% in upper secondary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, if recent trends continue, the richest boys will achieve universal primary completion in 2021, but the poorest girls will not catch up until 2086 – and will only achieve lower secondary school completion in 2111. Girls make up about 54% of the global population of children out of school. The proportion rises to 60% in the Arab States, a share that has remained unchanged since 1999. Thus, the availability and accessibility of schools leaves much to be desired. Cultural practices definitely contribute to the present trend, however, the phenomenon is also exacerbated by fees. Other barriers include early marriage and policies pertaining to pregnancy, and fear of violence. These need a cross-sectoral approach leveraging engagement across sectors.

The continued failure to ensure adequate access to children is accompanied by even larger number of children who fail to receive education that is of adequate quality. This element of girls' and women's right to education has been comparatively neglected in previous commitments on girls' education, certainly in the context of global frameworks, and must receive greater focus. The education offered is often neither acceptable or adaptable, and this is particularly the case when seen through the lens of gender equity. At the heart of the problem is inadequate attention on teacher preparation, inadequate infrastructure, poor quality and frequently gender insensitive curricula and teaching learning materials.

Among the countries with data, female teachers make up less than 40% of the total in 43% of countries at the primary level, in 72% of countries at the lower secondary level and in all countries at the upper secondary level (GMR 2014). The presence of female teachers can improve girls' enrollment and achievement, especially in more conservative settings where the movement and life choices of girls and young women is restricted. In

Punjab province, Pakistan, girls' standardized test scores were higher if they had a female teacher (Aslam and Kingdon, 2011).

Education systems as a whole are also frequently underfunded, and fail to adequately plan for the education of girl students and ensure adequate space for women teachers and women administrators. Any efforts to address the educational needs of women students must address the educational system in its totality.

### **What should be done?**

CEDAW's state signatories should be directed towards transforming education legislation, policy, governance, budgeting and practice in ways that increase the availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability of education for girls and women. GCE encourages CEDAW to use its country reporting process and/or the general recommendations to push the following actions by State signatories:

- that States report to CEDAW on progress with regard to article 10 should address the entire educational cycle, including early childhood care and education and adult literacy programs;
- that they should report on progression and learning, as well as initial enrollment; and
- that they should explicitly analyze the accessibility, acceptability, adaptability of education for girls, as well as availability;
- that States undertake regular gender audits of national education strategies and policies related to the overcoming of gender discrimination.

Additionally, GCE encourages CEDAW to develop specific recommendations to States, regarding the overcoming of gender discrimination in education, making education free and compulsory, at all levels between early childhood and secondary education levels. The education provided should furthermore be

#### **a. truly free** by ensuring that States

- abolish all direct and indirect costs, including making school feeding, transportation, uniforms and materials free.
- provide well-designed, targeted and appropriately incentives (including stipends, school feeding programs and subsidized or free transportation to school) to counteract indirect and opportunity costs.

#### **b. of appropriate quality by ensuring States address**

- availability of adequate numbers of trained, motivated and supported professionally qualified teachers. Recruitment policies must ensure balanced representation of women and men in the teaching profession. Furthermore, efforts need to be made to ensure the retention of women in the teaching profession, including the presence of a clear career path for women teachers.
- needs of girls when planning school and transport infrastructure, including providing separate toilet facilities for girls, safe transport, and safe schools in rural areas.
- draw legal and policy frameworks envisaged to eliminate gender bias and stereotypes in teaching and learning, curricula and textbooks, promoting positive representation of women as well as training in gender-equitable classroom practice.
- integrate gender sensitisation and human rights education at all levels of education curricula including teacher training.
- tackle gender stereotyped expectations in education by providing boys and girls with equal opportunities to access science, mathematics, technology, sports and all other fields of study. Furthermore, equal access to health (including reproductive health) and sexuality education would need to be provided to both girls and boys.

- ensure that adult literacy and continuing education programmes are of adequate quality through among other things, ensuring adequate pay, professional status and training, and ensure that such programs are designed in consultation with women (who make up the majority of non-literate people);
- provide equal access to health education, including reproductive health and sexuality education, including access to

**c. Equitable** by ensuring that States

- draw legal and policy frameworks envisaged to eliminate and properly address all forms of gender violence in and on the way between home and school. At the same time, mechanisms need to be put in place for the counselling for children or teachers survivors of violence.
- provide mechanisms for enrollment of children hitherto out of school through de-bureaucratizing processes of re-enrollment, providing bridging mechanisms for out of school children and offering spaces and opportunities for lifelong learning.
- ensure that law and practice enable girls to continue their education regardless of marital or parental status, and that education systems are responsive to these differing situations.
- promote the adoption of legal and policy frameworks that combat child labour, with emphasis to child domestic labour, which affects girls at disproportionate rates.
- undertake measures to eliminate gender bias and stereotypes in teaching and learning, such as ensuring positive representation of women in textbooks and training in gender-equitable classroom practice.
- undertake awareness raising and sensitization of teachers, parents, educational departments and ministries about the needs of girls and boys. Gender sensitive teachers and management trainings are equally important for both women and men teachers and school managers.
- prohibit all forms of discrimination (especially based on gender) and put in place clear mechanisms for redress to individuals and groups whose educational rights have been violated.

**d. Adequately financed** by ensuring that States

- Allocate a minimum of 20% of their total budget to education, of which at least half should go to basic education. States should scale up adult literacy programs by increasing budgetary allocations to at least 3% of education budgets.
- that States introduce gender-sensitive budgeting for education, as well as gender impact assessments in planning.

**e. have robust governance mechanisms** by ensure that States

- provide adequate spaces for participation of community and civil society in educational planning and monitoring. Space for participation of women in community-based monitoring and governance structures like School Management Committees needs to be ensured and adequate support provided to such community representatives to enable them to participate in decision making.
- put in place clear and fully funded plans to ensure gender and other disparities are overcome in a time bound manner with a view to ensure that girls' and women's rights to and in education are ensured.
- track progress against equity-based targets for enrollment, progression, quality and learning in a way that disaggregates data by gender, age, grade, wealth and location, among others. This information would, furthermore, need to be shared publicly to enable community and civil society oversight over progress.
- develop expertise and capacity in their education workforce through appointment of gender specialist, gender focal persons, and civil society representatives at different levels and ensure their involvement in planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation processes.
- table and enact laws to prohibit discriminatory practices in school administration, such as exclusion on

grounds of pregnancy. Equal opportunities for career growth need to be provided to women and men teachers in the teaching profession.

- undertake programmes of gender sensitization of the community to break stereotyped views of girls' education and overcome negative expectations

GCE recommends there be increased dialogue and synergy between the CEDAW and the main UN bodies and multilateral initiatives that address gender equality as well as the fulfillment of the human right to education, including those related to Education for All (EFA). The post-2015, post MDG and EFA successor frameworks should include comprehensive targets that address governance and implementation issues for girls' and women's education, including retention, completion and quality education.

The fulfillment of the right to education of all learners across the lifespan- and consequently the fulfillment of a range of other rights of individuals= cannot be attained without a strong and clear focus on education of girls and children. As we stand at the threshold of the beginning of a new development compact in the form of a new Post 2015 framework, a strong message endorsing a robust push in support of the educational rights of women and girls by nation states and the international community at large is timely. Continued educational inequality and discrimination in contravention of the human rights of millions of girls and women cannot be permitted to persist.