

Forum: Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Question of: Addressing the lack of education for women caused by social, economic, and cultural barriers.

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Introduction

Despite the years of discrimination women have withstood, they are still silenced to this day, being stripped of basic rights and freedom. The recent case of *Roe vs. Wade* proves once again how even little progress toward gender equality can be stolen away with a single decision. Gender inequality is one of the most pressing, urgent matters to be addressed, and a key aspect to achieving it is addressing the lack of education for girls. Around 130 million girls worldwide are out of school, with girls living in conflict areas being twice as likely to not attend school.¹ For example, 73% of girls in South Sudan do not attend primary school while non-conflict countries like Norway and Switzerland have most children of all genders attending school.² Only 49 percent of countries have achieved gender parity in education.³ From being limited to their assigned gender roles to receiving less income than men, women are set back with disadvantages from the starting line which harms their chances and opportunities in the long term.

Education received from school should be required for everyone as schools teach important life skills such as communication, critical thinking, self-management, and negotiation. The lack of education women receive makes it harder for women to be exposed to different opportunities, in turn often unable to receive proper recognition. It was only in the 1840s when people such as Emma Hart Willard started to recognize that women should receive quality education. Through accomplishments in the United States like the Seneca Falls Convention, the Declaration of Sentiments, and the establishment of the first school in women's higher education, Willard and a few other first-wave feminists led the way for feminism in future generations.⁴ However, even after education for women was established, it was reserved for women to become better wives and mothers. A parliamentary report in the 19th century from the United Kingdom

¹"Girls' Education." UNICEF, January 19, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>.

² Desk, India Today Web. "10 Toughest Places for a Girl to Get Education." India Today, November 28, 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/10-toughest-places-for-a-girl-to-get-education-1881752-2021-11-28>.

³"Girls' Education." UNICEF, January 19, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>.

⁴ "Emma Willard." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Emma-Willard>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

stated that girls should be educated in order to be “decorative, modest, marriageable beings.”⁵ False myths arose to discourage women from having academic aspirations, stating that it would undermine their attachments and responsibilities in their homes. Some even believed that education was against women’s nature and that having too much knowledge would affect their fertility.⁶ However, alongside these false myths, other scientific evidence arose that supported women’s education. The 1860s report by the Taunton Commission in the United Kingdom claimed that women and men had the same mental capacity and that one gender was not intellectually superior to the other.⁷ Many schools supporting women’s education referred to reports like the Taunton Commission, leading to the gradual diminishing of false myths.

The reasons for the lack of education in women can be put into three distinct categories: social, economic, and cultural barriers. First, social barriers such as gender stereotypes and biases prevent girls from accessing proper education. Gender stereotypes can limit young female students from exploring a broad range of topics while also giving them disadvantages in terms of academic opportunities. For example, fewer women are involved in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields than men. Only 27% of STEM workers are women, creating an unnecessary bias that encourages girls to “self-edit” their future.⁸ This also leads to gender underrepresentation in multiple fields of studies, decreasing the number of role models young girls can be inspired by.

The economic barrier is the second factor in women’s lack of education. Of the number of girls that do not attend school, the majority are from Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), meaning that many households cannot afford education costs. The cost of education often overwhelms families, leading many to prefer to send their sons instead due to traditional gender roles and biases. In addition, many schools are unable and unwilling to provide a safe environment for female students. A study conducted by Plan International United Kingdom in 2017 showed that 1 in 10 girls’ attendance across the world was affected due to the unaffordability and inaccessibility of menstrual hygiene products.

⁹ Since then, the UK has lowered the price of menstrual products and UNICEF has been working with

⁵ Ferrari, Pisana. “‘Distance Education’ Is Not a New Concept, It Is Actually Much Older than Zoom, Google Classroom, or Even the Internet.” cApStAn, September 30, 2020. <https://www.capstan.be/distance-education-is-not-a-new-concept-it-is-actually-much-older-than-zoom-google-classroom-or-even-the-internet/>.

⁶ “Women’s Education.” Women’s Education – Newnham College, July 6, 2022. <https://newn.cam.ac.uk/about/history/womens-education/>.

⁷ “Edwardian Book Ownership and Gender.” Ebrary. Accessed July 25, 2022. https://ebrary.net/176701/language_literature/edwardian_book_ownership_gender.

⁸ “The Stem Gap: Women and Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.” AAUW, March 3, 2022. <https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/the-stem-gap/>.

⁹ “What Is Period Poverty?” Bodyform, September 20, 2018. <https://www.bodyform.co.uk/our-world/period-poverty/>.

education and gender teams to Make Menstrual Hygiene and Health (MHH) accessible for all in schools.

10

Additional factors that impact the lack of education for women are cultural and environmental barriers. Different cultures and religions have various traditions and practices regarding child marriage or early pregnancies. A majority of child brides are forced to drop out of school either to prepare for their marriage or take care of household chores and their families. After a female student drops out of school due to marriage, it is almost impossible for them to return.¹¹ Child marriage most likely leads to child pregnancies, burdening young girls with more gender norms and roles. According to a study done by The World Bank, keeping girls in school is the most effective way to prevent child marriage as every year a girl stays in school, it decreases her chance of getting married by 6%.¹² Child marriage is also most present in countries with severe poverty and low economic development. In Bangladesh, Mali, Mozambique, and Niger, 75% of people are forced to live on less than \$2 everyday with half of the girls in these countries marrying before turning 18.¹³ These factors such as poverty and limited education make families more vulnerable to the aforementioned harmful practices.

A milestone in achieving gender equality was the establishment of the Title IX Education Amendment in 1972. Title IX states that “no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other education program or activity operated by a recipient”.¹⁴ This regulation decreased discrimination and inequality for women, especially in schools. To this day, a complaint can be filed to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) if women believe they have been discriminated against under Title IX. Title IX covers most of the types of discrimination that happen in schools such as sexual harassment, disadvantages in athletic opportunities, sex-based discrimination in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses, and pregnancy-based discrimination.¹⁵ After its establishment in 1972, efforts to revise and expand the regulations were met on May 6, 2020. Claims

¹⁰ “Menstrual Hygiene.” UNICEF. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/wash/menstrual-hygiene>.

¹¹ “Child Marriage and Education.” Girls Not Brides. Accessed July 25, 2022.

<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-and-education/>.

¹² “Educating Girls, Ending Child Marriage.” World Bank, August 24, 2017.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2017/08/22/educating-girls-ending-child-marriage>.

¹³ “Child Marriage and Poverty - International Center for Research on Women.” Accessed August 15, 2022.

<https://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Poverty.pdf>.

¹⁴ (OCR), Office for Civil Rights. “Title IX Education Amendments.” HHS.gov, October 27, 2021.

[https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/sex-discrimination/title-ix-education-amendments/index.html#:~:text=Title%20IX%20of%20the%20Education%20Amendments%20of%201972%20\(Title%20IX,activity%20receiving%20federal%20financial%20assistance](https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/sex-discrimination/title-ix-education-amendments/index.html#:~:text=Title%20IX%20of%20the%20Education%20Amendments%20of%201972%20(Title%20IX,activity%20receiving%20federal%20financial%20assistance).

¹⁵ “Sex Discrimination: Overview of the Law.” Home. US Department of Education (ED), July 12, 2022.

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/guid/ocr/sexoverview.html>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

were rewritten and stated that it is “impossible to discriminate against a person” by their gender identity or sexual orientation without “discriminating against that individual based on sex.”¹⁶

Many other efforts from nations can be recognized as effective stepping stones in the process of achieving gender equality. For example, one of the most notable efforts is the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDGs 4 and 5. Official targets such as ensuring “all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education” (Target 4.1) or eliminating “all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres” (Target 5.2) set a specific goal to reach by 2030¹⁷. Other international conventions such as the four United Nations Conferences on Women helped set objectives to achieve in a fixed time period and also sparked the establishment of many organizations related to women’s rights such as UN Women. These milestones remind us of the progress made for gender equality, but there is much more room for growth.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender inequality

Gender inequality refers to the violation of fundamental rights by gender discrimination. There are multiple forms of gender inequality and discrimination, one being when one gender or sex is prioritized or given an unfair advantage because of their gender. This has been an existing, urgent problem for a long time and is Goal 5 in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁸

Child marriage

Child marriage refers to when a child or a minor (under 18) gets married to an adult or another child. It usually relates to the culture and traditions the child bride/groom’s family holds and practices. It is common in India, prevalent among Muslims and Hindus while other countries such as Ethiopia have Christians and Muslims practicing child marriage as well.¹⁹ Many young girls are forced to give up their

¹⁶ “The U.S. Department of Education Releases Proposed Changes to Title IX Regulations, Invites Public Comment.” The U.S. Department of Education Releases Proposed Changes to Title IX Regulations, Invites Public Comment | U.S. Department of Education, June 23, 2022. <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-proposed-changes-title-ix-regulations-invites-public-comment>.

¹⁷ “Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 16, 2022. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.

¹⁸ “Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>.

¹⁹ Vogelstein, Rachel B. “Child Marriage and Religion.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, January 2, 2014. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/child-marriage-and-religion-0#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20in%20India%2C%20where,by%20Christians%20and%20Muslims%20alike>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

school education at a very young age due to responsibilities around the house as a wife/mother. The marriage is usually set up by the families of the groom and bride, with the child having no say in her future.

Gender-responsive pedagogies

Gender-responsive pedagogies (GRP) is a method of teaching students specific learning needs relating to gender. This teaching quality helps improve skills including academic access, performance, retention, and participation. It includes curriculums of gender-aware classroom practices that allow all students to have equal opportunities. Some features of the GRP include language in classrooms, school management systems, teaching and learning materials, and teachers trained to use strategies to eliminate sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination. Organizations such as the Forum for African Women Education (FAWE) have developed GRP models with over 6,600 teachers benefiting from their training.²⁰ More schools across the world have been adapting these methods, leading to a more inclusive and safe environment for individuals, especially female students.

Gender-equitable education

Gender-equitable education refers to an education system that tackles gender bias and norms while simultaneously empowering girls and boys to stay in school and develop life skills. Gender-equitable education reduces gender-based violence in schools while decreasing the number of child marriages and female genital mutilation. Examples of gender-equitable education include removing gender stereotypes from lesson plans, supporting governments and schools to eliminate gender gaps in academics, training teachers on gender-responsive pedagogies, and addressing barriers such as menstrual hygiene management, re-entry to school for young mothers, and distance-related obstacles.

Conscious/unconscious bias

Unconscious bias is an unintentional bias where the mindset of the bias is outside of one's control. Conscious bias is a bias that one is aware of and can choose to access or not. An example of a conscious gender bias is when an employer explicitly believes that men are smarter and more suitable leader figures than women are, and chooses to promote a man instead of a woman. The same outcome could happen with a person with unconscious gender bias, but they would instead make the decision

²⁰ "Gender-Responsive Pedagogy." FAWE, January 31, 2018.
<https://fawe.org/our-programmes/interventions/gender-responsive-pedagogy/>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

unaware of their inner biases. Both biases are harmful when it comes to promoting gender equality, resulting in prejudiced behaviors and unfair decisions.²¹

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap refers to when a man earns a higher income than a woman, even though they did the same amount of work. A study done by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) shows that women earn 83 cents for every dollar men earn while working full-time in the United States.²² The gender pay gap is a result of unequal education, gender roles, stereotypes, and bias. It can be acknowledged as a cause of gender inequality in education as it can discourage girls from attending school and create more biases and stereotypes of women. It can also be seen as a consequence of gender parity in education because many girls receive less quality education than men, making them appear less qualified for a job.

Gender parity

Gender parity refers to the balance and equality of the number of males and females in a certain area. It is often represented as a statistical measure, a female-to-male ratio. For example, if an equal number of girls and boys who complete secondary school was recorded, the gender parity ratio for that indicator would be one. The gender parity ratio is often used to determine the level of gender equality in a country in areas that concern gender equality such as education, income, and poverty rates.²³

Timeline of Key Events

July 19 - July 20, 1848 - Seneca Falls Convention

The Seneca Falls Convention was held in New York in 1848, and it was the first women's rights convention in the United States. It fought for social, civil, and religious women's rights while attempting to shed light on the unfair treatment and discrimination women experienced. The convention unanimously passed 10 resolutions on women's rights except for the ninth resolution about women's right to vote. It

²¹ Gaddes, Rachel, Zoe Jacobson, Sidra Montgomery, and Courtney Moore. "Conscious and Unconscious Gender Bias." *Conscious and Unconscious Gender Bias*, 2018.

https://dacowits.defense.gov/Portals/48/Documents/General%20Documents/RFI%20Docs/Dec2018/Insig ht_RFI%204.pdf?ver=2018-12-08-000555-027.

²² "The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap: Aauw Report." AAUW, September 20, 2021.

<https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/simple-truth/>.

²³ Manlosa, Aisa, and Denise Margaret Matias. "From Gender Parity to Gender Equality: Changing Women's Lived RealitiesA." *German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)*, 2018.

<https://www.idos-research.de/en/the-current-column/article/from-gender-parity-to-gender-equality-changin g-womens-lived-realities/>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

barely passed, as it was the most controversial resolution, but it still became the starting point of the women's suffrage movement. Nearly 70 years later, the 19th amendment was granted and women were able to vote legally.²⁴ The Seneca Falls Convention was considered the first spark in achieving women's rights to vote and a keystone in the history of gender equality.

July 1848 - Declaration of Sentiments Published

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the first-generation feminists, was the main organizer of the Seneca Falls Convention and was also the main writer of the convention's manifesto, the Declaration of Sentiments. The manifesto declared that "all men and women are created equal" and argued that the patriarchal society oppressed women and privileged white propertied males.²⁵ The declaration called on women to "throw off such government" and provided an empowering source that women could refer to in the past and present.²⁶ It also fought for women's equality in family, jobs, health, education, politics, religion, and morals, which were used as foundations for future women's rights movements, including the women's suffrage movement.²⁷

1963 - 1966 - Betty Friedan Publishes *The Feminine Mystique* and Founds the National Organization for Women (NOW)

Betty Friedan, born in 1921, was a journalist, activist, author, and co-founder of the U.S. National Organization for Women (NOW). She was a leader in the women's rights movement between the 1960s and 1970s. Her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, was published in 1963 and became a bestseller, expressing the frustration millions of women shared due to their gender roles.²⁸ The book created a social revolution, encouraging women to satisfy their personal curiosities and explore subjects outside their traditional roles.²⁹ Many say her revolutionary book sparked the "second wave" of feminism and raised awareness of other

²⁴ History.com Editors. "Seneca Falls Convention." History.com. A&E Television Networks, November 10, 2017.

<https://www.history.com/topics/womens-rights/seneca-falls-convention#:~:text=The%20Seneca%20Falls%20Convention%20was,women%20the%20right%20to%20vote.>

²⁵ "Declaration of Sentiments Table, 1848." National Museum of American History. Accessed July 25, 2022. https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_529599.

²⁶ History.com Editors. "Seneca Falls Convention." History.com. A&E Television Networks, November 10, 2017.

<https://www.history.com/topics/womens-rights/seneca-falls-convention#:~:text=The%20Seneca%20Falls%20Convention%20was,women%20the%20right%20to%20vote.>

²⁷ Cokely, Carrie. "Declaration of Sentiments." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2014. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Declaration-of-Sentiments>.

²⁸ "Betty Friedan - National Women's History Museum." Betty Friedan. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/betty-friedan>.

²⁹ History.com Editors. "Betty Friedan." History.com. A&E Television Networks, November 9, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/betty-friedan>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

women's rights issues such as education, birth control, abortion, and workplace equality.³⁰ Friedan also co-founded NOW in 1966 and became its first president. NOW's first action was advocating for equality in employment and soon after, they successfully ended the practice of sex-segregated "help wanted" advertising. NOW is currently the largest feminist group in the U.S., remaining as one of the most well-known feminist groups.³¹

June 23, 1972 - Title IX Enacted

Title IX was a milestone in achieving gender equality, especially in the participation of women in federally funded education programs. It states "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."³² This meant that women had more opportunities to participate in academic programs as well as athletic programs, championships, and scholarships. The enactment of Title IX mostly encouraged the participation of women in sports as it required programs to provide the same resources such as locker rooms, coaches, medical treatment, facilities, and training. Before the enactment, there were 140,000 more men than women who participated in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). After the 1972 enactment, the number of female athletes in high school increased from 295,000 to 2.6 million, and from 30,000 to more than 150,000 in colleges. Title IX is also credited with decreasing the number of high school female dropouts and increasing the number of women who extend to achieve college degrees and pursue higher education.³³

June 19 - July 2, 1975 - First UN Conference on Women Held

The first world conference on women was held in Mexico and coincided with the International Women's Year, 1975. The United Nations believed that making an International Women's Year would help remind the world that women continue to experience discrimination, even after years of fighting. The conference discussed three objectives that should be focused on for the decade. The first objective was to achieve "full gender equality" and eliminate gender discrimination, the second was to encourage

³⁰ Muñoz, Jacob. "The Powerful, Complicated Legacy of Betty Friedan's 'The Feminine Mystique'." Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, February 4, 2021. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/powerful-complicated-legacy-betty-friedans-feminine-mystique-180976931/>.

³¹ "National Organization for Women." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Organization-for-Women>.

³² Press, The Associated. "Title IX Timeline: 50 Years of Halting Progress across U.S." AP NEWS. Associated Press, June 13, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/title-ix-timeline-5fc023ca41d7d8c2489de24a23413938>.

³³ Television Networks, A&E. "Title IX Enacted." History.com. A&E Television Networks, November 16, 2009. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/title-ix-enacted#:~:text=On%20June%2023%2C%201972%2C%20Title,or%20employees%20based%20on%20sex>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

“integration and full participation of women in development”, and the third objective was to increase the contribution of women to strengthen world peace.³⁴ The conference led to the establishment of organizations such as the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and more. A large number of women participated in the conference, with 113 delegations out of 133 being women.³⁵ The conference also created a “World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women’s Year” which was a set of guidelines to help the advancement of women through 1985.³⁶ It was the first of four UN conferences on women, and the agendas set goals and standards for the other conferences to come.

September 4 - 15, 1995 - Fourth World Conference on Women Held

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China took place after 3 other conferences were held in 1975, 1980, and 1985. The fourth conference was considered the most important of all four conferences because of how it built on all agreements made at the three previous conferences. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was built in this conference and is now considered the “key global policy document on gender equality.”³⁷ The agenda was adopted unanimously by 189 countries and set strategic objectives and actions for the achievement of gender equality in 12 areas of concern such as women and poverty, education, health, violence, media, and more. The UN Division for Women summarized the goals and realizations earned from the four conferences, stating that they needed to “shift the focus from women to the concept of gender,” and that the structure of society and relations between men and women had to be re-evaluated.³⁸ After the fourth and final major UN conference on women, other conferences were held every 5 years that reviewed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.³⁹

³⁴ “World Conference of the International Women's Year.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/mexico-city1975>.

³⁵ “World Conference of the International Women's Year.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/mexico-city1975>.

³⁶ “World Conference of the International Women's Year.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/mexico-city1975>.

³⁷ “Fourth World Conference on Women.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/beijing1995>.

³⁸ “Fourth World Conference on Women.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/beijing1995>.

³⁹ “Conferences | Women and Gender Equality.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

July 2, 2010 - Creation of UN Women

UN Women was created in July 2010 but was planned to be initiated much before. The first UN Conference on Women held in 1975 led to the creation of four organizations: INSTRAW, UNIFEM, Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI).⁴⁰ These four organizations merged with UN Women to create a larger umbrella organization that covers most issues related to gender equality and women's rights. Former UN Secretary-General Banki-Moon stated that UN Women would enhance and support, not replace, the efforts made by other UN bodies such as CSW, UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA. He also stated that one key role of UN Women would be to support inter-governmental organizations in the "formulation of policies, global standards and norms," and implementing these standards with technical and financial support. Another key role of UN Women would be to "help the UN system be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress."⁴¹

June 16, 2015 - Michelle Obama's Speech, "Let Girls Learn", held in London, UK

Michelle Obama, the former first lady, constantly expressed her support for gender equality throughout the years. A notable reflection of her support for equality in women's and girls' education would be her speech to the Mulberry School for Girls. In her speech, she introduces the Let Girls Learn Initiative that she established in 2015 collaborating with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Let Girls Learn focuses on the importance of education that girls receive around the world by tearing down barriers to education, increasing education programs, and securing private-sector commitments. Michelle Obama mentioned the causes and long-term effects of gender inequality in education such as poverty, gender bias and stereotypes, religion, representation, and more, outlining the economic, social, and cultural factors of this agenda.⁴² In her time in the United Kingdom, she secured \$200 million dollars in collaboration with its government to support girls' education in conflict areas like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.⁴³ The Let Girls Learn

⁴⁰ Scaddan, Charlotte. "UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women." UN Women – Headquarters, July 2, 2010.
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2010/7/un-creates-new-structure-for-empowerment-of-women>.

⁴¹ Scaddan, Charlotte. "UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women." UN Women – Headquarters, July 2, 2010.
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2010/7/un-creates-new-structure-for-empowerment-of-women>.

⁴² "Remarks by the First Lady at Let Girls Learn Event in London, UK." National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, June 16, 2015.
<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/16/remarks-first-lady-let-girls-learn-event-london-uk>.

⁴³ Thelwell, Kim. "Four Top Speeches on Girls' Education." The Borgen Project. Kim Thelwell
https://borgenproject.org/wp-content/uploads/The_Borgen_Project_Logo_small.jpg, April 11, 2019.
<https://borgenproject.org/four-top-speeches-on-girls-education/>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

Initiative has since invested more than \$1 billion in over 50 countries and is believed to raise much more in the coming years.⁴⁴

Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies

Afghanistan

In the 2022 Gender Inequality Index, Afghanistan is ranked last (146th out of 146 countries) in the Educational Attainment and overall Global Gender Gap Index rankings.⁴⁵ Due to the recent Afghan-Taliban conflict, achieving gender equality in education has become much harder to accomplish. Since August of 2021, many girls have been ordered to leave school by the Taliban due to security reasons, but they promised that girls in grades 6 and higher would be welcomed back to school soon.⁴⁶ However, approaching the date, schools were shut down again by the Taliban, claiming that schools would reopen after a plan was made for schools to follow the Islamic law. In the past when they were in power from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban banned female education and employment for women, and many are concerned that history could repeat itself. Even before the Taliban took over, 60% of Afghan students out of school were female and only 37% of teenage girls could read and write, as opposed to the 66% of boys who could.⁴⁷ Young girls also feel threatened as there are possibilities that girls' and women's education could gradually begin to focus mainly on religious education. Being provided with only religious education would mean that the future generations would be raised upon stronger misogynistic values and girls would not be taught essential skills to pursue careers such as jobs in the STEM area.

South Sudan

South Sudan has one of the largest gender gaps in education due to the aftermath of violence and war present in the country. As South Sudan only became independent in 2011, it still faces obstacles in

⁴⁴ Singmaster, Heather. "The Legacy of Michelle Obama and the Let Girls Learn Initiative (Opinion)." Education Week. Education Week, January 13, 2017. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-the-legacy-of-michelle-obama-and-the-let-girls-learn-initiative/2017/01>.

⁴⁵ "Global Gender Gap Report 2022." World Economic Forum. Accessed August 9, 2022. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>.

⁴⁶ Foundation, Thomson Reuters. "How Will Taliban Rule Impact Girls' Education in Afghanistan?" news.trust.org, March 23, 2022. <https://news.trust.org/item/20210831110425-cvykj/#:~:text=Nonetheless%2C%20the%20country%20has%20one,according%20to%20Human%20Rights%20Watch>.

⁴⁷ Foundation, Thomson Reuters. "How Will Taliban Rule Impact Girls' Education in Afghanistan?" news.trust.org, March 23, 2022. <https://news.trust.org/item/20210831110425-cvykj/#:~:text=Nonetheless%2C%20the%20country%20has%20one,according%20to%20Human%20Rights%20Watch>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

repairing destruction and developing infrastructure, making social problems such as gender equality low on their priorities. The South Sudan government only spends 2.6% of its budget on education while 73% of girls are unable to attend primary school.⁴⁸ The destruction of schools and poverty also make it difficult for families to send their children to school. Even in the rare cases that a family can send a child to school, they most likely send their sons as their daughters are assigned to their traditional gender roles of house chores or taking care of their younger siblings, relating to the cultural factors of this agenda.⁴⁹ According to UNESCO, in both Afghanistan and South Sudan, there are only around 70 girls enrolled in primary schools for every 100 boys.⁵⁰

Pakistan

Pakistan is a patriarchal society where women face more discrimination and have a lower social, political, and economic status. Only around 8% of women attend tertiary education—all formal post-secondary education—and the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report further included that Pakistan will take 136 years to achieve full gender equality when observing its current progress.⁵¹ One of the most powerful stories related to girls' education comes from Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani, who was then 14 years old when she was shot during a protest in an effort to fight for gender equality in education.⁵² Now, she has become a voice for girls' education in both Pakistan and the entire world.

Norway

Norway is one of the countries with the highest gender equality and is ranked as one of the five countries to have the most equal societies in the world by the World Economic Forum (WEF). Norway has made many milestones and achievements in women's history. For example, it has one of the highest

⁴⁸ Desk, India Today Web. "10 Toughest Places for a Girl to Get Education." India Today, November 28, 2021.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/10-toughest-places-for-a-girl-to-get-education-1881752-2021-11-28>.

⁴⁹ Hodal, Kate. "Revealed: The 10 Worst Countries for Girls to Get an Education." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 11, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/oct/11/revealed-the-10-worst-countries-for-girls-to-get-an-education-international-day-girl>.

⁵⁰ "New Atlas of Gender Inequality in Education Shows Progress and Pitfalls in Countries around the World." UNESCO, March 13, 2017.

<https://en.unesco.org/news/new-atlas-gender-inequality-education-shows-progress-and-pitfalls-countries-around-world-0#:~:text=In%20Afghanistan%20and%20Sudan%2C%20there,of%20education%20in%20many%20countries>.

⁵¹ Kamal, Muhammad Abdul. "Gender Inequality in Education." Pakistan Today, February 27, 2022.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/02/27/gender-inequality-in-education/#:~:text=Pakistan%27s%20entire%20education%20system%20has,8.3%20percent%20attended%20tertiary%20education>.

⁵² Hare, Breeanna. "Where It's Hardest to Be a Girl." CNN. Cable News Network, October 13, 2016. <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/11/health/gender-inequality-worst-countries/index.html>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

rates of women's employment (77%), generous paid parental leave offers, affordable daycare, and female political participation. Over 40% of its parliament is composed of women, with many holding high positions.⁵³ In 2018, former prime minister Erna Solberg stated girls' education would be one of Norway's top five priorities from 2016 to 2020. In 2018, they have allocated CA\$580 million to global education and another CA\$330 million to the Global Partnership for Education.⁵⁴ Norwegian authorities place great value on gender equality in education as they consider it would benefit employment, poverty reduction, health improvement, and democratization.

Chad

Chad's progress in education is not only concerning for girls but for the entire population. The enrollment rate for boys is already low and even worse for girls. Almost half of the country is illiterate, and school enrollment rates decrease throughout the later years of the school curriculum. The enrollment rate for girls in primary school is 80.4%, 13.3% for middle school, and 10.3% for secondary school completion.⁵⁵ Eric Ngardjimi, an Education Cluster Coordinator at UNICEF, stated that the two main obstacles that hinder girls' education are the status of women in society and poverty. In Chad, women have traditional roles in the house, not at school, and most families follow religious practices such as early or forced marriages. Many traditional parents believe that their power would be "taken away" if women were educated. They believe that "over-educating" girls would hinder their abilities and responsibilities in the household as well as not being able to achieve a good marriage. Parents also fear that educating their daughters would lead to them leaving their homes to pursue educational fields, thus being "taken away" from their parents. Many young girls are stripped from having role models as only 19.5% of primary school teachers are women, 5.7% of middle school teachers, and 8% of secondary school teachers.⁵⁶ Another obstacle is menstruation and hygiene for girls. Many girls are absent during their menstruation period because of the shame they feel from their peers, trouble in finding sanitary products, and lack of hygienic facilities like toilets in schools. All these socio-cultural obstacles prevent women from receiving the necessary education. However, the government has also made many attempts to promote girls'

⁵³ Sørum, Benedicte. "Norway Prioritises Aid to Support Girls' Education, but Forgets the Jobs." Sciencenorway, March 4, 2018.

<https://sciencenorway.no/aid-education-forskningno/norway-prioritises-aid-to-support-girls-education-but-forgets-the-jobs/1454468>.

⁵⁴ Ovind, Anne Kari H. "When a Government Makes Gender Equality a Top Priority, It Pays Off." HuffPost. HuffPost, March 8, 2018.

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⁵⁵ Countrymeters.info. "Chad Population." Countrymeters. Accessed August 9, 2022. <https://countrymeters.info/en/Chad>.

⁵⁶ "Chad." Strengthening girls' education in Chad | Digital Situation Reports. Accessed August 9, 2022. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/chad/card/4ABbWgXqCB/>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

education. In 1994, the government created a unit within the Ministry of Education to encourage girls' participation in schools while also creating associations of mother educators. In 2015, they set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years, preventing parents from taking their daughters out of school for marriage.⁵⁷ In the 2000s, there was also a decree on free education which did not follow through due to the shortage of teachers.

Let Girls Learn

Let Girls Learn is an initiative launched in 2015 by Michelle Obama that aims to give young women access to education worldwide.⁵⁸ The initiative consists of a variety of programs. For example, it held an education camp in Rwanda for girls interested in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Design, and Math).⁵⁹ Let Girls Learn works collaboratively with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and provides the necessary funding and resources needed in conflict areas to support girls' education. They provide programs that can “prevent early and forced marriage,” hold “initiatives that educate girls about healthy behavior and reproductive health, and unprecedented efforts to prevent and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS.”⁶⁰ In that way Let Girls Learn is addressing both the root causes of gender inequality in education—economic, social, and cultural factors—as well as the consequences of the issue. The campaign has provided schools in more than 50 countries with over \$1 billion of funding.⁶¹

Suggested Solutions

The deep-rooted issue of gender inequality in education is impossible to solve with a single step. Reasonable solutions require layers of consideration and a series of proposals that take time to be processed and accepted. Tackling the misogynistic traditions and cultures that have been built for thousands of generations would be extremely difficult, especially due to the conservative, deep-rooted

⁵⁷ “Chad.” Strengthening girls' education in Chad | Digital Situation Reports. Accessed August 9, 2022. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/chad/card/4ABbWgXqCB/>.

⁵⁸ “Empowering Girls to Achieve Their Full Potential.” LET GIRLS LEARN INITIATIVE. Accessed August 9, 2022. <https://letgirlslearnke.org/>.

⁵⁹ Pulia, Shalayne. “5 Things to Know about Michelle Obama's Let Girls Learn Initiative.” InStyle. InStyle, September 8, 2016. <https://www.instyle.com/celebrity/michelle-obama-let-girls-learn-initiative>.

⁶⁰ “Let Girls Learn - Fact Sheet - United States Agency for International ...” Accessed August 9, 2022. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/USAID_LetGirlsLearn_FactSheet.pdf.

⁶¹ Singmaster, Heather. “The Legacy of Michelle Obama and the Let Girls Learn Initiative (Opinion).” Education Week. Education Week, January 13, 2017. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-the-legacy-of-michelle-obama-and-the-let-girls-learn-initiative/2017/01>.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

nature of most religions and cultures. There should rather be an effort to prevent the normalization of gender bias and stereotyping.

Making education accessible for girls should be the top priority when addressing gender inequality. Multiple organizations such as Let Girls Learn and Malala Fund set examples of how this can be done. For example, the Malala Fund helped girls continue their education after the Ebola pandemic in Sierra Leone by creating classrooms for more than 1,000 girls in 2015.⁶² The Let Girls Learn Initiative, in collaboration with USAID, built more than 560 schools and centers to train teachers, produced textbooks and provided them to schools, and created a university teaching degree program in Afghanistan.⁶³ Countless other organizations have executed similar projects to support and fund girls' education. There are multiple different methods to making education accessible. However, as easy and appealing as these solutions sound, it also presents flaws that should be considered. These methods of providing resources to schools and making education free are only possible for big-scale organizations as they are the only ones who have the authority and funding. There have also been many attempts that have failed due to the lack of qualified teachers and the inability to compensate for additional funds such as repairing/building facilities that are safe and hygienic. It also does not tackle the fundamental issue of gender biases that socially and culturally prevent girls from attending school.

A potential solution to address the root of the issue - the normalization of misogynistic ideals and stereotypes - is to provide gender-equitable education. Providing schools with simple curriculums that remove bias in language, teaching methods, and learning materials would be effective in stopping the gender bias that gets passed on through generations. Having gender-equitable education could mean anything from removing misogynistic reading material to having discussions on harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Doing something as simple as including an admirational female figure in a textbook could provide more role models for girls.

However, this solution rarely gets accepted in countries that limit girls' access to education. Their dominant cultures and traditions prohibit them from sending their daughters to school. and changing the education system to be more inclusive would spark controversy. More families would be discouraged to send their daughters to school as many traditional parents believe that educating girls would make them "overpower" their parents. In order to break the cultural barriers to girls' education, there should be an

⁶² "The Malala Fund by Malala Yousafzai - Fighting for Girls' Education." Foundation Guide, October 8, 2020. <https://foundationguide.org/service-categories/malala-fund/>.

⁶³ "Let Girls Learn - Fact Sheet - United States Agency for International ..." Accessed August 9, 2022. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/USAID_LetGirlsLearn_FactSheet.pdf.

25th Annual Session of the **Seoul Model United Nations**

effort to educate and communicate with traditional parents as well. One way to do this is to hold a local educational seminar for parents in countries with the most traditions and cultures encouraging gender stereotypes such as Chad or South Sudan. After providing parents with an incentive to participate in these seminars, educators from various parts of the world could teach parents the importance of receiving proper education, especially for girls, and how harmful traditional practices such as child marriage can be. If this solution is used to address the cultural barriers of gender inequality, delegates should attempt to find specific curriculums and valuable incentives for parents to participate in the seminars.

Harmful practices such as child marriage play a part in the lack of education girls receive. Many young girls are forced to quit school due to preparation for marriage, responsibilities in the house, and early pregnancies. In less economically developed countries (LEDCs), around 40 percent of girls get married before the age of 18 and most of them are unable to return to school. There should be considerations to appease the unwillingness of families to send their daughters to school because of cultural and traditional gender biases. As mentioned above, Chad has only recently prohibited child marriage under the age of 18. Organizations such as Girls Not Brides have supported movements and launched projects to end child marriage. By using these organizations as role models or collaborating with them, restrictions on child marriage can be enforced in many countries, allowing girls to attend school without having to worry about responsibilities as a wife or mother.

Organizing global conferences such as the four UN conferences on women would help encourage collaboration between member nations. Like the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action made in the fourth conference held in Beijing in 1995, member nations could come up with agendas containing specific points to focus on for a period of time. Delegates should make an effort to create a solution on collaboration between member nations as it can create compromises and consensus for resolutions to be set in place. Like the four UN conferences on women, having conferences throughout the decade can help to create organizations (such as UN Women), spark collaboration between MEDCs and LEDCs for monetary purposes, and set a specific goal to be met by the chosen time period. This year's theme, "Bonds of Unity" is a vital part of suggesting solutions as none can be effective without the collaboration and unity of delegations.

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