

Forum:	Human Rights Committee
Issue:	Establishing gender equality in education systems
Student Officer:	Tiffany Liew
Position:	Deputy President of the Human Rights Committee.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right. Every man, woman and child is entitled to it. Education is vital to our development as individuals and imperative for the progress of societies as it helps to pave the way to a successful and productive future. When we ensure that education is rooted in gender equality, we create a ripple effect of opportunity that will impact our future generations.

The importance of education has been stressed by a multitude of parties. The Millennium Development Goals established the importance of global education and gender equality through goals two “Achieve universal primary education” and three “Promote gender equality and empower women.” The recognition of connecting these two goals is the first step to achieving both objectives.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender equality

The absence of discrimination on the basis of gender in opportunities. It is the equal exercise by men and women in their human rights.

Gender discrimination

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms, which prevents an individual from exercising full human rights.

Equal opportunities

Ensuring the opportunity for full and equal participation of men and women in all aspects of political, social, cultural and economic life.

Gender Parity Index

A socioeconomic index designed to measure relative access to education of males and females. It is calculated by the proportion of the number of males and

females enrolled in a given stage of education.

Right to education

Defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) as the global access to compulsory education in primary and secondary, with focus on free education and equal access.

Inclusive education

An education style that takes into account different learning styles as well as the academic needs of students.

Child-friendly schools

Schools that address the needs of children in order to accommodate for their physical and psychological wellbeing needed in the process of their education.

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals to end poverty by 2015 claims that every said goal is directly related to women's rights, and societies where women are not given equal rights as men. Promoting gender equality, including gender equality in education systems contributes to the prospects of economic prosperities.

History

In 1948, the United Nations officially formulated the declaration of Human Rights. This states that every human has the right to go to school. Organisations and initiatives such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) actively continue to act against discrimination in education systems by hosting conventions such as the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, emphasizing the equality of opportunity for all and the need commitment to complying to the principles of the universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore the World Declaration on Education for All conference held in March 1990, was critical to the future of education standards. This conference marked the commitment to establish rights of all people- male and female to education and learning.

In 2000, the UN Millennium Development Goals were set to ensure universal primary education and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women by

2015. Also in 2000, UNGEI was established to create responsibilities in ensuring gender equality and the rights to education of children regardless of gender.

Key Issues

Gender inequality in education: Gender specific

The failure to recognise the falling behind of males to females in literacy is one of the main causes of today's gender gap in education. The focus is placed mostly on the advantage that males have over females in fields such as science and math and society has placed males in a position inhibiting the expression of emotions.

UNESCO and the Gender Parity Index

UNESCO uses the Gender Parity Index (GPI) as it actively attempts to reduce and eventually eliminate disparities in education in regards to gender. UNESCO emphasizes the troubles of unequal access to education for girls in third world countries.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

UNICEF

UNICEF is the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. It engages in activity regarding gender inequality. Reports by UNICEF state that over 50% of the 101 million primary school-aged children who are out of school are girls.

UNESCO

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. It advocated the development of gender equality in education laws and actively aids the expansion of access to education for women and girls. Research carried out by UNESCO shows that nations, which are less economically developed, are more likely undermine women's and girls' rights.

UNGEI

UNGEI is the United Nations Girls Education Initiative. This body was established to examine gender disparities in education in several countries. Research carried out by this organisation enabled the development of a database on gender inequality issues, which is used to aid governments to develop policies which help move towards meeting education for all goals such as the second Millennium Development Goal: "Achieve universal primary education."

UNFCCC

UNFCCC is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This body is concerned with the issue of gender equality in education systems as it places great emphasis on the importance of efficacy of women's participation in combating significant environmental issues. The UNFCCC states that women's participation are necessary for effective action on all aspects of climate change and now supports issues on the matter.

Pakistan

Education has become a universal human right and plays a significant role in the development of societies. The Constitution of Pakistan states that education is a fundamental right of every citizen yet gender discrepancies still exist in the education sector. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports that only 2.7% of Pakistan's GDP is contributed towards education and twice as many males to females receive secondary education.

India

In 1947, women's literacy rates were as low as 2%. Since then, the Indian Government has tried to provide incentives in the form of free meals, books and uniforms, in order to increase female enrolment in schools. The education of women is a vital ingredient for improving living standards in India both at home and outside of the home. From 2001 to 2011, female literacy rates have increased from approximately 50% to over 65%. A survey conducted in India showed a correlation between education of women and economic growth.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

There are a number of resolutions and events, which contribute to the issue of gender equality with regards to education. The listed events marks the dates of significant actions related to the issue.

Date	Event
December 10, 1948	United Nations declaration of Human Rights
December 14, 1960	UNESCO convention against discrimination in education
December 18, 1979	Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
March 9, 1990	World declaration on education for all
April 28, 2000	Dakar framework for action, education for all

April, 2000	UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI)
September, 2000	United Nations Millennium Development Goals
January 18, 2002`	56/116. United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all resolution
April 2, 2009	UNESCO world conference on education for sustainable development

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

With global emphasis on the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, women's rights were once again negotiated at the United Nations' commission on the status of women. Substantial progress was made but discussion was not all positive as some pushed for more traditional and less autonomous roles for women as a step towards achieving such MDGs.

The emphasis seems to be on another MDG goal, which is to eradicate poverty. It is argued that in order to reach the point of complete gender equality, this goal of eradicating poverty should first be met and thus more resources should be focused upon this goal. The argument lies in the belief that the most effective starting point is to resolve issues of poverty, which would then mitigate inequalities, which affect the women of the world.

The UN statistics on gender inequality in education shows that this issue has improved significantly over the past decade. However, in many parts of Africa, it seems that there has been little or no progress whatsoever. In Chad for example, enrolment ratio of girls to boy is considerably low. However, gender inequality is not the only issue in African nations, perhaps the problem stems from the fact that there are not enough schools for even boys attend. Gender inequality in education in Africa is a complex issue. Several different policies are needed if the UN's goals are to be achieved.

Possible Solutions

Subsidies or provisions of free education

Provision from the State of free education will reduce the financial burden of low-income families in regards to sending their children to school. Eliminating the cost will lead to greater ability to send sons and daughters through education and thus these choices can reduce gender disparities in education. This incentive of free education can ensure that as many children as possible are enrolling at school.

Policies for compulsory education

Research carried out by the organisation UNGEI suggests that low-income families are less likely to send their children to schools if it is optional. Girls are more likely to be kept at home because of the gender roles which may suggest that education for girls is not a necessity. Imposing policies for compulsory education will lead to a significant increase in girls enrolling in school.

Government investment in child-friendly schools

Child-friendly schools will promote gender equality as violence, discrimination and corporal punishment are greatly discouraged. This will provide a safe environment for school children and thus can aid the issues of gender inequality in education systems.

Policies ensuring gender parity in teaching faculty

Gender parity is just as important in teaching faculty. By having as many female and male teachers ensures that the needs for boys and girls are met in schools. The identification of male role models for boys and female role models for girls is essential for development throughout the education process.

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