



IN BRIEF



# UN WOMEN'S WORK ON EDUCATION

Photo: UN Trust Fund To End Violence Against Women/Phil Borges

## What's the Issue?

The world has made considerable progress towards gender parity in education, especially at basic education levels. However for many girls and women, equal and quality education opportunities remain out of reach. About two-thirds of the estimated 776 million illiterate adults are women, reflecting decades of limited access and poor quality education.

Despite persistent boys' underachievement in a number of countries, especially at higher levels of education, far too many girls and young women continue to be denied schooling, leave prematurely, or complete school with few skills and limited opportunities. At issue are intersecting forms of gender-based discrimination within communities and in schools; preferences in certain contexts to educate boys rather than girls; curricula and pedagogy that are often biased against girls and women; inadequate provisions to support girls – especially adolescents – and to provide second-chance opportunities for those who drop out because of pregnancy and early marriage to complete their education and acquire relevant skills. Also at issue is the growing insecurity, violence and threats of violence that girls, especially, face in their quest for education. These challenges and the realization that the education of women and girls can be a game-changer in development, underlie UN Women's work on education.

## Our Solutions

Our solutions are founded on 3 principles: 1) Basic education is not enough if we seek to empower women in today's society – we must provide access to quality secondary and higher education too; 2) The skills that are most sought after and highly paid in today's economies are science and technology based – we must educate girls and women to be conversant with and to use science and technology; 3) Intersecting forms of gender-based discrimination play a key role in holding women and girls from successful completion and skills acquisition in education – we must provide solutions that are intersectoral, apply multi-pronged interventions and engage a range of partners inside and outside the education sector.

The Entity has recently launched a joint programme together with UNESCO, UNFPA and the World Bank which embodies these three principles. We advocate that single-sector approaches to gender equality in education be replaced by a "SHELF" of solutions – SHELF encapsulating the key areas of intervention required to ensure the empowerment of women and girls through education: Security and Safety (S); Health (H); Employment (E); Legislation and Law Enforcement (L); and Finance (F). Persistent threats to girls' education underscores the need to apply the entire SHELF of tools in our quest for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through education. We seek to partner with others to achieve this and to make the education and the full empowerment of all women and girls a reality.



## How We Make a Difference:

Partnering with others to make the education and the full empowerment of all women and girls a reality

### **AS CO-CONVENER OF WORLD EDUCATION FORUM 2015:**

We seek to strengthen and deepen the Education for All (EFA) movement's longstanding emphasis on achieving gender equality in education, stressing the empowering potential of quality education for girls and women. We also seek to form stronger partnerships with other key players and to nurture the inter-sectoral interventions that are so critical to reversing gender based discrimination in education. UN Women-led panel discussions at the WEF2015 seek to build consensus around our 3 key principles, especially to emphasize skills acquisition for empowerment as an ultimate goal in education. We have also made relevant contributions to strengthening the gender equality perspective in the draft Declaration of the World Economic Forum and in the EFA Framework for Action. Our co-convening role is also an avenue which we will explore to reinforce the implementation of actions to address the Beijing Platform for Action critical area of concern – education and training of women.

### **AS CO-ORGANIZER, WITH UNESCO, OF MOBILE**

**LEARNING WEEK 2015:** We brought a strong gender equality dimension to this flagship event of UNESCO through our influence on the concept, the agenda, direct participation in discussions, and engaging panelists with experience in developing and nurturing ICT expertise among girls and women. The conference, under the theme “Leveraging technology to empower women and girls”, was an opportunity for UN Women to also present its own digital innovations for women, including the Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment, and to feature two grantees of the Fund for Gender Equality who have developed software or are using mobile technology to raise women's issues in their rural communities in India and Costa Rica. Our participation opened avenues for closer ties with key actors and partners that are active in the ICT sector, including the

Mozilla Foundation, the World Wide Web Foundation, Intel, XPRIZE, and IREX, among others. Participants left with better appreciation of the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to ICT development and design.

### **AS PARTNER IN JOINT PROGRAMME ON EDUCATION WITH UNESCO, UNFPA AND THE WORLD BANK:**

The Joint Programme for the Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education is a joint venture between UN Women, UNESCO, UNFPA and the World Bank. The programme seeks to improve the quality and relevance of education for adolescent girls and young women, foster enabling environments through advocacy, inter-sectorial coordination and governance, and build the evidence-base for gender responsive education policies and actions. The proposed beneficiary countries for phase 1 will include Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Mali and Niger. Through the programme we hope to promote ensure that girls and women take full charge of their own lives and actively participate in the development of their communities and countries, as both beneficiaries of and agents of change. We want to strengthen both the relevance and quality of education for adolescent girls and young women. It will build on the potential of information and communication technologies to improve education delivery and content and encourage their further application for income generation, lifelong learning and exercising citizenship.

### **AS WAGGGS' PARTNER IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:**

UN Women and the World Association for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) have jointly developed Voices against Violence, a non-formal education curriculum for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years aimed at breaking gender stereotypes, challenge harmful social norms, and build youth capacity and leadership to prevent violence against women and girls. Through non-formal educational activities, participants learn about violence against women and girls as a human rights violation, identify the root causes and engage their peers and communities in prevention efforts. The Voices against Violence programme is being implemented in 12 countries with the support of Zonta International. The programme is training 3000 trainers and youth leaders and is estimated to reach 800,000 children and young people by the end of 2016.

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