



## UN WOMEN

Topic 2: The question of social and economic obstructions for girls' educations and how to mitigate them

## Committee Overview

### **Purpose of the Committee**

UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) is dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls worldwide. Within a Model United Nations (MUN) setting, this committee focuses on addressing issues such as gender-based violence, economic inequality, political underrepresentation, access to education and healthcare, and the protection of women's rights in conflict and humanitarian settings. Delegates work collaboratively to draft resolutions that propose policies, frameworks, and international cooperation strategies to eliminate discrimination and achieve gender equality in line with global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5.

### **Relevance to Global Governance**

UN Women plays a critical role in global governance by shaping international norms, supporting member states in implementing gender-responsive policies, and ensuring that women's rights remain central to the international agenda. Gender equality is not only a human rights issue but also a prerequisite for sustainable development, peace, and economic growth. Through advocacy, research, technical assistance, and coordination across the UN system, UN Women strengthens accountability and promotes inclusive governance structures worldwide. In MUN, this committee reflects the importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing systemic inequalities and advancing global justice.

### **Background on the Topic**

#### **Introduction to the Topic**

Despite progress in global education, millions of girls still face social and economic barriers that prevent them from attending school or completing their studies. These obstacles include gender-based discrimination, poverty, early marriage, unsafe school environments, and lack of access to sanitary facilities. Girls who miss out on education are more vulnerable to child marriage, gender-based violence, and limited economic opportunities, perpetuating cycles of inequality.

#### **Historical Background and Events**

- **Global Education Initiatives: The Education for All (EFA) movement, launched in**

1990, aimed to provide universal primary education but revealed persistent gender gaps in many regions.

- **Malala Yousafzai and the Pakistani Taliban (2012): The attempted assassination of**

Malala brought global attention to the suppression of girls' education in conflict zones.

- **South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa: Girls' enrollment historically lags behind boys**

due to entrenched social norms, early marriage, and household labor expectations.

- **COVID-19 Pandemic (2020–2022): School closures disproportionately affected girls,**

increasing dropout rates and vulnerability to child marriage.

### **Current Global Stance**

- **UN and International Response: UNESCO, UNICEF, and UN Women promote universal education with gender equity.** The global consensus recognizes that educating girls is critical to ending poverty, improving health outcomes, and fostering sustainable economic growth.

- **Importance: Girls' education directly affects national development, population health,**

economic productivity, and social stability. It is a central target under SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

### **Key Data & Trends**

- 129 million girls worldwide are out of school (UNESCO, 2023).
- In low-income countries, girls are 2.5 times more likely than boys to be excluded from secondary education.
- Child marriage affects 12 million girls annually, often preventing school attendance (UNICEF, 2023).
- Investments in girls' education generates up to a 10% increase in national GDP over time.

### **Key Terms + Definitions**

#### **1. Gender-based barriers – Social, cultural, and economic obstacles that**

disproportionately affect girls' access to education.

2. Child marriage – The marriage of a person under 18 years old, often resulting in school dropout.

**3. Socio-economic inequality – Disparities in wealth, resources, or access that hinder**

educational opportunities.

4. Quality education – Inclusive, equitable education that meets international standards and promotes lifelong learning.

**5. Empowerment – Increasing girls’ capacity to make choices, pursue opportunities, and**

have agency over their lives.

**6. SDG 4 – Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality**

education and promote lifelong learning for all.

**7. SDG 5 – Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all**

women and girls.

**8. Gender parity – Equal access and participation of girls and boys in education, employment, and decision-making.**

9. Digital divide – Inequalities in access to technology and the internet, which affect girls’ learning opportunities.

**Relevant UN Bodies and Resolutions**

**Major UN Bodies Involved**

- **UN Women – Leads gender-focused policies, programs, and advocacy for girls’ education.**
- **UNICEF – Implements programs supporting access to education, reducing child marriage, and promoting safe school environments.**
- **UNESCO – Monitors global education targets, supports curriculum development, and advocates for inclusive policies.**
- **World Bank – Funds educational initiatives and supports governments in reducing socio-economic barriers.**

## **Key International Treaties / Conventions**

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)** – Guarantees the right to education and protection from harmful practices.
- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)** – Obligates states to eliminate gender-based discrimination in education.

## **Current UN Initiatives**

- **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)** – Funds education systems in low-income countries with emphasis on girls.
- **UNICEF Education in Emergencies** – Ensures continued schooling in conflict and disaster zones.
- **Spotlight Initiative** – Addresses gender-based barriers that prevent girls from accessing education.
- **Malala Fund Collaboration** – Advocates globally for policy change and investments in girls' education.

## **Major Actors and Their Relevance**

### **Key Countries**

- **Afghanistan** – Girls face restricted access to education due to socio-political policies, highlighting urgent international advocacy needs.
- **Nigeria** – Affected by Boko Haram attacks on schools; demonstrates the intersection of security and education.
- **India** – Large-scale social programs like “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” aim to reduce gender disparities in education.
- **Norway** – Provides substantial foreign aid and funding to girls' education programs

globally.

### **Non-State Actors**

- **NGOs – Malala Fund, Plan International, and Save the Children advocate for girls’**

education and implement community programs.

- **Private Sector – Tech companies provide digital learning tools and scholarships to**

bridge the education gap.

- **Regional Organizations – African Union (AU) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) promote gender-inclusive education policies.**

### **Guiding Questions**

1. What social and economic barriers prevent girls from accessing primary, secondary, or tertiary education?
2. How can governments and international organizations prevent child marriage and reduce school dropout rates among girls?
3. What role does poverty play in limiting girls’ educational opportunities, and how can it be mitigated?
4. How can cultural norms that disadvantage girls be addressed without infringing on local traditions?
5. How can digital tools and technology improve access to education for marginalized girls?
6. What strategies can ensure safe and inclusive school environments for girls?
7. How can public-private partnerships contribute to funding and supporting girls’ education?
8. What measures can be taken to ensure educational policies are gender-responsive and sustainable?
9. How can education initiatives in conflict or disaster-affected areas reach the most vulnerable girls?
10. How can international monitoring and accountability mechanisms enforce commitments to girls’ education?