

ATUMUN SOMMERCAMP

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United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization



Study Guide

Equal Access to Education

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	2
Introduction	4
Introduction to the Topic	5
Introduction to UNESCO	5
Background	6
Poverty and child labour	6
Early pregnancy and adolescent births	7
Early marriage	7
Armed conflicts	8
Gender-based violence and discrimination in and around schools	8
Lack of safe and inclusive educational spaces	8
Lack of menstrual hygiene	9
Religious and conservative influence on educational policy	9
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960 - CADE	10
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - CEDAW	10
The Dakar Framework for Action	10
United Nations Girls' Education Initiative - UNGEI	11
Right to Education Initiative	11
Global Partnership for Education - GPE	11
Bloc positions	12
Developing countries	12
Traditional countries	12
Western countries	12
Questions a resolution should answer	13
Further reading	14
Sources	15

Abbreviations

CADE	Convention against Discrimination in Education
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HRW	Human Rights Watch
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Introduction

Dear Delegates,

We are delighted to welcome you to this year's Sommercamp MUN and the committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)!

Gender equality regarding education is not only a fundamental human right, it is also crucial in order to ensure global sustainable development. We hope that the session will lead to an insightful and fruitful discussion on one of the key issues of the twenty-first century: providing quality education for all.

This study guide will provide you with an introduction to the committee's topic Equal Access to Education as well as an introduction to the committee of UNESCO. Furthermore, the study guide provides you with a basic understanding of the topic, including the needed background information on this complex problem. However, we do encourage you to do further research on your own, in order to truly comprehend the various aspects of the topic and to be as well prepared as possible for our session. Please, feel free to utilize the resources provided in the Further Reading section.

We hope that you will find the study guide helpful and that you are as excited for Sommercamp MUN as we are. If you have any questions regarding the committee, the topic or a similar matter, feel free to contact us. We are looking forward to meeting you all and to an interesting debate!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at: julieblom01@gmail.com and line090101@live.dk.

Sincerely from your Committee Directors,

Julie Blom and Line Møller Jørgensen

Introduction to the Topic

The debate of the committee will be based upon the intersection of the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5: Quality Education and Gender Equality. The right to education is secured in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 26 as well as a number of other resolutions. Due to the nature of the SDGs, improvements on this issue will make it easier to progress on other goals.

From 1998 to 2014 the number of out-of-school children worldwide has decreased from 381 million to 263 million¹. In general, children have started to attend school, but the girls are still lacking behind. This is to be perceived as a major problem, as Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has found that keeping girls in school is not only important for their own health and well-being, but for the success of the entire community.

A girl who finishes secondary school is less likely to experience child marriage, face domestic abuse, and suffer from long-term health complications. Thus, educated girls will get fewer, healthier children, who are more likely to get an education and get out of poverty. In this way, saving a generation of girls will help all of the following generations as well. The importance of promoting equal access to education is clear.

Introduction to UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was formed in November 1946. Members of UNESCO include 193 states and 11 associate members. Three UNESCO member states are not UN member states - these being Cook Island, Niue, and Palestine, while three UN member states: Israel, Lichtenstein and USA are not UNESCO members².

The main purpose of UNESCO is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations in the areas of education, science and culture, in order to further universal respect for justice, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.³ Furthermore, UNESCO enforces a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of harassment. One of their two current global priorities is gender equality.⁴

¹ <https://ourworldindata.org/how-many-children-are-not-in-school>

² <https://en.unesco.org/countries>

³ article I, 1 http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/UNESCO_E.PDF

⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/genderequality>

UNESCO is most well known for its lists, one of these being the UNESCO World Heritage List with over 1000 sites that UNESCO works to preserve, but the agency does work in a number of areas.

UNESCO is a United Nations Specialised Agency. Specialised agencies are legally independent of the United Nations and have separate budgets, members, rules, and personnel.

Background

During the scope of the Millennium Development Goals, the world had great success with improving equal access to primary education meaning that almost the same rate of girls and boys are enrolled in primary education. This covers regional differences though. For example, in Central Asia, 27% more girls than boys in primary school age are not attending school.⁵ In countries like China and India, it has been observed that the education gap is greater among poor and rural children.

There are a number of factors hindering girls and women from entering or finishing their education. In the following sections, some of the most important will briefly be explained.

- **Poverty and child labour**

Many girls are forced into child labour often as different forms of domestic work. This is often the case in poor families. Other families who can not afford to send all their children to school will prioritize educating boys before girls. In China, this has been a particular problem.⁶

In India, most rich children will complete primary education and 75% will complete secondary or higher education as well. There is not a major difference in gender when looking at children of a higher socioeconomic status. However, 37% of girls versus 18% of boys of a lower socioeconomic status have no education at all.

- **Early pregnancy and adolescent births**

In developing countries, there are 20,000 girls under the age of 18 giving birth every day. However, the amount of total pregnancies is much higher than that of births. Early pregnancy is a consequence of little or no access to school, information or health care⁷.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

⁶ <https://borgenproject.org/girls-education-in-china/>

⁷ <https://www.unfpa.org/adolescent-pregnancy>

In the United States of America in 2017, 1.88% of women aged 15-19 years gave birth to a child. This is a drop of 7% from 2016. Less favourable socioeconomic conditions, such as low education and low income levels of a teen's family, may contribute to high teen birth rates. Only about 50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by 22 years of age, whereas approximately 90% of women who do not give birth during adolescence graduate from high school. Furthermore, the children of teenage mothers are more likely to have lower school achievement and to drop out of high school⁸.

For every 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19, there were 76 adolescent births in India in 2010 compared to 49 worldwide and 53 in less developed regions.

For every 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19, there were 6 births in Sweden, 9 births in France, 16 births in Pakistan, 24 in Sri Lanka, 71 in Afghanistan, 83 in Bangladesh and 201 in Niger.⁹

- **Early marriage**

Every day, 41,000 girls marry before turning 18. In most developing countries, it is extremely difficult for girls to remain in school once they get married¹⁰. In Pakistan, only 9% of girls who got married before 18 has completed secondary school or higher, and 65% of girls who got married before 18 have no education at all¹¹.

The worst state for child marriage is the eastern state of Bihar in India, which is amongst the poorest states in the country, where nearly 70% of women in their early twenties reported having been married by the age of 18.¹²

- **Armed conflicts**

It has been shown that armed conflicts affect girls in particular. Refugees are also among the groups who severely lack access to education. As an example, Yemen is experiencing an armed ethnic conflict where many schools have been bombed and especially girls have been hindered from going to school.

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/about/index.htm>

⁹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>

¹⁰ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/child-marriage-and-education-impacts-costs-and-benefits>

¹¹ figure 5

https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/3096/file/UNICEF_ROSA_Child_marriage_adolescent_pregnancy_3May2019.pdf

¹² <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/10/30/in-india-teen-pregnancy-extremely-likely/>

- **Gender-based violence and discrimination in and around schools**

Girls and women encounter violence and other types of discrimination in and around schools. This includes violence or harassment on the journey to and from school, sexual assault or rape from teachers and other authorities and bullying by fellow students. Not only is this a clear human rights violation, but it also results in girls not finishing their education. Even though these problems are most severe in developing countries such as Kenya, almost all countries experience similar issues to some extent. An NGO found that 1 in 7 female students in the UK has experienced serious physical or sexual assault.

- **Lack of safe and inclusive educational spaces**

This includes both the learning environment where girls experience discriminatory curricula, books, sexist school regulations and a lack of female teachers. Many girls also attend school with poor sanitation. This affects both girls and boys but for example, the lack of hygienic and private toilets is an issue impacting girls disproportionately. Human Rights Watch has documented how this is an issue for example in Afghanistan.¹³

- **Lack of menstrual hygiene**

A study by UNICEF in 2018 in Bhutan has shown that 25% of adolescent schoolgirls miss school during their menstrual period due to the school not having any place for girls to wash and change. 48% of girls miss school due to period pains, and 32.5% of adolescent girls miss school during their period due to being afraid of others making fun of them¹⁴. A normal period length for an adolescent usually ranges between 2 to 7 days, every 28 days, meaning girls who skip school when having their period will miss about 7-25% of school due to their periods¹⁵. UNICEF has estimated that roughly 1 in 10 African girls miss school due to their periods each year. In India, it has been estimated that as many as 1 in 5 girls drop out of school after they get their periods — and in some regions, like Maharashtra, that number is nearer to 4 in 5¹⁶.

- **Religious and conservative influence on educational policy**

In some religious and conservative groups, traditional gender perceptions result in boys' education being prioritized over girls' education. This is a harmful approach that results in the loss of huge economic potential. Many Latin American countries are dealing with this type of issue.¹⁷

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ3wWDRVJSU>

¹⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/bhutan/media/211/file>

¹⁵ <https://helloclue.com/articles/cycle-a-z/what's-normal-period-length>

¹⁶ <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/menstrual-hygiene-day-education/>

¹⁷ <https://redclade.org/en/noticias/the-right-to-education-with-gender-equality/>

The historical lack of access to education for girls has resulted in a disproportionately large number of women being illiterate. Across the world more women than men are illiterate. This has severe consequences because it hinders women from fully participating in civil society. Combating illiteracy is key to empowering women because it makes them able to get better jobs, advocate for their rights and participate in civil society. Programs in Latin America have had success with providing basic literacy skills for adult women but such possibilities are nowhere close to being available worldwide.¹⁸

Though access to education is almost equal in developed countries, they still face other issues on the basis of gender equality. Some academic fields have traditionally been very male-dominated, including the STEM subjects. There are multiple reasons for this, but gender stereotypes and a lack of role models and support are among the most important. Initiatives have tried to develop girls' interest in the STEM subjects, but more action is needed to ensure that all academic subjects will actually be a possibility for every student if they wish to pursue this direction.¹⁹

Past resolutions and other initiatives

Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960 - CADE

Aside from the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the most essential international agreement when it comes to equality in education, CADE, was adopted in 1960. It lays down the basic principle that everyone has an equal right to education and no one should be discriminated in their access to education because of race, sex, language, religion, political opinion, economic condition etc. The parties of the Convention committed themselves to making primary education free and compulsory as well as making secondary education accessible for all. Yet, there are only 104 states who have ratified the convention, missing major countries like the USA, China and India²⁰.

¹⁸

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/oct/20/two-thirds-of-worlds-illiterate-adults-are-women-report-finds>

¹⁹

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/taliamilgromelcott/2018/09/11/girls-if-you-want-to-change-the-world-try-stem/#3844dd166399>

²⁰ http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/DISCRI_E.PDF

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - CEDAW

Especially article 10 of CEDAW is important for the debate in this committee. It lays out requirements for states to take immediate action to ensure that girls have access to the same education as boys. Only very few countries like Somalia, Iran, Sudan and the USA have not ratified the convention.²¹

The Dakar Framework for Action

The Dakar Framework for Action of 2000 is a more recent example of states committing themselves to provide free, compulsory and quality primary education for everyone and especially girls. The Framework is set up to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary school by the year 2005 and to completely eliminate gender inequality in education by 2015.²²

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative - UNGEI

UNGEI is working with advocacy to accelerate action on girls' education and works primarily to realize the following four points:

- An enhanced focus on marginalized and excluded groups
- The reduction/elimination of school-related gender-based violence
- Improved learning outcomes for girls
- An increased number of girls transitioning to secondary education and accessing post-primary opportunities.

UNGEI is working on achieving its goals through a number of partnerships with both international, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Right to Education Initiative

The Right to Education Initiative is backed by the five NGOs ActionAid, Amnesty International, Global Campaign for Education, Human Rights Watch and Save the Children. Their work includes promoting equal access to education with the principles from the Universal Human Rights and conducts a combination of research, monitoring, advocacy, policy development and information sharing²³.

²¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

²² <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000121147>

²³ <https://www.right-to-education.org/girlswomen>

Global Partnership for Education - GPE

GPE supports developing countries in building strong and robust educational sectors by providing the required knowledge and resources. GPE focuses on countries with high numbers of out-of-school children and low completion rates, especially countries affected by violent conflicts. The GPE has already had success in improving the quality of education in a number of countries and reducing the educational gender gap.

Bloc positions

Few countries disagree with the overall goal of gender equality in education. Different countries, however, focus on different aspects of the topic and wish those to be prioritized. Also, countries might favour some approaches over others. The discussions in the committee will likely center around these blocs:

Developing countries

Developing countries are, generally speaking, poor and lack educational infrastructures like schools for both children and adults. They might as well be struggling to find qualified teachers. Some of these countries have been harmed by violent conflicts that prevent children from attending school. For them, the question is more of providing education at all and to make sure that parents do not pull their children out of school. Girls might be forced to abandon their studies to help their mothers at home, while boys are more likely to quit school in order to work. It is important to keep in mind that poverty might be forcing parents to make this decision in order to ensure that they can feed their family. The goal of education in these countries is to provide basic literacy skills to empower students to improve their future. This group of countries will likely hope to receive more support from more developed countries.

Traditional countries

This group of countries have decent educational systems and close to equal access to primary education. Yet, traditional values and gender roles hinder girls from completing their education, and they are often asked to do house chores instead of pursuing academics. For some of these countries, the traditional values are a very important aspect of the culture, and they will thus likely be reluctant to agree to major changes.

Western countries

Western developed countries have relatively well-functioning educational systems with universal access to primary education. Gender equality in education is still an issue especially when it comes to women being underrepresented in certain fields like the STEM subjects, as well as women often being underrepresented in research. These are the aspects that the Western countries will be most likely to address.

Questions a resolution should answer

- What can be done to ensure complete gender equality in access to primary education?
- How can women's participation in male-dominated academic fields such as STEM be promoted?
 - Which efforts could encourage girls to learn more about management, tech or financial literacy?
- What efforts can help lower illiteracy rates for women specifically?
- How can countries be encouraged to adopt laws to protect women in education?
 - How should campaigns on equal access to education be designed to reach as many people as possible?

Further reading

Number of children who are not in school

- <https://ourworldindata.org/how-many-children-are-not-in-school>

UNESCO in brief

- <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>

SDG 4, quality education

- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

Data on adolescent birth rate in all countries (maternal health -> adolescent birth)

- <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>

Child marriage and education

- <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/child-marriage-and-education-impacts-costs-and-benefits>

School dropout in South Asia (child marriage and adolescent pregnancy)

- https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/3096/file/UNICEF_ROSA_Child_marriage_adolescent_pregnancy_3May2019.pdf

Why Periods Are Keeping Girls Out of School — and How You Can Help

- <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/menstrual-hygiene-day-education/>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

- <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

The Right to Education Initiative

- <https://www.right-to-education.org/girlswomen>

Report on the cost of not educating girls

- <http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/Missed-opportunities-high-cost-of-not-educating-girls-World-Bank-July-2018.pdf>

UNESCO Right to Education Handbook

- <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366556>

UNESCO - Monitoring of the Implementation of CADE

- <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227859/PDF/227859eng.pdf.multi>

Implementation of CADE

- <https://tinyurl.com/ATUMUN-CADE>

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14. Video by HRW, girls in Afghanistan needing toilets.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ3wWDRVJSU>
15. Menstrual hygiene management of adolescent school girls and nuns

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16. The average period length
 - a. <https://hellocloe.com/articles/cycle-a-z/what-s-normal-period-length>
17. Why Periods Are Keeping Girls Out of School — and How You Can Help
 - a. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/menstrual-hygiene-day-education/>
18. The right to education with gender equality - Latin America
 - a. <https://redclade.org/en/noticias/the-right-to-education-with-gender-equality/>
19. Article about $\frac{2}{3}$ of world's illiterate adults being women
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