

Forum: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Issue: Investing in the education of women in developing nations

Student Officer: Angel Weng (American School in Taichung)

Position: Vice President

## Introduction

Throughout the past decade, nations worldwide have been committing themselves towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, which are to be met by the year 2030. In regards to the issue of investing in the education of women in developing countries two SDGs in particular relate closely to this issue: SDGs 4 and 5, which focus on quality education and gender equality respectively. Women's education has been an ongoing global issue and has been proven difficult to resolve since many difficult barriers would need to be overcome before tackling this issue, such as poverty. Many nations had made many attempts to resolve this issue, from actions involving amending and adding legislation to establishing international treaties and partnering with other countries, but this issue is proven to be difficult to close and still is today. In continents worldwide, ranging from South America, Africa, and Asia, this issue is still prominent, and there are necessary actions to make progress towards this issue.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education

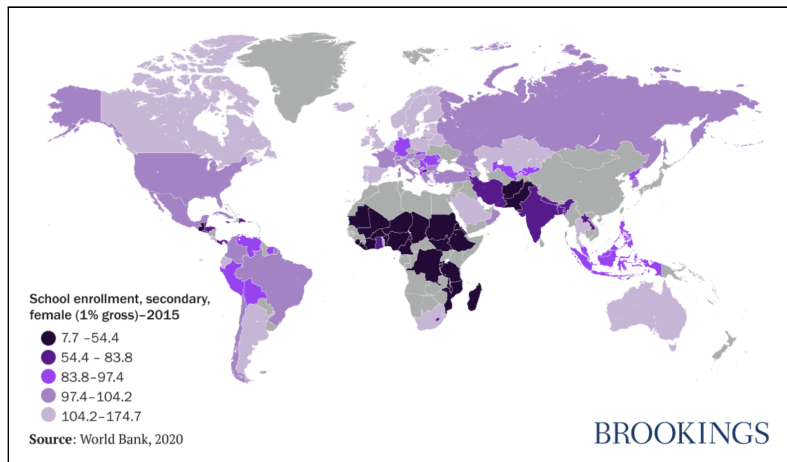
Education can be split into three categories: primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education, with primary education being the lowest possible educational level and tertiary education being the highest.

The U.S. Department of Education defines primary education as education provided in elementary school, secondary education as education received in middle school and high school, and tertiary education as “non-degree programs that lead to certificates and diplomas plus six degree levels: associate, bachelor, first professional, master, advanced intermediate, and research doctorate.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “USNEI.” Structure of U.S. Education, U.S. Department of Education, 28 Feb. 2008, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html>.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), “around the world, 129 million girls are out of school, including 32 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age, and 67 million of upper-secondary school age.”<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1: A global map of school enrollment of secondary education for women (2015).**

## Quality Education

Quality education is education that “entails issues such as appropriate skills development, gender parity, provision of relevant school infrastructure, equipment, educational materials and resources, scholarships or teaching force.”<sup>3</sup> Quality education provides individuals with resources and opportunities to pursue either a successful career or a degree in higher education.

## Gender Education Gap

The UN defines the Gender Education Gap as when “women and girls have less access to education, healthcare, ... economic autonomy[,] and are under-represented in decision-making at all levels.”<sup>4</sup> The Gender Education Gap is different in every nation, but one significant similarity to be seen is that women’s literacy rates tend to be lower than men’s, especially in underdeveloped countries.

<sup>2</sup> “Girls' Education.” UNICEF, UNICEF, 19 Jan. 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>.

<sup>3</sup> “SDG Resources for Educators - Quality Education.” UNESCO, UNESCO, 21 Nov. 2018, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/sdgs/material/04>.

<sup>4</sup> “Women and Girls – Closing the Gender Gap.” United Nations, United Nations, 2022, [https://www.un.org/en/un75/women\\_girls\\_closing\\_gender\\_gap](https://www.un.org/en/un75/women_girls_closing_gender_gap).

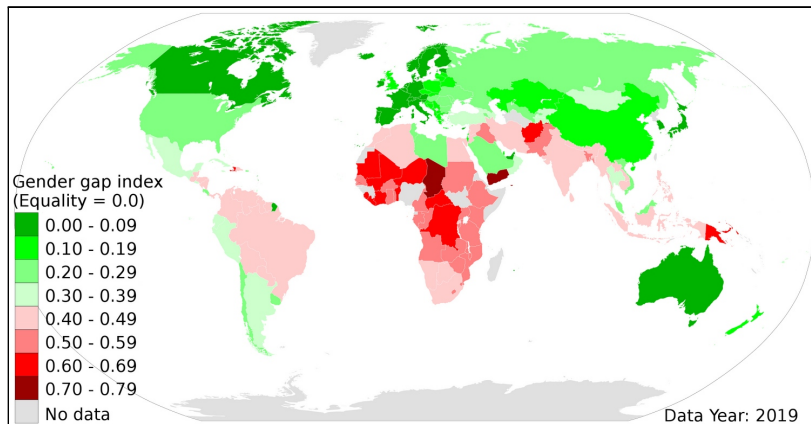


Figure 2: A global map of the gender gap (2019).

## Literacy Rate

The UN refers to the literacy rate as “the percentage of [the] population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his/her everyday life.”<sup>5</sup> It is important to note the significance of the literacy rates in developing countries, especially amongst different genders. In general, the global literacy rate for men above the age of 15 is approximately 88%, while the global literacy rate for women above the age of 15 is 79%.

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed by the UN in 2015 as a “universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.”<sup>6</sup> The UNDP encourages members of the UN to follow and meet these goals by the year 2030. Of all the SDG goals, SDGs 4 and 5 would prove to be the most related to this issue. The SDG 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promot[ing] lifelong learning opportunities for all,”<sup>7</sup> while the SDG 5 strives to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”<sup>8</sup>

According to the UN, between the years 2016 and 2019, there has been a dramatic increase of efforts from organizations and governments to reach these goals through funding operations that promote gender equality and increased education. In addition, developing countries whose people suffer from gender inequality and lack of quality education have begun to give monetary and legislative

<sup>5</sup> “Indicator Metadata Registry Details.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, 2022, <https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/3200>.

<sup>6</sup> “Sustainable Development Goals: United Nations Development Programme.” UNDP, UNDP, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

<sup>7</sup> “Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” United Nations, United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.

<sup>8</sup> “Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” United Nations, United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>.

contributions in order to show their devotion to SDGs 4 and 5. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the progress of both SDG 4 and 5 have been deeply affected since schools were forced to close and in the best of cases, moved electronically. This has affected multiple women hindering their ability to receive a quality education.

## History

### Education for Women during the Medieval Era (~400 B.C.E.- ~1450 C.E.)

Throughout the Medieval era, education highly depended on an individual's social-economic status. The higher the social-economic status of an individual in a society, the more likely they are to receive a quality education. Women who came from wealthy families did receive education, but the education they received was related to teaching women how to be sophisticated wives and mothers rather than the sciences, mathematics, and other subjects that were taught to men. The women who received the highest order of education during the Medieval Era were Nuns due to their responsibility for biblical teachings.

The Medieval era has shifted a view of education towards women, through the declaration of the Virgin Mary as Jesus's mother. Women were viewed as a bad omen, but due to the religious prominence of the Virgin Mary, the opinions and attitudes towards women changed to be respectful and highly viewed upon. Women were granted permission to be educated, to own land, and to run businesses. However, "a proper education was difficult to come by during the Middle Ages for men and especially women."<sup>9</sup> Hence, some women did receive education, but the education they received was not of the best quality.

### A Push for Education Rights to Women

During the 18th and 19th centuries, activists supporting education rights to women started to join forces on raising awareness and protesting for education to women. Such women who had participated in this movement include Emma Hart Willard, an American writer, who advocated for education rights to women by stating the need for "college-level education for the sake of being well-educated mothers in the new America."<sup>10</sup> However, this was just the beginning of the push for women's education rights.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, more women activists have stood up for education rights to women on similar topics. Women activists of the 20th and 21st centuries include Malala Yousafzai, Michelle Obama, and so many more. These women activists started charities and funding organizations,

<sup>9</sup> Pak, Eudie. "When Women Became Nuns to Get a Good Education." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 4 Sept. 2018, <https://www.history.com/news/women-education-medieval-nuns-church>.

<sup>10</sup> Thorpe, JR. "Here's How Women Fought for the Right to Be Educated throughout History." Bustle, Bustle, 11 May 2017, <https://www.bustle.com/p/heres-how-women-fought-for-the-right-to-be-educated-throughout-history-53150>.

such as the Malala Fund and the Global Girls Alliance, regarding the need for girls and women to be educated while encouraging and leading protests calling to eliminate factors that stand as barriers to women's education. Furthermore, these women and many others remain active and utilize their influence to spread awareness about education rights for women which have been especially impactful towards galvanizing people across the world to fight against gender inequity.

### **The Establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of 17 goals that were developed in 2015 and accepted by a total of 193 countries worldwide. These goals serve as “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future,”<sup>11</sup> and are to be met by the year 2030.

Between 2015 to 2020, the United Nations (UN) has reported and witnessed a significant increase and improvement in the Asia-Pacific region of inclusive and obtainable education through the adoption of SDG 4. To further elaborate, in 2016 there was an increase of “453 million girls and women... studying from pre-primary to tertiary education in Asia-Pacific.”<sup>12</sup> Increasing accessibility to primary and secondary education for women, monitoring the learning progress and results of girls receiving education, and many other initiatives have all been essential to the rise of women receiving education in recent years. However, the UN mentioned that there is still 27 million youth in that region remaining illiterate. While the efforts and success of these Asian nations to provide more people with quality education should not be undermined, we are still far from the 2030 goal.

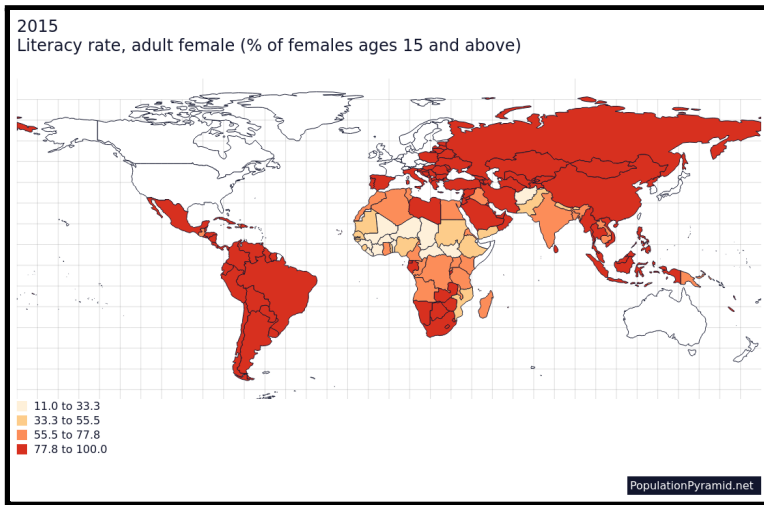
On a global scale, there has been an increase of the literacy rate worldwide “from 83.2% to 91.4%.”<sup>13</sup> However, equality is not easily achieved around the world. Currently, 774 million adults of the world's population remain illiterate. Of that 774 million, 493 million of them are women.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> “The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development.” United Nations, United Nations, 2021, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

<sup>12</sup> “Gender Equality in Asia-Pacific Education: International Women's Day 2018 Statistical Snapshot.” UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Bangkok, 8 Mar. 2018, <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/gender-equality-asia-pacific-education-international-women%E2%80%99s-day-2018-statistics-snapshot>.

<sup>13</sup> “Quality Education in India | Women, Girl Child Education in India | SDG 4 – UN India.” United Nations India, United Nations India, 2021, <https://in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals/quality-education-in-india-sdg-4/>.

<sup>14</sup> “United Nations Statistics Division - Demographic and Social Statistics.” United Nations, United Nations, 2012, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/worldswomen/wwEduc2010.htm#:~:text=Two%20thirds%20of%20the%20774.years%20and%20across%20most%20regions.&text=The%20global%20youth%20literacy%20rate,declined%20to%205%20percentage%20points>.



**Figure 3: A global map of literacy rates (in percentages) among women age 15 and above in 2015**

## Key Issues

### Poverty

Poverty is the inability to afford basic necessities that ensure a prosperous life, and is a barrier to education..

Because of a lack of financial resources, impoverished families have to decide to remove their children from school and involve them in labor to support the family. Not attending school hinders children's educational development because without attending school, they would remain illiterate and lacking the necessary knowledge to find a suitable career to rise out of poverty and support themselves and their family.

In regards to the issue at hand, in many impoverished nations, parents prefer sons over daughters. This is because in many cultures, like that of India, when a daughter marries away to her husband's family, she is not required to provide for her family, but rather to the family of her husband. So, if a family has both daughters and sons, and the money to send only some children to school they would rather send boys to a school rather than a girl, making women vulnerable to being unable to receive education. This affects the gender wage gap, since if a woman does not receive a quality education, then she would not be able to pursue a quality career, making her unable to provide education for her progeny. Depending on how much education she was exposed to, she might remain illiterate, further extending and worsening the gender wage gap.

Due to COVID-19, women's education in developing countries has faced a turning point and a serious decline in progress. COVID-19 has disrupted education systems and the development of

children worldwide. It forced multiple schools to close their doors and to turn towards the use of online learning. This affected families living in poverty and rural areas, for that they may not have access to technology and educational materials. This raised concerns to governments, organizations, and to the UN itself as to how can they act to help women's education in developing countries during the pandemic.

### **Child Marriage and Early Pregnancy**

In developing countries, child marriage is a major issue where children below the age of 18 are arranged to be married to someone by their parents. While it is not only unfair to the girls being married off because they are not choosing who they will marry, child marriage contributes to early pregnancy, which is when a girl is pregnant below the age of 18. According to World Vision, "child marriage is a violation of child protection and human rights."<sup>15</sup> This is a prone problem for women's education in developing countries. Child marriage puts a girl's education at a stopping point by changing the child's focus and responsibility towards being the one responsible for household responsibilities. This responsibility of caring for offspring leaves no time to continue on an educational career.

### **Gender-based Violence**

The United Nations Population Fund defines gender-based violence as "violence against women and girls [and] is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world."<sup>16</sup> Gender-based violence is a general topic and contains many specific acts of violence that harm women and girls, such as "violence or abuse that is based on gendered stereotypes or that targets students based on their sex, sexuality, or gender identities."<sup>17</sup> These acts of violence breed insecurity, which can foster an association between abuse and education.

According to the UNDP, VAW, which stands for Violence Against Women and girls, is experienced by "about 1 in 3 (35 percent) of women and girls worldwide."<sup>18</sup> Survivors of VAW often face the fear of returning to pursue their education, career, or to voice their opinions. Many VAW survivors are often uncomfortable approaching experts in this topic, which makes it harder to collect information about exactly who is experiencing this issue and how to help them recover from their trauma.

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<sup>15</sup> Reid, Kathryn. "Child Marriage: Facts, Faqs, and How to Help End It." World Vision, World Vision, 5 June 2020, <https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/child-marriage-facts>.

<sup>16</sup> "Gender-Based Violence." United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, 2021, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence>.

<sup>17</sup> "The Effects of Gender-Based Violence on Academic Performance." Education Links, Center on Conflict and Development at Texas A&M University, USAID, 1 Jan. 2016, <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/effects-gender-based-violence-academic-performance>.

<sup>18</sup> Jahan, Selim. "Violence against Women, a Cause and Consequence of Inequality: United Nations Development Programme." UNDP, UNDP, 19 Nov. 2018, <https://www.undp.org/blog/violence-against-women-cause-and-consequence-inequality>.



## Lack of Education in Rural Areas

In rural areas of developing countries, it is particularly difficult to have access to proper education. And even if there are some opportunities for children to receive an education in a rural area, it is more likely that these opportunities are given to boys rather than girls because of the unfortunate favoring of sons over daughters. This further impacts the opportunity for girls to continue their education careers, ultimately inhibiting the progression of the SDGs 4 and 5.

Because of access to education of proper education (and many other services) residents of rural areas have relocated to urban areas in hopes of finding a greater opportunity to receive quality education for the benefit of their careers and families. In addition, the effects of the lack of schools in rural areas could be seen in each country's education gap between different regions. "Those who reside in rural areas normally have a very difficult time accessing quality education because they live in a remote area and because of how inaccessible education may be. Because education can be very inconvenient to access, residents of rural areas either cannot afford to commute to and from education facilities, or they become demotivated to contribute the time and resources to get an education. This is an issue because if those in rural areas do not get an education they cannot gain the capacity to make changes for the betterment of their communities, they may not make educated decisions in regards to agricultural practices and commerce, they may be vulnerable to being taken advantage of by the state or by corporations due to lack of knowledge of public policy, or they may not be properly represented in within democracies and ill-informed about political affairs."<sup>19</sup> These current concerns are related to future concerns when governments or organizations invest in educational programs in rural areas. We must ensure that residents of rural areas receive (and actually use) education facilities.

## Child Labor

Child labor hinders children's ability to develop and receive an education. Women are more often to be "overrepresented in non-economic activities such as work in their ' household.'"<sup>20</sup> Due to stereotypes of parents, boys are often sent to receive an education over girls, since they would benefit the household economically more than girls. As a woman grows older, their duties tend to overload their schedules, leaving no time to pursue their educational career. This is detrimental to ending gender inequality because this further stretches the gender gap.

Child labor is difficult to address because it often goes undetected (especially in rural areas), can be beneficial to large corporations, and therefore (child labor) is in a way defended, and because of

<sup>19</sup> Dombkowski, Felipe. "Hsinmun XVII (802) UNDP: Felipe Dombkowski." Google Docs, Google, 4 Sept. 2021, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OtvV4YEK38ApKk6VXanyJR05T7do\\_djmZCbRDpbo3l4/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OtvV4YEK38ApKk6VXanyJR05T7do_djmZCbRDpbo3l4/edit).

<sup>20</sup> "Child Labor Hinders Children's Education." Global Partnership for Education, GPE Secretariat, 12 June 2016, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/child-labor-hinders-childrens-education>.



many other factors that continuously act as barriers to resolve this issue. The fact that all these problematic factors continue to worsen under different circumstances makes child labor a main obstacle that inhibits the education of women in developing countries.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### World Bank Group

The World Bank Group (WBG) is an international organization that provides financial aid to the governments of developing nations, and is greatly involved in the reduction of poverty. It is also devoted to gender equality in education, for that, it is core related to its two goals to “end extreme poverty within a generation and boost shared prosperity.”<sup>21</sup> The WBG has a variety of projects set in developing countries to help girls worldwide pursue their educational careers. Its projects are related to making education as inclusive, accessible, safe, and employable as possible. Currently, the WBG “has already committed an estimated \$2.5 billion to girls’ education in FCV [(Fragile, Conflict, and Violence)] countries as of September 2021—exceeding its pledge of \$2.0 billion from 2018 to 2023.”<sup>22</sup> The contributions of the WBG have made exceeding results. Whether it is promoting projects, investing in solutions to this issue, or creating and managing programs for women, the WBG mentioned that they have been “impacting at least 150 million girls and young women,”<sup>23</sup> demonstrating positive results from their support and efforts to help developing countries educate their women.

### UN Women

Working closely with members of the UN and created by the UN General Assembly, UN Women is in charge of securing gender equality in all nations. To sum it up, there are four core ideas that the UN Women focuses on, which aim to provide educational, political, and career opportunities for women of all generations, while also incorporating the big idea of the 17 SDG goals along with their priorities of seeing the development and improvement areas where there could be more women involved.<sup>24</sup> Currently, the UN Women states that they are focusing on promoting equality within education, and have created online and physical programs to educate boys and girls around the world.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> “About the World Bank.” World Bank, World Bank, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20Group%20has,generation%20and%20boost%20shared%20prosperity.&text=Mission-,The%20World%20Bank%20Group%20has%20two%20ambitious%20goals%3A,generation%20and%20boost%20shared%20prosperity>.

<sup>22</sup> “Girls’ Education.” World Bank, World Bank, 26 Oct. 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation#4>.

<sup>23</sup> “Girls’ Education.” World Bank, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation#3>.

<sup>24</sup> “About UN Women.” UN Women – Headquarters, UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>.

<sup>25</sup> “SDG 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All.” UN Women – Headquarters, UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-4-quality-education#:~:text=UN%20Women%20acts%20to%20promote,curriculums%20and%20on%20virtual%20schools>.

## G7 (Group of 7) Nations

The G7 nations, consisting of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States of America (U.S.A.), the United Kingdom (UK), and Canada, are among the countries who have made multiple efforts to address this issue and the countries who are committed to providing education for women in developing countries. Their ultimate goal, regarding this issue, is to achieve gender equality in education by focusing on SDGs 4 and 5. Nations such as the U.K. and China, have invested large amounts of money to enroll more girls to school in low-income countries. The U.K. prime minister has partnered with the Kenyan government in order to provide online classes for children during the pandemic, while China invested \$10 million USD in health projects in developing countries, including for better school campuses for girls.<sup>26</sup> Apart from the major G7 nations, other nations, including Denmark and the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.) have participated in G7 summit meetings and made contributions in similar ways. In the last G7 summit meeting on June 11 to 13, 2021, the nations have made a goal of enrolling 40 million girls worldwide in educational programs and 20 million girls under the age of ten to receive education by 2026<sup>27</sup>, along with the decision to invest \$15 billion in helping women find career opportunities, due to the pandemic. These commitments are related to the 2X challenge, which calls upon the G7 and other developed countries to invest in gender equality and has benefited girls in regions of Africa and Asia. However, due to the pandemic, there could be a worth of \$1 trillion spending lost, which is a major concern to the G7 nations, since it will take time and investments to regain what was lost.

## AU (African Union) Members

The African Union Members, consisting of 55 members of states in the region of Africa, are amongst the nations that face some of the most problems when providing education to women. The issue of women's education in these regions is of great significance in the hands of these nations since about 28 million girls [in the age range of 6~15 years old] living in that region are illiterate.<sup>28</sup> Amongst the goals and aspirations on Agenda 2063 of the AU, there are two goals, reading "Well Educated Citizens and Skills revolution underpinned by Science, Technology, and Innovation" and "Full Gender Equality in All Spheres of Life,"<sup>29</sup> are particularly important to keep in mind, as for that the ultimate goal of the AU is to achieve African prosperity. Currently, countries of "Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, Niger,

<sup>26</sup> "China Pledges USD 10 Million Commitment to UN Women, Assistance for Other Developing Countries to Build 100 Health Projects for Women and Children (Updated)." UN Women – Headquarters, UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/commitments/china>.

<sup>27</sup> "G7 Nations to Agree on Global Plan to Help 40m Girls into Education." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 3 May 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/03/g7-nations-plan-help-girls-education-raab-blinken>.

<sup>28</sup> Costin, Claudia, et al. "No Girl Left behind - Education in Africa." World Bank Blogs, World Bank, 6 Mar. 2015, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/no-girl-left-behind-education-africa>.

<sup>29</sup> Kuwonu, Franck. "Millions of Girls Remain out of School | Africa Renewal." United Nations, United Nations, Apr. 2015, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2015/millions-girls-remain-out-school>.

Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Tanzania, The Gambia[,] and Uganda”<sup>30</sup> have made progress in narrowing the gender gap, through the use of awareness and implementations of policies, which decrease school tuition, increase the number of female teachers, and mitigated discrimination in schools through several initiatives. However, issues beforehand, such as funding as well as internal conflicts serve as problems that are faced by developing countries, making these countries dependent on organizations and countries to help decrease gender inequality in regards to education.<sup>31</sup>

### **UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) Members**

In South America, the main barrier towards women receiving an education is child pregnancies, where 15% of all pregnancies in a year in that region happen to girls under the age of 20, forcing girls to drop out of school. Nations, such as Colombia, have made important strides to enroll more girls into educational programs, such as the From Zero to Forever project, established by the Colombian government in 2010 to provide opportunities for children living in poverty to receive an education.<sup>32</sup> After further investigations and research, it is shown that the UNASUR has made multiple significant progress when it comes to offering primary education to girls but is facing struggles with offering secondary education. The UNASUR also stated that their biggest problem is offering quality education, which varies amongst all the UNASUR nations.<sup>33</sup>

### **ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Members**

The ASEAN has a total of six aims, focused on helping the Southeast Asian nations on development, with one of them being to offer better education and research facilities for all nations. According to the ASEAN, around half of the population in Southeast Asia are women, and the IFO (International Monetary Fund) stated that ASEAN is on track for the SDG goals regarding gender equality. According to Minister Ing Kanthaphavi, the Minister of Women’s Affairs of Cambodia, ASEAN has made many gender equality declarations, in addition to raising awareness and executing plans. The ASEAN also specified that in order to achieve SDGs 4 and 5, they would have to reach out to multiple ethnic minorities, in addition, to removing gender-related violence against women.

### **India**

<sup>30</sup> Kuwonu, Franck. “Millions of Girls Remain out of School | Africa Renewal.” United Nations, United Nations, Apr. 2015, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2015/millions-girls-remain-out-school>.

<sup>31</sup> “20 Reasons Why, in 2020, There Are Still 260m Children out of School - World.” ReliefWeb, OCHA, 7 Feb. 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/20-reasons-why-2020-there-are-still-260m-children-out-school>.

<sup>32</sup> “Girls’ Education in Colombia Continues on the Path of Progress.” The Borgen Project, Borgen Project, 28 Oct. 2019, <https://borgenproject.org/girls-education-in-colombia/>.

<sup>33</sup> “UNASUR - Fostering South American Intergration Through Development and Cooperation.” UNASUR, Nov. 2014. [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/37384/1/S1420807\\_en.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/37384/1/S1420807_en.pdf).

India has one of the lowest rates of women's education in Asia, with approximately 201 million women under the age of 7 uneducated.<sup>34</sup> Despite the statistics, the Indian government is deeply committed to the SDGs, in addition to the establishment of goals and programs, such as the "Sakshar [B]harat mission for female literacy" and the "National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level."<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, there are still concerns about this issue; in India, cultural practices pose a barrier towards offering women education. As stated before, girls are married away to other families and not required to care for their own family, which discourages parents from sending their daughters to school when they will inevitably leave. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has progress made towards increasing accessibility of education to women.

## Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of Event
Jul. 1944	The World Bank was established to lend money to developing countries, for the purpose "to improve their economies and to improve the standard of living of their people." <sup>36</sup> Currently, the World Bank is focusing on making loans and investments to developing countries to help developing countries "to reduce poverty", which corresponds to SDGs 4 and 5.
Jun. 21, 1945	The Commission on the Status of Women was founded by the ECOSOC and is the "principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women." <sup>37</sup>
Dec. 10, 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human rights was ratified, with 30 Universal Declarations, as to what each individual has rights to. Article 26 of the declaration stated that education is a human right, and every individual shall have the right to have access to education.
1979	The CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), an international treaty published, is adopted by the UN.
Sept. 15, 1995	The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is published for the purpose of discussing gender equality.
Jul. 2010	The UN Women was an entity established by the UN General Assembly, for the purpose of empowering women and recognizing gender equality throughout the world.

<sup>34</sup> Bureau, US Census. "Women's Education in India." Census.gov, United States Census Bureau, 8 Oct. 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1998/demo/wid98-1.html#:~:text=The%20Indian%20government%20has%20expressed,million%20illiterate%20women%20in%20India>.

<sup>35</sup> "Woman Education in India - Importance & Government Initiatives." CareerRide, CareerRide, 23 Feb. 2015, <https://www.careerride.com/view/woman-education-in-india-importance-government-initiatives-19688.aspx>.

<sup>36</sup> "Getting to Know the World Bank." World Bank, World Bank Group, 26 July 2012, [https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/07/26/getting\\_to\\_know\\_theworldbank#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20is%20an,of%20living%20of%20their%20people](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/07/26/getting_to_know_theworldbank#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20is%20an,of%20living%20of%20their%20people).

<sup>37</sup> "Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women – Headquarters, UN Women, [https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#:~:text=The%20Commission%20on%20the%20Status,II\)%20of%2021%20June%201946](https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#:~:text=The%20Commission%20on%20the%20Status,II)%20of%2021%20June%201946).

2015	The UN SDG goals are established, in order to build a better future for the future generation and our world. They are aimed to tackle world issues, including gender equality and quality education, and to resolve them by 2030.
Mar. 11, 2020	The WHO announces that the COVID-19 virus outbreak is now a pandemic, to which it has affected multiple projects set to offer women education and prevented women from attending educational programs.
Jun. 11, 2021 ~ Jun. 13, 2021	The annual G7 Summit meeting, with the most recent being the 2021 G7 Summit meeting on June 11~13, 2021, involved the G7 nations and other developed nations discussing global issues and solutions. Amongst the solutions discussed, there are investments being made to enroll more girls into schools.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Women in Development, 22 December 2015 (A/RES/70/219)
- The Rights to Education, 18 June 2008 (A/HRC/8/4)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 15 September 1995
- Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 1 July 2016 - 32/20. Realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, 18 July 2016 (A/HRC/RES/32/20)
- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), 18 December 1979
- 2021 G7 Summit Meeting, 11 June ~ 13 June 2021

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Some of the most significant actions that have been done to resolve this issue include the establishment of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the publishing of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and international meetings such as the annual G7 summit meeting.

The formation of the CEDAW, which has a total of 189 ratifications in 2015<sup>38</sup>, has contributed to different rights for women in different countries, in addition to fostering the adoption of national laws, and efforts towards eliminating violence against women of all religions, ethnicity, color, age, and race.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Issues in the U.S. Ratification Debate." EveryCRSReport.com, Congressional Research Service, 23 July 2015, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R40750.html#:~:text=drafted%20in%201979.-CEDAW%20is%20the%20only%20international%20human%20rights%20treaty%20that%20specifically,signed%20but%20not%20ratified%20CEDAW.>

<sup>39</sup> "CEDAW in Your Daily Life." OHCHR, OHCHR, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/DailyLife.aspx>.

In regards to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the main goal of this declaration was to provide broad and fair opportunities to both women and men of all ages. The declaration is also a major turning point, as this declaration is “adopted unanimously by 189 countries, [and] was an agenda for women's empowerment that is now considered the key global policy document on gender equality.”<sup>40</sup>

In addition, the effect of the G7 summit meeting has brought many global leaders' attention towards helping developing countries enroll more women in education systems, and encouraged them to fund for this cause.

While However, the formation and ratification of treaties require entire governments to shed light onto an issue, they are critiqued by the people for e tends to be not being effective enough, and lack of specificity. Statistics have shown that gender inequality is decreasing, but not at the rate of meeting the 2030 SDGs.

## Possible Solutions

When regarding possible solutions to lowering gender inequality, it is essential that solutions are longevous and sustainable. One possible solution to eradicating gender equality could be increasing pressure by the international community onto nations that have low gender equity, pushing them to pass legislation that will help phase out life-threatening rules and norms involving perilous actions that prevent women from receiving a quality education such as child marriage and abusive relationships. The international community could put pressure on nations that still have discriminatory laws through imposing sanctions, having annual conferences, or even providing consultation on how to empower girls in education. However, there are many factors such as the low capacity of governments to enforce legislation, poverty, and the ambitions of the political elite in such countries that may stand in the way of the success of international pressure. In order to effectively accomplish this, a combination of strongly devoted international and civil support will be necessary for prompting the governments of developing countries to take a step into this solution. While this solution allows for the international community to be involved in the issue on a global scale, it could be argued that it does not ensure longevity as it only calls upon nations to make legislative changes rather than taking more concrete initiatives. In addition, sanctions could only further hinder nations' ability to solve the issue at hand.

Another possible solution is investing in increased access to education for girls in rural areas. If we compare the literacy rate of women in urban areas to rural areas, we can notice a significant difference. For example in Pakistan, “the urban female literacy rate is 58 percent and rural women

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<sup>40</sup> “Fourth World Conference on Women.” United Nations, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/beijing1995>.



literacy rate is half of it, i.e., 27 percent.”<sup>41</sup> While in almost all countries the literacy rate is lower for women than it is for men, the gap between the two widens even more in rural areas. Expanding access to education for girls in rural areas benefits will benefit both the current and future generations of girls who seek to be educated. In order to effectively implement this solution, however, substantial funding is needed especially for sufficient personnel and physical schooling facilities. Furthermore, providing rural areas with access to the internet where they can learn remotely rather than having to travel to physical schooling locations, is another possible solution that caters to events such as the ongoing pandemic. However, it would still require funding from organizations and or countries to provide the necessary equipment. Despite the beneficiaries of this solution, it is not guaranteed that people will attend education: they may not see the importance of investing time into schooling rather than immediately employing themselves to make money. Moreover, it may be difficult to promote the idea to certified teachers of teaching in rural areas with an income that is unable to satisfy their needs.

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<sup>41</sup> Sadia, Uzma. “Women Education in Rural Areas of Pakistan: Meaning, Need and Barriers!” LinkedIn, LinkedIn, 5 June 2018, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/women-education-rural-areas-pakistan-meaning-need-barriers-sadia>.



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