



The
STEVE
SINNOTT
FOUNDATION

TWENTY SEVENTH EDITION

Engage



Changing Lives Through Education

Women, Life, Freedom

Jerry Glazier



FOREWORD

Welcome to this highly focused edition of ENGAGE 27 Changing Lives Through Education - Women, Life, Freedom

Since its inception, in 2009, the Foundation has maintained the strongest possible motivation to do all that it is able to campaign for equal access to high quality education for girls and women.

While progress is being made the articles starkly remind us that, so often globally, girls and women get a very raw deal. Barriers too numerous remain. They include huge inequality, war, poverty, lack of political stability and will, as well as cultural intransigence.

However, in this challenging post covid period inspiring examples of change are, against the odds, seen. This gives hope and motivation that change can, must and will happen.

JERRY GLAZIER

From the Chief Executive's Desk

Welcome to the 27th edition of engage. As we enter Autumn, it is a good time to reflect on the summer months. Educators have faced lots of challenges in providing education and the teachers we have been working with report lots of positivity too. You can read about some of our project work on pages 10 and 11 and you can also read updates from Sierra Leone (page 9) and Haiti (page 12).



It is the halfway point to the targets set for Sustainable Development Goals of 2030 and the statistics published by the UN make sobering reading. Although globally we have had Covid to contend with, it is still very worrying to read how slow progress has been.

At the Foundation we work towards the achievement of SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all as we believe that education supports the achievement of all of the other 16 SDGs.

A few highlights from the UN report are below:

- Progress towards quality education was already slower than required before the pandemic, but COVID-19 has had devastating impacts on education, causing learning losses in four out of five of the 104 countries studied.
- Without additional measures, only one in six countries will achieve the universal secondary school completion target by 2030, an estimated 84 million children and young people will still be out of school, and approximately 300 million students will lack the basic numeracy and literacy skills necessary for success in life.
- To achieve national Goal 4 benchmarks, which are reduced in ambition compared with the original Goal 4 targets, 79 low- and lower-middle- income countries still face an average annual financing gap of \$97 billion.



- To deliver on Goal 4, education financing must become a national investment priority. Furthermore, measures such as making education free and compulsory, increasing the number of teachers, improving basic school infrastructure and embracing digital transformation are essential.

You can read more about the progress on SDGs and the call for action here:

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf>

One of the questions we are most frequently asked at the Foundation is how we choose where we work. We work in countries where we have had a union link or there are education organisations where the infrastructure is in place to carry out replicable, fit for purpose and sustainable programmes that support access to education. It is important to us that we can work directly with partners on the ground who share our ethos in providing quality education for All. We have developed an assessment framework and we choose our partners based on a set of criteria which looks at indicators such as; capacity, risk, return on investment and sustainability.

The focus of this edition is on Girls' Education and we have included some interesting and thought-provoking articles from leaders in education as well as from people delivering education on the ground.

We have been working with educators globally to see how we can prevent gender based violence and give our young people hope for a future where violence and discrimination is called out. This work has led us to work on developing a resource on relationships for educators and young people. This is an exciting opportunity to make a difference, both in the U.K. and globally. Look out for the launch date coming soon and sign up to here to join our mailing list, <https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/get-good-news>.

You give us hope is the thing I hear most from the young girls and women we work with. I am passing this message on from all of us at the Foundation to all our donors and supporters, "You give us at the Foundation hope that we can ensure education for all can become a reality and a real legacy for young people today and for our future generations".

Thank you for helping us to give the gift of education to future generations. If you would like to support our work, see page 20 for ideas.

Despite Violence and Oppression, Women and Girls Are Demanding ‘Women, Life, Freedom’

DANIEL KEBEDE, NEU GENERAL SECRETARY

Around the world, women and girls continue to experience discrimination, misogyny and oppression, are denied their rights to dress as they please, work outside the home, engage in public and social life or even control their own bodies.

In Afghanistan, Amnesty International has found that human rights violations against women and girls constitute gender persecution, a crime against humanity. Girls are denied the right to access secondary education and young women are prevented from attending university whether at home or abroad. Women cannot attend a gym or walk in the park and are restricted from working outside the home, except in a very few sectors and roles. Women cannot go more than a short distance from home without a male family member to escort them – even accessing healthcare requires a male chaperone.

In Iran, women and girls are forced to wear the hijab and, under a new law, the ‘Support for the Culture of Hijab and Chastity’ legislation, can be fined thousands of pounds or jailed for up to 10 years for failing to do so, in what the United Nations has labelled “gender apartheid”.

In France, religious clothing and symbols have historically been banned in all public schools and Government buildings. But recent legal changes have included bans on Muslim and Jewish clothing. In 2010, France banned the wearing of full-face veils in all public spaces. Wearing a headscarf in state-run schools has been banned since 2004 and last month (September) girls were banned from wearing abayas to school.

In 2021, Turkey pulled out of the ‘Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence’, a major human rights treaty establishing comprehensive legal standards to ensure women's right to be free from violence.

Meanwhile in the USA, in June 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the legal ruling which enshrined women's rights to abortion. Since the decision, 21 US states have banned abortion or restricted the procedure earlier in pregnancy than the standard set by *Roe v. Wade*.

But everywhere women are fighting back...

In Afghanistan, large numbers of women have taken to the streets demanding the right to education and work.

There have been public demonstrations in Iran, with women such as Nazila Maroufian publicly flouting the hijab edict despite being immediately returned to prison.

In Brazil, where President Lula took office at the start of this year, women have taken 11 Ministerial positions and have helped bring forward a package of more than 25 measures that will transform the lives of women, including a bill that guarantees equal pay for women and men who perform the same jobs.

In Colombia, women are playing a leading role in transforming their country after years of violence and repression. The 2022 elections saw victory for President Gustavo Petro and Vice President, Francia Márquez, the first Afro-Colombian Vice President in the country's history and only the second woman to hold the position.

In Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America, women are now winning the battle to control their own bodies.

In February this year, Colombia made abortion legal during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. This followed Argentina's liberalisation of abortion law in 2020 when the procedure was decriminalised and legalised until the 14th week of gestation. The following year, the criminalisation of abortion was declared unconstitutional in Mexico (although access to abortion still varies state by state).

I am delighted that this month, women from countries including Afghanistan, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Iran, Palestine, Turkey and Sudan, along with Black, refugee, trade union and LGBTQ+ women, will be speaking at the NEU's annual International Solidarity Conference. These sisters will make clear that despite continued persecution, oppression and legal setbacks, women and girls across the globe are fighting back – demanding their rights to control their lives and their destiny. They will amplify the voices and resistance of women around the world as they shout their demands for Women, Life, Freedom!

Biography

Daniel Kebede was elected General Secretary of the National Education Union (NEU) in 2023. Daniel is a former primary teacher and school representative in North Tyneside, and since 2013, was a union rep and officer undertaking casework and negotiation where he successfully concluded a number of disputes for members including around lesson planning requirements, book scrutiny and numeric targets. He has campaigned for fair funding, pay and workload. He was awarded the national Blair Peach Award for outstanding contribution to anti-racist work in 2017. Daniel was previously a member of the NEU National Executive and before that the NUT National Executive. He was elected Senior Vice President of the NEU in 2020 and NEU President in September 2021. He has represented the Union on platforms in the UK and abroad.



Making Equality in Education a Foundation for Stronger Societies

BY LAURA FRIGENTI

As a prominent member of the G7, the United Nations and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the United Kingdom has long been both a strong advocate and a source of vital resources for educating girls and boys in lower-income countries.

Heading towards the next general election, it is imperative that education is consolidated as a cross-party issue, not only because individuals' lives are at stake, but because education is the best pathway to more equitable, prosperous and secure societies.

The global community has increasingly recognized the imperative of gender equality in and through education and it has in the past achieved promising—if fitful—progress in getting more children learning, particularly girls.

Covid's sudden and sweeping onslaught tragically strangled that momentum in parts of the world, while conflict has dramatically reversed gains in certain other countries.

Children need the UK and other prosperous nations to deliver financial support on a scale in tune with today's mounting crises. All girls and boys, equally, must be given the skills to not just survive but to thrive in the face of current and future threats.

But the pandemic reminded us as never before that education systems remain shockingly vulnerable to shifting public imperatives, leaving communities and entire societies relying on an increasingly fragile foundation.

These education systems need far greater resources and expertise from all stakeholders, with each contribution serving to further encourage and ensure gender equality in learning.

In a new paper, GPE sets out how, as a partnership and fund, we are bringing everyone to the table to drive transformative change through gender equality in access to, within and through education.

In countries like Nepal and Sierra Leone, GPE is working with governments and their partners to change harmful social norms that undermine learning, particularly for girls but also for those from ethnic minorities or for those with disabilities.

This kind of equal access—in enrollment and completion—is a foundation of successful education. There is also an urgent need to look beyond attendance and consider the role gender plays in boys' and girls' experiences within the education system, as well as the potential to engage young people as agents for change through education.

Examples include promotion of women in school leadership



positions and vocational pathways that support opportunities, regardless of gender.

In the UK, I hope all political parties will heed the call to include a commitment to global education financing in their manifestos and step up the pressure internationally through the G7 and other forums, including through initiatives such as the upcoming government White Paper on international development.

About the Global Partnership for Education

GPE is a shared commitment to ending the world's learning crisis. We mobilize partners and funds to support nearly 90 lower-income countries to transform their education systems so that every girl and boy can get the quality education they need to unlock their full potential and contribute to building a better world. For more than 20 years, GPE has mobilized partners and funds to get 160 million more girls and boys in school and improve learning in partner countries around the world.

GPE has become the single most significant funder of education by offering:

The reach: GPE has nearly 90 partner countries and an active grant portfolio of almost \$3 billion. In 2022 alone GPE reached nearly 110 million children and trained more than 675,000 teachers.

The vision: GPE looks at education systems as a whole. Our big-picture approach helps countries make changes that will get more children in school and learning.

The convening power: GPE is the only platform that brings together all the different parties needed to drive lasting change and mobilizes funding behind these reforms.

The tools: GPE provides countries with a range of flexible funding options and uses innovative financing tools to bring even more resources in. GPE also supports evidence generation (KIX) and civil society strengthening (Education Out Loud).

To learn more: www.globalpartnership.org

Biography

Laura Frigenti is the Chief Executive Officer of the Global Partnership for Education and a veteran of 30 years in multilateral organizations, government, nonprofits, and the private sector. She started her career at the World Bank, where she worked for 20 years, across Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Breaking Barriers in STEM Education

BY LAURA WATFORD

For several decades, it has been well documented that there is a lack of diversity within the STEM sector. This is an industry that is facing a huge skills gap, not only in the UK, but globally. The price of inequality is being felt in these industries but what are we all doing to address this?

One of the most impactful pieces of work that I have experienced in my career is the report "Not for People Like Me" by Professor Averil Macdonald which addressed diversity issues in Science, Technology, and Engineering (STEM). This report and linked resources inspired me deeply. Professor Macdonald's insights on unconscious bias and strategies for equitable STEM education continue to guide and influence my work both in the classroom and through STEMunity (a community of young people, educators, and industry who believe the next generation of young people are the key to future prosperity).

The phrase "Not for people like me" encapsulates the inequality that is experienced by women and other underrepresented groups. No young person should feel this level of discrimination or social injustice.

So, here's a few things that I believe contribute towards working for a more equitable education system for all:

Add to STEM Capital - we should all be building opportunities to enhance this!

Over the past 10 years, the SPIRES group out of UCL have produced some brilliant work around the concept of STEM capital. This concept that we can build opportunities into our school curriculum offers, both in the curriculum and extra curricula, allows students to develop understanding, experience and relatability of STEM skills and opportunities. Those students with higher 'STEM Capital' are known to be more likely to pursue careers in STEM fields if that is their area of interest.

This could look like a high-quality school curriculum that links examples of context and real-life problem solving. The RAEng (The Royal Academy of Engineering) have some incredible resources to support this approach as a legacy from their CST programme. It could also include opportunities to visit innovative and inspiring workplaces, to participate in engaging extra curriculum activities and to interact with positive career linked role models.

Creating opportunities from the grass roots - This is our STEMunity

Inspired by these experiences, I co-founded STEMunity with my colleague Jorden Birch. STEMunity aims to inspire underrepresented young people to pursue STEM careers by offering context-based learning and interactions with role models, bridging the STEM capital gap. We designed a variety of opportunities, including the 5PARK box, our Online

Escape Rooms, STEM Academy Video series and our Mixed Reality Experience.

Address digital poverty - I'm proud that my school lead on this, I realise that we are incredibly lucky to have this programme.

The challenge lies in creating an educational ecosystem that allows ALL young people to flourish and explore diverse opportunities. As an educator in an inner-city school, I've seen the challenges first-hand, the impact of increasing childhood poverty. One transformative programme I have been lucky to witness is the digital strategy at my school, where students are provided with one-to-one devices in efforts to address digital poverty. This extends beyond the classroom with opportunities for families to engage with the learning opportunities.

In the era of the fourth industrial revolution, rapid technological advancements outpace our education systems. We must adapt to prepare students for uncertain future careers. Innovation is key, as we navigate this ever-changing landscape, we must continue to innovate in education to empower our students for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

When a more equitable society is achieved, I truly believe that the scientific and technological advancements will thrive, the areas that I believe must be addressed are:

1. A more diverse and equitable curriculum which allows all to flourish.
2. Industry and workplaces to truly reflect and act upon the mechanisms by which they can be more inclusive and diverse productive environments where no one would ever think the phrase "not for people like me".
3. Affordable and high-quality childcare for all to allow working parents to thrive.

Biography

Laura, an educator with 15 years of experience in Portsmouth. Alongside Jorden Birch, she co-founded the STEM education charity STEMunity, in August 2021. Through their education projects, STEMunity, has reached over 30,000 young people, striving to remove barriers in STEM education. Laura leads the STEM program at Portsmouth Academy and organizes community events. Her two young daughters, Millicent and Edith, inspire her dedication to positive change in education. Her story exemplifies the transformative power of education and its potential for the next generation.



Music is for all

BY JESSICA CRAIG

Having studied music and being a musician myself, I feel privileged to work for the Musicians' Union, (MU).

Growing up in Coventry and attending a state secondary school, the importance of 'the arts' was never promoted and never felt as integral as other subjects.

The idea you could become a musician and make a living seemed too fantastical.

However, at the MU we know working as a musician IS a full time career and we encourage, support and celebrate musicians from all walks of life.

This is why the MU campaigns against musicians being asked to work for free, and works to empower musicians by recognising their work, advising them of their rights and challenging those who try to exploit them.

My role as 'Royalties Official' is to ensure any music royalties due to any musician are paid.

The MU pays royalties to any session player or 'non-featured' musician who has played on a track which has been synced alongside any moving images, for example a song played in an advert or a film. We also administer royalty payments for some television programmes and music videos.

MU royalties are paid to members and non-members, and last year we distributed a record £1.37 million to musicians and their families.

Another part of my role is helping musicians understand their rights, advising on fair terms in contracts and providing the information they need to ensure their music is protected.

In addition, colleagues and I have set up free roadshow events across the UK to highlight the work we do and to speak to musicians one on one about their career needs.

These have been invaluable, with musicians expressing their gratitude for increasing their understanding of music rights and royalties. There are more events to come so look out for information on the union's website and social media feeds.

Not only does the MU offer to support musicians on an individual basis but the MU is passionate about improving the music industry overall with our campaigns and lobbying work.

Some of these campaigns relate to fixing music streaming and acting against buyouts, however, a vital area the MU is committed to is equality, diversity and inclusion which is crucial in improving the music industry.

This is accentuated by the setting up of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team who aim to achieve equality for all, taking



action against discrimination and educating everyone on best practice.

The MU knows there are challenges faced by women in music, for example sexism, lack of representation, maternity rights and childcare.

We have a growing Women's Network for members to raise issues and feed into the union's work, like the MU's contribution to the Misogyny in Music inquiry in Parliament and the development of template workplace policies on issues ranging from sexual harassment to breastfeeding.

The union offers legal advice to women and guidance on workplace rights for all musicians.

There is also a scheme called 'Safe Space' which gives every musician the opportunity to report instances of sexual harassment, sexism and sexual abuse in confidence. The MU can provide advice and information on support services to those affected.

It's amazing these matters are at the top of the MU's agenda, as no-one has to face prejudice or discrimination.

This is strengthened by the appointment of Naomi Pohl as General Secretary, the first woman to hold the post since the MU began in 1893.

It is fantastic to work for an organisation where every musician, whether they are a singer, songwriter, student or music teacher is supported and that the MU is behind them no matter what.

Women and Girls' Education

**BY K BALDEH ADAMA, TEACHER, ARMITAGE
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, JANGANG BUREH,
CENTRAL RIVER REGION SS, THE GAMBIA**

Over the years, significant strides have been made to make education accessible to girls in the Gambia. There have been achievements as quite a good number of girls have been enrolled in primary school and there is provision of free education for girls in public schools up to high school level. This was geared towards the attainment of gender parity and SDG4.

However, there are numerous obstacles to girls' education, particularly in the rural areas, ranging from social, cultural and economic issues that put them at a disadvantage.

Cultural practices such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and cutting discrimination, excessive household chores and gender stereotypes have been barriers to the education of rural girls. As a result, they do not acquire the knowledge and skills needed to compete in the labour market; nor gain socio-emotional and life skills to navigate and adapt to a changing world.

I was the first female in my family to go school, from a community where girls' education was not given as much consideration as that of the boys. These are some of the challenges I had to conquer. I needed to break the cultural barriers that limit the girl-child to only the matrimonial home and allow me to reach the level where I am today, making an impact in any ways I can. Little did I know I would reach this far but the passion to make a difference in my life through education and the support from educators who spotted the potential in me, made the journey possible.

Poverty is another factor affecting the education of rural girls. A large percentage of girls in rural Gambia are from underprivileged families. As a result, the girls lack the required economic support to pursue their education.

Also, the lack of, or limited access to transportation, prevent some rural girls from attending schools located far away from their homes. They are forced to walk long distances which renders them exhausted, they are usually not regular and not punctual as their parents cannot afford bicycles or other means of transportation and this affects their academic performance. Therefore, boys continue performing better in school and become most productive in the communities while girls drop out or are withdrawn from school for marriage. These are reasons why some of my female school mates and my students who travel kilometers to school, drop out or opt for transfers to the urban areas where guardianship becomes an issue, thus exposing them to more dangers in the city. A rural girl who is not accustomed to city life is in most cases taken advantage of.

Aside from teaching, female teachers can play vital roles in

schools. They can guide, coach and mentor girls and thus serve as role models. The absence or limited numbers of women in leadership roles and teaching positions in the rural areas can limit girls' aspirations and opportunities.

There are several ways to address barriers and ensure that girls and women attain equality and equity in education. This can be done by removing financial barriers, providing scholarships and transportation facilities to make school more accessible.

The cultural and societal norms that hinder girls' education can be challenged and transformed through sensitization, campaigns, community engagement and involvement of local leaders and influencers in promoting girls' education.

It will also be important to establish mentorship programs that connect girls with successful women who can inspire them. Role models and mentors help girls envision their potential and pursue their goals.

Coming from a rural area and having experienced some of these challenges, I opted for a rural posting so that in addition to teaching, I could conduct activities that are meant to empower rural girls, build their self-esteem and boost their confidence. This is made possible through the clubs I coordinate and through my engagement with the Gambia Teachers' Union. My passion for girls' education is fulfilling.



Gender Equality and Development for Social Action (GEDSA)

BY ISATA M KAMARA, FOUNDER OF GEDSA

Background

Gender Equality and Development for Social Action (GEDSA) was born from the experience and passion of the lead founder during her childhood and teenage years. Gender discrimination and cultural practices have forced many girls out of school and made their dreams of a better life collapse along the way. The organisation is registered with the Bombali District Council and the Ministry of Social Welfare in Sierra Leone.

In Africa, Sierra Leone in particular is a society that still sees the position of women to be just housewives and cooks for their husbands. Sierra Leone is rated among one of the poorest countries in the world, the country has a population of over seven million according to the 2021 National Census (Male 3,716,263, Female 3,825,378, Total 7,541,641¹) and the priority according to culture is to prioritise boys' education over girls. This is reflective of the education rates in the country as only 47% of the population was educated between the period 2004-2022.²

Impact of The Steve Sinnott Foundation in supporting education

Since the establishment of the partnership between The Steve Sinnott Foundation, the Sierra Leone Teachers Union, and Gender Equality and Development for Social Action, many interventions have been taken in the Bombali District in Northern Sierra Leone, Porto Loko District in the North-Western Region and Bo District in the Southern Region of Sierra Leone. These range from the training of school leaders on gender based violence, supporting school girls in the making of reusable sanitary pads, engaging teenagers on election violence, continuous engagement with schools to ensure girls have the space to speak up and report any form of violence (physical, sexual or psychological) through established structures like school mentors and guardian counsellors.

Funding support from The Steve Sinnott Foundation UK has seen girls making their own reusable sanitary pads, which has helped many girls come to school during their menstrual periods as they could not always afford to buy them, and become confident in speaking up.

GEDSA continues to make inroads in engaging stakeholders through radio discussions and community meetings in making sure children, especially girls and children with disabilities, are provided with support and care. The provision of learning materials including bags, books, pens, pencils, mathematical sets, sharpeners were provided for 100 children. The first phase targeted 50 beneficiaries and offered training for school leaders and parents to provide them with the skills and techniques to support them.

Governments are charged with the responsibility to ensure all economic, social and political aspects of a country are fully provided, but the status of Sierra Leone makes this impossible.

So the need for partnerships and support from like minded organisations is essential for the achievement of SDG4.

The Steve Sinnott Foundation is fundamental in supporting GEDSA towards the achievement of this goal. Over this period of supporting GEDSA, over 2000 girls and boys in 15 schools have been taught about hygiene, drugs and violence, the importance of education and much more. 60 school leaders and over 100 parents have been reached with educational messages through support from the Steve Sinnott Foundation over a four year period. The aim is to continuously engage schools as an ongoing process each school year.

References

- [1.https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/MTPHC_Provisional_Results/2021_MTPHC_Provisional_Results.pdf](https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/MTPHC_Provisional_Results/2021_MTPHC_Provisional_Results.pdf)
- [2.https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/SLE/sierra-leone/literacy-rate](https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/SLE/sierra-leone/literacy-rate)



Training mentors on making sanitary pads



School Girls and boys making sanitary pads



Engagement with boys and girls on violence



Engagement with heads of schools

Project Updates

Here are some of the highlights of the past 6 months. Remember to check out our blog on the website for regular updates and more detailed information. The best way to keep up to date with our project work is to follow us on our social media channels and our blog.

<https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/blog>

<https://twitter.com/ssfoundation>

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/sinnottfoundation>

https://www.instagram.com/ssfoundation_

Positive Periods and Gender Based Violence Prevention

This year we have continued to support programmes in Cape Verde, Cuba, Haiti, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal.

The Gender Based Violence Programme has developed as a result of the safe spaces created for The Positive Period Programme; so far it has rolled out across 8 countries. We have supported teachers with "Counselling Skills and "Identifying Special Educational Needs" training in The Gambia. It has also developed into a new programme focusing on Relationships where we will be working with educators and both girls and boys to make positive choices in relationships.

Embracing Diversity and Empowerment in Cuba

In a world striving for inclusivity and equal opportunities, education emerges as a powerful tool. Every individual, irrespective of their background, deserves the chance to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Such values are the core essence of the Foundation, which recently organised a remarkable workshop led by Dr. Rosaida Ochoa Soto and Norma Guillard Limonta. This workshop was not only about education; it was a celebration of diversity and empowerment that left a lasting impact on all participants.

<https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/title-embracing-diversity-and-empowerment-insights-from-a-workshop-on-sexuality-and-stereotypes>



UNESCO ASPnet 70th anniversary - Arts and Culture for Peace Initiative Kyoto, Japan

The UNESCO ASPnet programme is managed by the Steve Sinnott Foundation's CEO Ann. Here at The Foundation, we are proud to have worked with Doshisha University's Liferisk Research Centre and the UK National Commission for UNESCO to organise a 5 day cultural exchange to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of UNESCO ASPnet.

Students from Oman, Singapore, Poland, The Netherlands, the Gambia, South Korea, Belgium, Japan and the U.K. worked on the Arts and Culture for Peace initiative in Kyoto, Japan - known for traditional Japanese culture and promoting sustainability. The shared intercultural experiences created a rich platform for the participants to discuss the challenge of achieving a Culture of Peace.

The young people and educators experienced a tea ceremony hosted by Urasenke Tea. They heard from the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Dr Genshitsu Sen, at the opening and they connected with ASPnet students who shared their own tea cultures from all regions. Art Mile Japan facilitated the creation of a group artwork and they made their own bowls at Bizen pottery in collaboration with Oxford University Kilns. We heard from Hiroshima survivor Keiko Ogura about the importance of fostering peace through working together creatively.

Outcomes achieved:

- Learning about peace initiatives from communities around the world and consider how young people can implement what they have learnt in their own communities
- Learning to work collaboratively and peacefully in an international setting, developing tolerance and understanding.
- Learning about the difference between peacekeeping and peace-making.
- Learning about delivering sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles.
- Learning about cultures and traditions and appreciating cultural diversity and heritage.
- Learning how to use creative arts to tell their story through theatre, art, sound, music, poetry and ceramics; to create impactful displays to be showcased at the UNESCO General Conference and other sites.



Ann Beatty and Malgorzata Herbich presenting Gift a Poem @JSaito

The young people painted a picture of the future they want on a large 1.5m x 3.6m canvas. The mural completed here is filled with thoughts and ideas of the youths. Their message is "Let's create a sustainable and peaceful future together!".



Innovative Technology Must no Longer be a Luxury for Rural Schools

BY GABIE AURIEL

In the 1st rural section of Basse Plaine, commune of Limonade where the Cima Community School of Hope is located, there is no access to electricity. A minority of the people who can afford a mobile phone, much less a smartphone, find it difficult to keep it charged. This is a problem in today's technology-driven world.

To combat this problem, Cima Community School of Hope (CCSH) joined forces with the Steve Sinnott Foundation to launch The CCSH Resource Learning Center to facilitate education focused on multimedia and information technology. The Center is available to our staff and students from 1st Grade to High School. Today, our CCSH-RLC is equipped for audio-visual language learning. Students can learn English, Spanish, and many other languages in a participatory way, while we encourage the self-study method.

With 25 computer workstations and 19 tablets, powered by a 6-kw solar system, the space is conducive to learning. We promote inclusive education, we have knowledgeable IT and language teachers, and we are user friendly. The Resource Learning Center serves:

- The staff and students of Cima Community School of Hope
- The 21 children of Caring for Haitians Orphans with AIDS (CHOAIDS).
- More than 50 community youth enjoy interactive weekend courses.

Students are eager to connect to the global village and acquire innovative technological knowledge. A computer Lab is no longer a luxury for our rural school. They use basic software like Microsoft Office, they can navigate the internet and operating systems easily. They learn through audiovisuals and in a very interactive environment. It helps develop their ability to learn by listening, reading, and writing in their language, often through playing fun and engaging games.

In addition to learning a foreign language and navigating a computer, the CCSH-RLC helps to better prepare the students for a successful professional career. It may even serve as their main profession in the future; students can freelance anywhere. They understand this and show interest and motivation to learn at every opportunity. The use of information and communication technologies in education plays a crucial role in providing new and innovative platforms of support for teachers, students, and the learning process more broadly. We encourage students to read through our book club and use social media to their advantage. Students were able to participate in the Virtual Global Classroom

Event on June 16th for the Day of the African Child and connected in solidarity with children in the USA, Brazil, DRC, and other African Diaspora countries.

We have initiated a film based project called "Cine Changement". Every Wednesday students watch a short film or documentary that fosters open debate. They ask questions about current events, issues that jeopardize their future, and propose solutions and alternatives for a fragile country like Haiti. We also took advantage of our CCSH-RLC to integrate our adult literacy parents and community members so that no one is left behind. All 3 Alfa classes (about 93 students) were invited to watch the Maestra documentary about the 1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign. The literacy students admired the sacrifices made by young students to eradicate Cuban illiteracy within one year. They have a chance to reflect on and evaluate their civic engagement as Haitian citizens. Regardless of their social rankings and age, they can make a difference, be an agent of hope, and their voices count.

Sonje Ayiti recently acquired Starlink for reliable internet capability to boost innovative virtual learning opportunities for staff, students, parents, and the community. The CCSH-RLC now has reliable internet access to promote more cultural and educational exchange activities with other schools in the diaspora, which would be even better for a global connection to the outside world and help teachers to have more content for their lessons.

Biography

Gabrielle is a native of Cap-Haitien, Haiti. Obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Information Systems from DeVry University and a background in Business Administration. In Haiti, she was National Director for the Foundation of Compassionate American Samaritans (FOCAS) then as Transition Manager of Food for the Hungry (FFH). She has devoted herself to SONJE AYITI full-time as the President and Executive Director, the organization that she founded in Georgia in 2004 to help Haitians to help each other in order to create their Haitian dream with pride and dignity. As a Social Entrepreneur, she co-founded and serves as Executive Secretary of SAPEN SA since 2009.



Empowering Women and Girls: The Path to Equal Education

BY SOPHIE YOUNG

In the modern world, access to education is a fundamental human right, being Article 26 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the reality for many women and girls around the globe remains starkly different. Despite significant progress in recent decades, gender disparities in education persist, with the UN estimating that in 2023 130 million women are still denied access to education. In this article, I explore the importance of addressing these disparities and the steps that can be taken to ensure women and girls have equal access to education.

The Gender Gap in Education

Education is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is a catalyst for empowerment, self-determination, and economic independence. It is the first step in development. Unfortunately, many women and girls continue to face barriers to education. Cultural norms, early marriage, household responsibilities, and economic constraints often limit their access to education. Discriminatory attitudes and violence against girls who seek an education further exacerbate inequalities.

Breaking Down Barriers

To address this issue, we must prioritise a multifaceted approach. Governments and communities must work together to change cultural norms and attitudes that perpetuate gender disparities in education. This involves challenging harmful stereotypes, promoting gender equality, and celebrating the value of educating women and girls.

Additionally, policies and programs must be implemented to provide economic support and incentives for families to send their daughters to school. Scholarships, cash transfers, and initiatives that provide school supplies, healthcare and uniforms can help alleviate the financial burden that education often places on families.

Quality Education Matters

Equal access to education is not just about getting girls into classrooms; it's also about ensuring the quality of that education. Schools must be safe and supportive environments for women and girls, free from discrimination, harassment, and violence. Teachers should receive training in gender-sensitive teaching methods, and curricula should be updated to reflect gender equality principles.

Empowering Women Beyond the Classroom

Education is a powerful tool for women and girls to break free from the cycle of poverty and discrimination. When they have access to quality education, women are more likely to find better job opportunities, participate in decision-making processes, and contribute to their communities' development.



Studies have shown that an extra year of schooling can increase a girl's future earnings by 10-20%. Empowered women can also serve as role models and advocates for gender equality, helping to drive lasting change in their community and the wider society.

The Road Ahead

Achieving equal access to education for women and girls is not a one-size-fits-all solution. It requires a concerted effort from governments, communities, and international organizations. Progress is being made, but there is still much work to be done. By investing in girls' education, we are not only improving the lives of individuals but also creating a brighter and more equitable future for all.

In conclusion, the fight for equal access to education for women and girls is a battle that affects us all. It's a fight for human rights, gender equality, and social justice. As we move forward, let us remember that educating women and girls isn't just about changing lives; it's about changing the world. Together, we can break down the barriers that stand in the way and ensure that every girl has the opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve her full potential.

Biography

Sophie is a current undergraduate student studying International Development at the UEA. She decided to do her placement with the Steve Sinnott Foundation as she understands the importance of education's role in improving opportunities. Sophie is excited to work with the Steve Sinnott Foundation and contribute to their work providing equitable education.

Barbie Girl

BY JEANINE CONNOR

Gender equality is an international human right – but is it a reality? UN Women was founded in 2010 to accelerate progress in achieving international gender equality. Their key goals are empowering women, reducing economic and political disparities and reducing violence against women and girls.¹ But the organisation's findings are stark. Globally, women earn 20% less than men; only 25% of all national parliamentarians are female; and at least 35% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence.¹ Reading these statistics prompted me to reflect on what it's like to be a woman at this moment in time.

At this moment in time, Barbie the movie² has just been released to (mostly) critical acclaim across Europe and the US. It is promoted as a movie about a living doll that suffers an existential crisis, exploring matters of life and death, relationships, feminism and patriarchy through glorious – mostly pink – technicolour, sunshine, song and dance. Sounds like harmless fun and potentially a commendable way to provoke conversations about gender equality, right? Not everyone agrees. Barbie has been banned in several countries for reasons including: the promotion of feminist ideologies that demean men (Saudi Arabia), objectionable LGBTQ+ content (Pakistan), promoting homosexuality, sexual deviance and transsexuality (Lebanon) violating Islamic values (UAE), damaging moral standards (Algeria) and inaccurate portrayal of geographical maritime borders (Vietnam).³ So, not fun, not harmless and not commendable.

According to Greta Gerwig, the movie's director, young girls are funny, brash, confident and play with Barbies, and then they suddenly abandon their confidence along with their dolls.⁴ Anyone who has been (or seen) a girl maturing into a young woman knows this is a stereotypical and reductionist description of development. I wonder how valuable Barbie – the doll – is as a 'source of enrichment' and as a model of womanhood, when she is eternally adolescent, has unrealistic (and potentially unhealthy) proportions, is sexless, and can seemingly turn her hand to any number of careers at the flick of a debit card, no training required.

Barbie is a toy, not a human, and for me the blurring of this boundary blurs the line between fantasy and reality. This can be harmful when the target demographic of Barbie the movie is young women and girls, in particular (the movie is rated PG13). Barbie is a brand, and, at this moment in time, the Western world is in the clutches of Barbie-mania, or, as publicists would have it, 'Barbie-core'. This is also aimed at women and girls who are being enticed to buy into the fantasy with Barbie shoes, Barbie clothes, Barbie sportswear, Barbie haircare, Barbie toiletries, Barbie jewellery, Barbie sex toys, Barbie home accessories and even Barbie snacks.

We are also being bombarded with yet more unrealistic, reductionist, stereotypical, culturally biased images of what a woman looks like in the form of Margot Robbie, the white, blond-haired, blue-eyed actress who plays the leading role. She has model proportions – reportedly 34–24–34 – and a 'snatched' jawline – reportedly the 'perfect' 125 degrees. Most women and girls do not and cannot match these statistics, but many will try, through restricted eating, skin lightening, hair bleaching or surgery. And when they still don't 'measure up', their confidence will plummet.

I have read that Barbie is a 'commentary on what it's like to be a woman in the 'real world'.⁵ The reality is that at this moment in time women are still judged on their appearance

and sexuality, are still the victims of economic and political disparities, are still likely to experience cultural and age biases, and are still more likely than men to experience physical and sexual violence. I don't think that Barbie is doing much to change that.

Biography

*Jeanine Connor is a psychodynamic psychotherapist who works in private practice, mostly with adolescents and young adults. She is also a clinical supervisor and training facilitator. Jeanine has supported young people, and those who work with young people, in a variety of settings for 25+ years. Jeanine is the author of two books about psychotherapy – Stop F*cking Nodding and other things 16 year olds say in therapy (PCCS Books, 2022) and Reflective Practice in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy: Listening to Young People (Routledge, 2020). She is in the process of writing a third, which will be published in 2024. Jeanine is the editor of BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) Children, Young People & Families journal and reviews and edits for BACP Therapy Today.*

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Books: Stop F*cking Nodding www.pccs-books.co.uk/products/stop-fcking-nodding

Reflective Practice in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy www.routledge.com/Reflective-Practice-in-Child-and-Adolescent-Psychotherapy-Listening-to/Connor/p/book/9780367149406

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‘When we let children leave lessons we devalue education’.

Are we missing the point?

BY SHONAGH REID

Recently in the UK, there has been a discussion on twitter about whether or not students should be allowed to leave the classroom once a lesson has started. Some assert that letting a child out of a classroom implies that the education in the classroom is not valued highly enough. To paraphrase, 'students need to know that the lesson is vital, therefore they have to remain in it'. The conversation then moved on to behaviour of students, specifically the idea that students leaving classrooms may engage in graffiti, vaping and smoking in the toilets. Onward, to the lack of support from school leaders who promote poor behaviour by not dealing with it strongly enough.

As someone who has been an Assistant Principal for Behaviour and Attitudes, I fully understand the importance of boundaries and structure for young people to learn in. Indeed, for some children school can be their safe space. Order and calm is essential for them. We know from a range of different sources such as Teacher Tapp and articles in the TES, that poor behaviour is often cited as the reason for poor retention of staff.

I can simultaneously hold the belief that order, structure and calm are necessary for good learning to take place, and that young people can generally be trusted to take ownership of that learning and their own bodies.

Young people are well aware that their education is vital. I think they know this too well and feel pressured. When I was at school, the world was a significantly different place. Education was different. Industries and jobs were very different. Societal pressures were very different and social media didn't exist. Technology is moving apace, and the jobs of the future don't exist yet. So why are we so confident that our current ways of teaching and learning are suitable for today's learners.

Our education system is largely unchanged since the Victorian era. The world, however is completely different. This view that learning has to take place in a classroom, with everyone facing forward, in the quiet is not in tune with our modern lives or modern ways of work. I work with organisations who are purposefully giving staff more agency and trust. They support staff to take breaks when they need to and trust them to get the work done to a high standard. They support flexible working. They are working to challenge discrimination. They listen to staff to create a comfortable working environment because they know that this is key to retention and productivity. Education doesn't seem to be anywhere near this, and more importantly, it isn't preparing young people for this way of working.



What about staff? Post covid the world is changing and teachers continue to vote with their feet choosing different career paths which are more in tune with modern life and reasonable expectations of a person's stress and work levels. What are we really doing to make education an attractive work environment (note I didn't say career)? Teachers expect more.

As the exchange on Twitter implies, we are not tolerant. We can't understand that a young person may need to take breaks from pressure. We don't seem ready to understand that trauma exists, that this might be a factor in a child's response to what is happening to them and the stressful environment they are in. There continues to be a failure to recognise protected characteristics and the specific challenges these bring to all stakeholders.

What if we were able to create a flexible education system which prepares young people for modern ways of working? What if we replicated those ways of working to meet the needs of teachers? Are we making our young people culturally aware so that they can excel in international collaboration that hybrid working has encouraged?

If we look at the etymology of the word, 'educate', we might want to reflect on: to what extent we are leading our young people and showing them the way? How are we revealing the outside world to them? How are we nurturing and supporting them? Are we looking after their minds? Do we promote intellectual and cultural development?

Shonagh Reid is an equity, diversity and inclusion consultant supporting organisations to create a truly inclusive working environment.

Support the Women in our Public Schools on the way to Diversifying Teaching

BY MARY CATHRYN RICKER

Early in my work as the president of my local teacher's union I was invited to a community leader meeting about reforming the teaching profession. Amidst the discussion of harsher teacher evaluations, raising standards for teaching, creating easier entry into the profession, merit pay for "good" teachers, and more, I brought up the fact that working conditions and salaries hadn't meaningfully changed since the 1960s. "We're in favor of paying math and science teachers more so they can be compensated closer to what they'd get in the private sector," a business community representative replied, offering an idea that was not new to me.

Full disclosure: my dad was a career math teacher from that era of math and science majors who answered their government's call to become math and science teachers who would boost the United States of America's bench in the space race. I could easily picture how a larger salary could have changed our family's budget.

Teachers' unions like mine (and my dad's) addressed pay disparities based on gender that were common a generation earlier by fighting for a salary schedule focused on experience and education.

So, I offered back, "If we want to differentiate pay related to the most important job in education, then we should seriously consider paying kindergarten and first grade teachers more than anyone because they teach students to read, which is the rocket science of education," alluding to an influential issue of AFT's *American Educator* magazine from 1999.

"Well, I'm sure those teachers are fine but I have volunteered in first grade classrooms and their work doesn't compare to math and science teachers."

Oh. Interesting. We clearly weren't going to see eye to eye in our differentiated pay conversation.

More so, there are decades long gender stereotypes lurking behind that conversation. In addition to the history of gender-based pay inequities, elementary school teachers are assumed to be female while more secondary teachers are male.

There has long been a disconnect between the importance communities, elected officials, and countries have placed on education. From local funding efforts to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, support for education is nearly universal in most communities. That support for education doesn't always translate to support for educators and, with a majority of educators worldwide being female, that

sets a dangerous precedent. Our teachers deserve professional working conditions because teaching and learning begins with their expertise. Additionally, a teacher's working conditions are a student's learning conditions and so administrators, public officials, or policymakers mistreating, undermining, or disrespecting teachers sends a message to students that teachers do not deserve respect, fair treatment, or professionalization.

In addition to a stubborn lack of recognition of teachers as professionals, a vicious cycle exists around salary. Teachers have historically low wages because it is feminized and because it is feminized teacher's wages are suppressed. The evidence that belonging to a union, with the ability to negotiate collectively, improves teacher compensation is key in disrupting this vicious cycle.

Teaching has been a feminized profession for over a century and, despite efforts to diversify the profession, remains a feminized profession. In fact, the OECD reports that the gender gap increased from 2005 to 2019.

In order for our students to have the most representative learning conditions, we need the most representative teachers so we must continue to diversify teaching to represent everyone in our communities, including by gender. Efforts like Black Men Teach, active in my home state of Minnesota, can make a meaningful difference. I would posit treating the current majority female teaching population as professionals—with professional wages, recognizing their expertise in teaching and learning rather than infantilizing them, respecting their commitment to education rather than exploiting it—would both model for students the way to treat women (and thereby model for female students how they can expect to be treated in any profession) and create the conditions for everyone to see teaching as a profession worth pursuing.

Biography

Mary Cathryn D. Ricker is a National Board-Certified teacher currently serving as executive director of the Albert Shanker Institute, a non-profit organization established in 1998 to honour the life and legacy of the late president of the American Federation of Teachers. Ms Ricker has also served as president of the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, executive vice-president of the American Federation of Teachers, and as Commissioner of Education for the State of Minnesota.



Women and girls education GUPT perspective

BY DALILA EL BARHMI

Women's and Girls' Full Participation in Society: "Are Palestinian women reaping the benefits of education in similar ways to the rest of the world?"

Palestinian women continue to be some of the most educated women in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region. While women's academic participation is indeed measurable, they are not reaping the benefits of education. Palestinian women, especially educated Palestinian women, are overlooked, and under-represented in Palestinian society. Current indicators reveal that access to education has not significantly improved women's status in Palestinian society. It is therefore imperative to benefit from Palestinian women's education and skills in society not only as a social right, but as a development necessity.

The percentage of educated women in Palestine is remarkable and one of the highest around the world with a 99.6% in 2020 for completion in primary and upper secondary. While Palestinian women have always been visible in the national struggle, they have limited leadership and decision making opportunities. Their participation in civil society and the formal government has been restricted.

In decision making positions, women comprise only 8.3% of all ministers, 0% of ministerial representatives, and 6% of assistants to the ministerial representatives. Within all ministries women comprise 30% of staff. In the Ministry of Women's Affairs, women are the majority, comprising 68.1%.

Education unions leading by example:

Education unions have viewed the education of future generations, with a focus on girls, as a form of protest, resistance to the country and Arab region's ongoing conflict, displacement, and upheaval. Accordingly, women and girls' education has thrived in recent years.

COVID 19 crisis a catalyst for transforming education unions:

Education unions voiced that an appropriate response to COVID -19 in the education sector should consider the rights and best interests of students, teachers and education support personnel and involve education unions in developing the containment and recovery measures.

This response accelerated the transformation process of the largest union in Palestine, the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT). They want to have a truly representative union and integrate women educators in the union decision making structures.

Despite the pandemic, GUPT continued to engage in social dialogue with the government, continued to fight for decent working conditions and welfare for teachers and education personnel and engage in a process of trade union transformation reflecting the realities of the 21st century. The union stepped up during the rapid shift to distance learning, they have developed online programmes, trained teachers on distance learning and supported students to decrease inequality among learners.



The union also urged that the transformation should also challenge discrimination and increase women's involvement in education, in trade unions and in society. This process was a driver to enhance women's leadership within the union's structures.

From words to action: Mechanisms put in place to enhance women educators' participation.

With the support of international sister organisations, GUPT developed their own strategy to promote women's participation and leadership within their union and in education.

They developed a strategy, and we identified the following objectives:

- Increase the number of women in key union leadership and decision-making bodies at the regional and national level, through capacity development training on leadership for women. They have also introduced policies such as gender quotas and allocated budgets for their gender equity programmes.
- Activate the role of their Women's Committee and prioritise the recruitment of young female teachers.

The union is also working to identify and address the barriers to women's participation in union leadership and decision making.

In education the union is working with the Ministry of Education to review school books so that gender discrimination is not inherently written into the curriculum. GUPT is also organising sensitization training for educators so that discriminatory stereotypes are not perpetuated in the classroom.

Finally, for the GUPT it is important to secure the right to education for all Palestinian students, especially girls. Teaching and learning must occur in quality environments. Every effort must be made to eradicate the different types of violence that occur all too frequently in and around educational settings.

Biography

Dalila EL Barhmi is the Regional Coordinator for Arab Countries with Education International (www.ei-ie.org). Dalila coordinates the programmes, policies, operations, and activities for the Arab region since 2019. Dalila is a human and trade union activist and has worked as a programme officer on trade union rights and equality within the same organisation. She was part of the student unions in Morocco, then joined the international trade union movement later with International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers based in Brussels in 2004.

Capacity development as part of education

BY JOSEPHINE DODDS

Education has been identified as a key aspect to achieve societal development. This has been highlighted with the 2015 sustainable development goals, with goal 4 being to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education has also shifted to being a means to transmit peace and global tolerance through increasing the understanding of other cultures. This has tied in with the rise of capacity development initiatives in development practice that seek to empower and enable individuals and communities to build upon their pre-existing capacities. It is a key strategy to ensure educational development by international organisations, governments, and communities.

The main principles of capacity development are participation, locally driven agenda, ongoing learning, long term investment and building upon local capacities. By integrating these principles into educational development, it allows for school communities to become involved in peace building activities. Through following a locally driven agenda schools can become centres for fostering peace and understanding and address local issues that may prevent children from attending or staying in school.

This is what the UNESCO Associated Schools network aims to achieve by involving schools and educational institutes at a global level, creating networks of educators and students that share information, knowledge and spread UNESCO's value of peace. It aims to join schools through four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together to create sustainable learning and teaching environments that involve communities in conservation activities, petitions and cultural events. Schools undertake social and educational projects that allow students to get involved with supporting developmental and humanitarian organisations, through fundraising and field trips. Recently The Steve Sinnott Foundation organised an international trip to Japan for the 70th Anniversary of UNESCO ASPnet for the Arts and Culture for peace exchange, bringing together students from The Gambia, Oman, Singapore, Korea and Coventry.

By expanding education to include individuals and communities' local agendas and addressing international issues, education can provide a platform for ongoing learning and development. It allows for students to develop their ability to think critically and connect with others meaning they can both learn and understand issues that might not be highlighted otherwise. By allowing schools, students, and



communities to connect and direct their own development and focusing on developing existing capacities, the meaning and aim of education shifts from traditional roles to being focused upon understanding and peace.

Biography

Josephine Dodds is currently completing a masters in international development management. She decided to do her placement with the Steve Sinnott Foundation due to her interest in education and the ability to deliver this sustainably as a key tool for the future of sustainable development. Josephine has previous experience working overseas on education projects and early years education.

The importance of educating women and girls

BY ROSE-TAMARA JEANTY

The education of women and girls throughout the world is of paramount importance. Educating them will have implications for societies, communities and the world in general. The education of women and girls is a key driver of sustainable development and social progress, and a human rights issue. However, there are still many challenges and obstacles to girls' education. Inequality and discrimination are still the order of the day. Let's take a closer look at what this means and what the possible solutions are.

Gender equality and equity

There has been a marked improvement in girls' education over the last 25 years, and much progress has been made. The latest UNESCO report states that 180 million more girls have enrolled in school. However, when it comes to access to and completion of education in poor countries, there is a gender gap. Girls are less likely to enrol and stay in school, those who do enrol do not complete primary school, and few of those who do complete primary school go on to university.

According to surveys carried out by UNESCO:

- 2018 (130 million girls in the world are not in school)
- 2019 (12 million are married at an early age)
- 2019 (18.5 million girls aged between 15 and 19 become pregnant).

According to article 3 of the preamble to the 1946 constitution: 'The law guarantees women, in all areas, equal rights with men' despite this, there is still a long way to go before we can talk about equity and equality between women and men, particularly in education. The GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT (GEM) affirmed this in a report published in 2020 entitled '25 years of efforts to achieve gender equality in education'.

Access to education, the main obstacles

Girls and young women are deprived of their right to education. They face various obstacles. These include:

Poverty: Almost everywhere in the world, children living in poverty encounter difficulties in education, but the stakes are much higher for girls. In families with little money, there are not enough resources to send all the children to school, so the choice goes to the boy or boys in the family.

Ethnicity: There are also cultural factors that come into play; in some traditions, unfortunately, girls are still assigned to housework, and the focus is on domestic chores rather than their education, as it should be. This favours the education of boys while neglecting that of girls.

Disability: Disabled girls are doubly victimised because of their status as girls and as disabled children. Education is difficult for them to access, and they are subject to multiple forms of discrimination. Many of them do not go to school, and the quality and treatment received by those who do is questionable.

Child marriage: Child marriage, most of which is forced, has serious consequences on the lives of young girls, which in turn has repercussions for the community. Married children mean responsibility and dropping out of school.

Early and unwanted pregnancy: When girls become pregnant, they automatically stop attending school, either because they are stigmatised, marginalised or simply because their institution considers pregnancy to be grounds for dismissal.

Gender-based violence: So many young girls have had to drop out of school because of gender-based violence. The violence is physical, sexual and moral. It usually happens at school, on the way to school, or on the way to get supplies for the home (fetching water, wood for cooking, etc.).

Educating girls, opportunities and consequences

While there are obstacles to girls' education, there are also opportunities that could alleviate the problems. If we want a strong society with fulfilled women, we need to educate them, starting in early childhood. Educating girls from early childhood will give them a solid foundation for their learning and their future. They become well-rounded, aware adults. They avoid early marriages and pregnancies that would limit their future prospects.

However, if we are talking about schooling for girls, we need to talk about education that is adapted to the needs of each individual. Many children have access to education on the cheap. Teachers are not sufficiently trained, the environment is inadequate and there is a lack of school infrastructure. Talking about getting girls into school should really mean guaranteeing quality and appropriate education.



Gender stereotypes need to be deconstructed

Girls and boys must enjoy their right to education equally and equitably. (Including pregnant girls and young mothers). Governments must establish an inclusive education system at all levels. Disabled people must fully enjoy their right to education in accordance with Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The same opportunities must be offered to all on an equal basis.

If we want girls to go to school, it must be of good quality and there must be a good infrastructure. Much better hygiene care is needed in schools. The issue of menstrual hygiene should no longer be an obstacle to education, and there must be access to intimate hygiene for girls in schools.

There is no more effective tool for sustainable development than girls' education

Girls' schooling is a tool for reducing poverty in their communities, and has economic benefits. According to the World Bank, each year of secondary education enables girls to increase their adult earnings by up to 25%. Education empowers girls and increases their ability to make decisions. An educated woman is much more likely to engage in civic and community activities, and to know and defend her rights.

Getting girls into school will have social, demographic and intergenerational consequences. Educated girls become adult women with better family planning results. Educated women help to improve maternal and child health. Prenatal care increases with the level of education.

An educated woman will pass on her knowledge to her children, who in turn will do the same and perpetuate the cycle. One educated woman can produce a generation of educated men and women. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), education reduced the rate of malnutrition in the world by 40% at the end of the twentieth century. Girls' education is important in all areas and at all levels. Getting girls into school is, and will remain a sure route to sustainable development, with a new generation of men and women prepared to face the future with hope.

Children's education and quality of life are influenced by that of their mothers and fathers, but particularly that of their mothers. If we want to break this cycle of inequality, which is so persistent, we need to change the norms now. If the parents' level of education determines that of their children, then it is in education that we need to invest if we aspire to a new generation of men and women. Educating girls means betting on the future.

Biography

Rose-Tamara Jeanty was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in Carrefour, where she studied diplomacy/international relations and human resources. She is an intelligent, dynamic and open-minded person; someone who believes that with the right methods and strategies, things can change.

What can you do to support our work?

There are lots of ways you can support our work...

You might like to organise an event, <https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/fundraise>. Get in touch with us at admin@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk and we will be very happy to support you.

The National Holocaust Museum near Newark is excited to share a new book intended for primary school students. It is the real-life story of a Jewish child, Hedi Argent, who experienced the conditions that led to the Holocaust. Every book purchased provides vital funds to support the Foundations education projects.

You can buy 'When the Music Changed' here: <https://www.holocaust.org.uk/shop/the-day-the-music-changed>



Thank you to all who have donated time, energy and funding to support the work of the Foundation.

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