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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**General recommendation No. 36 on girls' and women's right  
to education**

## A. Introduction

1. Education plays a pivotal transformative and empowering role in promoting human rights values and is recognized as the pathway to gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>1</sup> It is also an essential tool for personal development as well as for developing an empowered workforce and citizenry that can contribute to civic responsibility and national development. Consequently, in endorsing the United Nations Millennium Declaration in September 2000, Member States resolved to 'ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys would have equal access to all levels of education.'<sup>2</sup>

2. Despite important progress, this goal has not been achieved. Although the education of girls and women is considered to be one of the most effective investments for sustainable and inclusive development, in 2012, 32 million girls of primary school age around the world were out-of-school, representing 53% of all out of school children as were 31.6 million adolescent girls (50.2%) of lower secondary school age.<sup>3</sup> Even where educational opportunities are available, inequalities persist, preventing women and girls from fully taking advantage of such opportunities. As a result, in September 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) reported<sup>4</sup> that 773.5 million adults (15+ years) in the world were illiterate and, of these, 61.3% were women while for youth (15 to 24 years) the figure was 125.2 million with females representing 61.3% of that population. Generally, girls and women are disproportionately discriminated against during the schooling process in access, retention, completion, treatment, learning outcomes as well as in career choices resulting in disadvantage beyond schooling and the school environment.

3. The need to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning is a priority in Goal 4 of the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>5</sup>, adopted by 189 of 192 world leaders, and intended to transform the world by 2030. Two critical education targets to be met are to: (a) ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; and, (b) eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations. The Education 2030 Framework for Action, agreed by the global education community in November 2015 to accompany the SDG agenda, therefore, acknowledges that 'gender equality is inextricably linked to the right to education for all' and that achieving this 'requires a rights-based approach. This approach ensures that both female and male learners not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education'.

4. However, certain factors disproportionately prevent girls and women from claiming and enjoying their basic human right to education. These factors include: barriers to access for disadvantaged and marginalised girls and women exacerbated by poverty and economic crises, gender stereotyping in curricula, textbooks and teaching processes, violence against girls and women in and out of school and structural and ideological restrictions to their engagement in male dominated academic and vocational fields.

5. The gap between the legal recognition of girls' and women's right to education remains critical and its effective implementation calls for further guidance and action on Article 10 of the Convention which is elaborated in this GR. The development of this GR and its recommendations are grounded in existing CEDAW jurisprudence based on concluding observations and existing GRs as well as information from submissions received, oral presentations by States parties and a wide range of stakeholders, including non-

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<sup>1</sup> UN Chronicle. The Magazine of the UN. Vol.1 No.4, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> A/B5/L2 55/2, <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF. 2015. Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative in Out-of-School Children.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Fact Sheet. September 2013, No.26.<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/fs26-2013-literacy-en.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> A/RES/70/1

governmental and civil society organisations and academics, at a preliminary half day consultation hosted by the Committee in June 2014.

## B. Justiciability of the right to education

6. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1948, education has been acknowledged as a basic human right.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, several international, regional and national instruments and court decisions<sup>7</sup> have established that the right is justiciable, and consequently enforceable in law. These instruments therefore provide that protection from discrimination in the field of education, an underlying and basic principle in human rights law.

7. Therefore, in line with GR 33 on women's access to justice, all States parties have an obligation to protect girls and women from any form of discrimination that denies them access to all levels of education and to ensure that where this occurs they have recourse to avenues to justice.

## C. Right to education: existing normative framework

8. In addition to the UDHR, the right to education is reaffirmed in a number of **international** and **regional**<sup>8</sup> legally binding instruments. States parties, therefore, have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education which must be justiciable in **national legal systems**.

9. As a human right, education enhances the enjoyment of other human rights and freedoms, yields significant development benefits, facilitates gender equality and promotes peace. It also reduces poverty; boosts economic growth and increases income; increases chances of having a healthy life; reduces child marriage and maternal deaths; and, enables individuals to combat diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

10. Although it is recognised internationally, including by UNESCO, that education can be progressively implemented according to available resources, aspects of national law that constitute the core of the right to education must be immediately implemented. These include: ensuring the right of access to public educational institutions and programmes on a non-discriminatory basis; ensuring that education conforms to the objectives set out in international standards; providing primary education for all; adopting and implementing a national educational strategy that includes provision for fundamental, secondary, and higher education; and, ensuring free choice of education without interference from the State or third parties, subject to conformity with 'minimum educational standards'.<sup>9</sup>

11. International legally binding instruments on the right to education include: the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (Article 13); the *International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination* (Article 5); the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (Article 30); the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (Article 24); and, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Article 28); the *UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport* (Article 1); the *Convention on Technical and Vocational Education*.

<sup>6</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> SERAP v. Nigeria, Judgment, ECW/CCJ/APP/12/07; ECW/CCJ/JUD/07/10 (Nov. 30, 2010)

<sup>8</sup> The Arab Charter on Human Rights, the Charter of the Organization of American States, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the first Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers.

<sup>9</sup> The Right to Education: Law and Policy Review Guidelines. UNESCO 2014.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002284/228491e.pdf>

12. Non-binding political commitments and global strategies reiterate governments' responsibilities in recognizing education as a catalyst for accelerating national development and social transformation. They call on states to take strategic action in confronting inequalities and inadequacies in the access of girls and women to education and training. They include: the 1994 Cairo *International Conference on Population and Development* (ICPD); the 1995 *Beijing Platform for Action*; the *Education for All* goals, established at Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990 and reaffirmed in 2000 in Dakar (Senegal); the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) established in 2000; and, more recently, the 2030 Agenda for *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), adopted in 2015, which includes goals and targets aimed at the elimination of all forms of discrimination against all women and girls.

#### D. Scope of the General Recommendation: the tripartite human rights framework

13. Education that empowers girls and women equips them with capacities to claim and exercise broader socio-economic, cultural and political rights, on an equal basis with boys and men in their societies. To achieve gender equality all aspects of the education system – laws and policies, educational content, pedagogies and learning environments - should be gender sensitive, responsive to the needs of girls and women and transformative for both females and males.

14. This GR is grounded in a human rights framework for education which focuses on three dimensions: The first is the **right of access to education**. The second, **rights within education** and, the third, **rights through education**. This tripartite framework largely reflects the rights elaborated in the 4As framework of accessibility, availability, affordability and adaptability<sup>10</sup>referred to in subsequent paragraphs.

15. The **right of access** to education involves participation and is reflected in the extent to which girls/boys, women/men are equally represented; and the extent to which there is adequate infrastructure at the various levels to accommodate the respective age cohorts. Indicators of attendance, retention and transition from one level to another are concerns related to the right of access to education.

16. **Rights within** education go beyond numerical equality and aims at promoting substantive gender equality in education. It therefore concerns equality of treatment and opportunity as well as the nature of gender relations between female and male students and teachers in educational settings. This dimension of equality is particularly important given that it is society that shapes and reproduces gender-based inequalities through social institutions, and educational institutions are critical players in this regard. Instead of challenging entrenched discriminatory gender norms and practices, schooling, in many societies, reinforces gender stereotypes and maintains the gender order of society expressed through the reproduction of the female/male, subordination/domination hierarchies and the reproductive/productive, private/public dichotomies.

17. **Rights through** education define ways in which schooling shapes rights and gender equality in aspects of life outside the sphere of education. The absence of this right is particularly evident when education, which should be transformational, fails to significantly advance the position of women in the social, cultural, political and economic fields thereby denying their full enjoyment of rights in these arenas. A central concern is whether certification carries the same value and social currency for women as for men. Global trends disclose that, in many instances, even where the educational attainment of males is lower than that of females, males occupy better positions in these arenas.

18. This GR aims at ensuring that regional disparities, and within-country inequalities, based on multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that prevent girls and women from enjoying rights to, within and through education are addressed and ultimately eliminated. Hence, the GR expands article 10 of the CEDAW Convention and links it with all other

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<sup>10</sup> See E/CN.4/1999/49.

articles and relevant existing GRs to establish the correlation between the right to education and the enjoyment of other rights enshrined in the convention.

19. The target users of this GR include: all state officials tasked with the formulation and implementation of legal and policy decisions pertaining to public and private education at all levels: academia and researchers; student, teacher and parent associations; parliamentarians, non-governmental organisations engaged in girls' and women's education; traditional and faith-based organisations; media; and, corporate organisations and trade unions.

## **E. Addressing gender based discrimination in education**

20. The CEDAW Convention is the International Bill of Rights for Women and serves as binding international law for the 189 States that have, as at June 2017, ratified it. **Article 10** addresses women's and girls' legal right to education and calls on States parties to *'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure them equal rights with men in the field of education'*. It thereby requires States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in education throughout the life cycle and at all levels of education. To meet the criterion of *non-discrimination* education must be accessible, in both law and practice, to all girls and women, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, without discrimination on any prohibited ground.

21. **Article 1** of the CEDAW Convention defines discrimination as *'any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field'*. States parties, therefore, are not only required to ensure that education is *recognised* as a human right but also that appropriate conditions are created for this right to be fully and freely *enjoyed* and *exercised* by girls and women.

22. In specifying situations and requirements by which States parties must ensure the realisation and enjoyment of the right for men and women on an equal basis, Article 2 of the Convention reaffirms both negative and positive obligations. Its central core is the prohibition of discrimination. This implies that States parties must refrain from interfering, directly or indirectly, with girls' and women's full enjoyment of their right to education - the obligation to respect. Similarly, States parties must take positive steps to fulfil - by ensuring rights to, within and through education for the full development of girls' and women's potential on an equal basis with men.

23. The numerical gains that girls and women have made in the field of education, in some regions of the world, conceal the continuing discrimination they face in spite of the existence of formal legal and policy frameworks intended to promote *de facto* equality. The protections contained in formal equality instruments are effective only if enforced in keeping with provisions set out in articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

24. **The Committee recommends that States parties institute the following measures to respect, protect, and fulfil girls' and women's rights to, within and through education:**

a) **enhance compliance with article 10 of the Convention and raise awareness in society of the importance of education as a fundamental human right and the basis for the empowerment of women;**

b) **integrate age appropriate education on women's human rights and the CEDAW Convention in school curricula at all levels;**

c) **undertake constitutional amendments and/or other appropriate legislative action to ensure the protection and enforcement of girls' and women's rights, to, within and through education;**

d) **enact legislation that makes provision for the right to education, throughout the life cycle for all girls and women, including all disadvantaged groups of women and girls;**

- e) eradicate and/or reform policies, institutional, administrative or regulatory directives and practices that directly or indirectly discriminate against girls or women within the education sector;
- f) enact legislation that sets the minimum age for marriage of girls at 18, and, in compliance with international standards, align the end of compulsory education with the minimum age for employment;
- g) review and/or abolish laws and policies that allow expulsion of pregnant girls, other categories of trainees and teachers and ensure there are no restrictions on their return following childbirth;
- h) recognise rights in education as legally enforceable for which, upon violation, girls and women have equal and effective access to justice, and the right to remedies including reparation;
- i) monitor the implementation of national, regional and international provisions governing girls' and women's right to education ensuring the right to remedy where there are violations;
- j) work with the international community and civil society toward the enhancement and development of the right of girls and women to education.

## **F. Addressing gender stereotyping**

25. Discrimination faced by girls and women in education is both ideological and structural. The ideological dimension is addressed in **articles 5 and 10 (c)** of the Convention which call on States to modify accepted '*social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women which are based on ...stereotyped roles for women and men*'. This is of paramount significance in ensuring that women and girls can enjoy rights to, within and through education. This is essential as these discriminatory practices are not only exercised at the individual level but are also codified in law, policy and programmes and are therefore perpetuated and enforced by the State

26. **Article 5(a)**, addresses the structural dimension of discrimination stating that it is rooted in '*prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women*'. Here, the Convention requires States parties to adopt measures '*towards a real transformation of opportunities, institutions and systems so that they are no longer grounded in historically determined male paradigms of power and life patterns*'. The educational system is an example of an area for transformation, which once achieved, can accelerate positive change in other areas.

27. **In keeping with articles 5 and 10 (c) of the Convention, the Committee recommends that States parties strengthen efforts and take proactive measures to eliminate gender stereotyping in education that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against girls and women by:**

- a) **challenging and changing patriarchal ideologies and structures that limit girls and women from fully exercising their human right and freedom to enjoy their rights to, within and through education;**
- b) **developing and implementing policies and programmes, including awareness-raising and educational campaigns about the Convention, gender relations and gender equality, at all levels of schooling and society at large, directed at 'modifying social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women with a view of achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary practices' in line with article 5 (a) of the Convention;**
- c) **encouraging the media to project positive and non-sexualized images of women, including ethnic and minority girls and women, elderly women and girls and women with disabilities as well as promote the value of gender equality for society as a whole;**

d) **revising and developing non-stereotypical educational curricula, textbooks and teaching materials to eliminate traditional gender stereotypes that reproduce and reinforce gender-based discrimination against girls and women and to promote more balanced, accurate, healthy, and positive projections of female images and voices;**

e) **instituting mandatory training of teaching staff at all levels of education on gender issues and gender sensitivity and the impact of their gendered behaviours on teaching and learning processes.**

## **G. The right of access to education**

28. The right of girls' and women's access to quality education is based on the availability of adequate infrastructure to meet their needs. Without such availability the right of access is compromised. Where girls and women lack access to quality education they ultimately face major difficulties including lack of personal autonomy and choices including: control over their health and sexual and reproductive decisions; lower quality healthcare for themselves and their children; intergenerational poverty; and, lack of power-sharing and participation on an equal basis with boys and men in both the private and public domains. Ensuring this right warrants attention to physical, technological and economic access as well as access for disadvantaged groups and those in precarious situations.

### *Physical Access: Availability of adequate infrastructure*

29. *Availability* refers to providing functioning educational institutions and programmes in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of girls and women, within the jurisdiction of the State party, which are not differentially resourced by location (**article 14**) or any other factor. Further, *access* to educational institutions must be within girls and women's safe reach, either by ensuring that they are accessible at some reasonably convenient geographic location or via modern technology. Proximity to schools, particularly in rural areas, is crucial given the prevalence of gender-based violence against girls and women in public spaces and the risk that females face travelling to and from school. School distance can constitute an important barrier to school attendance, especially in rural areas, where over 80 per cent of all out-of-school children live.

30. Further, essential considerations in providing adequate infrastructure in educational institutions relate to barriers that the onset of menarche poses to girls' successful completion of school. Lack of an enabling school environment including: inadequate gender segregated water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, untrained or unsupportive staff, lack of appropriate sanitary protection materials and lack of information on puberty and menstrual issues, contribute to social exclusion, reduced participation in and focus on learning, and decreased school attendance.

31. **The Committee recommends that States parties take the following measures to ensure availability of physical facilities for the education of girls and women:**

a) **provide adequate budgetary, human and administrative resources to ensure that adequate provision is made at the primary and secondary levels to accommodate all girls in the respective population age cohorts;**

b) **address imbalances in budgetary allocations for disadvantaged and marginalised groups of girls and women based on socioeconomic status, location, ethnicity, gender identity and religious persuasion;**

c) **institute temporary special measures in keeping with Article 4 to increase the number of qualified teachers, particularly female where the teaching force is predominantly male, including through provision of appropriate and continuous training;**

d) **monitor the implementation of girls' and women's right to education by regularly collecting data disaggregated by sex, location, age, school type and ethnic group on access indicators at all levels of education – number of females/males enrolled**

as a proportion of the school-age population relevant to the respective levels of education; survival, drop-out, attendance, and repetition rates; average years of schooling for females/males; transition between levels [early childhood, primary, primary-secondary, secondary/tertiary/vocational]; number of male/female teachers, i.e., parity in teaching supply; and, female/male literacy rates at different age levels and using the information to inform decision-making, policy formulation and periodic reports to the Committee on barriers to girls' and women's access to education;

e) adopt strategies to encourage and monitor school enrolment, attendance, retention and reintegration after drop-out based on disaggregated data;

f) improve sanitation facilities by providing sex-segregated toilets and washrooms in all schools as well as access to safe drinking water.

32. The Committee recommends that States parties take the following measures to ensure accessibility to education for all girls and women:

a) ensure that girls and women living in rural and remote areas have access to education in line with articles 14 d) and 4 of the Convention and adopt temporary special measures, when appropriate, to support their right to education;

b) ensure that schools are physically accessible and within safe reach between home and school, particularly in rural and remote areas;

c) provide opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing any gaps in education between men and women [article 10 e)];

d) institute policy initiatives including social protection programmes, school feeding initiatives and provision of sanitary protection material to increase school attendance particularly in rural and remote areas;

e) provide hostels/transportation for girls where distance between home and school inhibits access to education and ensure that girls in these facilities are protected from sexual and other forms of abuse;

f) train teachers to provide a supportive environment and culture which allows pubescent girls to participate confidently in learning without fear, shame or risk.

*Technological accessibility*

33. Where financing is limited, an alternative to providing physical access to education and facilities is through the use of information and communication technologies in distance and open learning settings. These approaches provide distinct benefits for girls and women with limited access to conventional forms of education and training, including those who are excluded because of: distance from school in rural areas; domestic work and parental responsibilities, particularly in cases of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy; and, exclusion based on other social and cultural barriers. Women who want to pursue advanced education while combining work and domestic responsibilities also benefit from these possibilities.

34. Other distinct benefits that can be derived from the use of open learning technologies are: the development of new patterns of teaching and learning and the fostering of a new learning culture; increased flexibility for adult learners; opportunities for employers to provide cost effective professional development on the job; opportunities for governments to increase cost-effectiveness and capacity for education and training.

35. The Committee recommends that where opportunities for girls' and women's access to education through distance and open learning do not exist States parties take the following measures:

a) examine the feasibility of introducing access, at the upper secondary and tertiary levels, by setting up facilities to provide certification through the pursuit of open learning opportunities;



**b) upgrade teachers' knowledge and competence in the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and provide training in skills required to operate in an open learning environment;**

**c) ensure that girls and women belonging to disadvantaged groups, those from rural communities and those with low levels of literacy are not excluded from these opportunities because they do not have access to the tools and the skills required for meaningful participation.**

*Economic accessibility*

36. Education has to be affordable to all, without discrimination based on sex or any other prohibited ground, and should be free and compulsory from pre-school up to the secondary system and progressively up to the tertiary level. Despite the existence of legislation providing for free education up to a stipulated age or grade level, in many States parties, auxiliary fees are imposed on students attending public schools to augment government subventions. Additionally, parents are faced with meeting the hidden cost of uniforms, transportation, textbooks and other school materials, lunch and various levies and user fees with students from the poorest quintile being most adversely affected and often stigmatised.

37. The monetization of access, through user fees, forces poor parents to choose which of their children to send to school and often show a preference for educating boys over girls. They decide on the basis of what they believe will be the maximum economic benefit to the family, over the long term, on their educational investment. Because of entrenched gender inequality, labour markets generally favour men. Parents, therefore, conclude that it is better to educate boys who are able, after schooling, to access better employment opportunities. Parents' choices are also influenced by stereotypes that place girls in the domestic sphere.

38. In the context of economic crises, many States parties make cuts to social services and education is outsourced to private entities as well as provided by non-state organisations such as religious or community groups and/or NGOs. It has been established that privatization has specific negative consequences for girls and women and particularly girls from poorer families, excluding them from education.

**39. The Committee recommends that States parties take all measures to ensure that user fees and hidden costs do not negatively impact girls' and women's access to education by instituting the following measures:**

**a) provision of universal, free and compulsory education from pre-school up to the secondary level regardless of socio-economic status for citizens of the state as well as for girls and women with migrant and refugee status;**

**b) affordable education at the tertiary level, by reducing user fees and indirect and opportunity costs;**

**c) introduction of safety nets, and other measures to ensure that girls and women from lower socio-economic strata are not denied access to any level of education based on their inability to pay user fees and/or meet hidden costs;**

**d) respect for the same standards regarding non-discrimination of girls and women as in public institutions as a condition for the right of private actors to run academic institutions;**

**e) campaigns targeting parents and the wider society to overcome male preference for education and recognise the value of educating girls.**

*Disadvantaged groups of girls and women*

40. Many girls and women are excluded from education and are marginalised because of being simultaneously exposed to the intersection of different forms of discrimination as well as issues including lack of relevance of the curriculum and communication in non-native languages, exposure to violence and stigma; and poverty. Such disadvantaged or vulnerable groups include:

**41. Ethnic minority and indigenous girls and women.** The majority of girls not in primary school belong to ethnic minorities and other excluded groups. The main factors

impacting the access of these groups to education include poverty, discrimination and lack of cultural relevance, and instruction often delivered in the majority language resulting in lower educational achievement, higher drop-out rates, loss of heritage languages and lower self-esteem.

42. **Refugee, asylum seekers, stateless, undocumented, internally displaced and migrant girls and women.** When forcibly uprooted, girls and women in these situations end up in camps with no schools or makeshift schools with limited capacity, without curricula or instruction in relevant languages. Displacement causes particular barriers to learning: human resources may be lost and physical infrastructure destroyed; and, during flight children may lose state-mandated documentation thereby preventing them from enrolling in new schools. Girls can be particularly affected during displacement because the increased insecurity causes some parents to keep girls home.

43. **Girls and women with disabilities.** Millions of girls and women with disabilities are deprived of the right to education as a result of multiple discrimination based on gender and disability. According to UNESCO, a third of out-of-school children worldwide are children with disabilities.<sup>11</sup>

44. Although many governments officially promote inclusive education, in practice, children with disabilities, especially girls, are either excluded or segregated in special schools. Low attendance rates of children with disabilities, particularly girls, have similar causes globally: lack of physical accessibility, refusal of teachers or school principals to enrol such children, lack of accommodation of their needs in school curricula and teaching materials, and more generally, stigma and lack of awareness among parents and communities that yield negative attitudes about the learning capacities of women and girls with disabilities. Additionally, the number of teachers trained to address students with special needs, is often inadequate.

45. **Lesbian, bisexual transgender and Intersex (LBTI) students.** Bullying, harassment and threats against these students by fellow students and teachers constitute barriers to the right to education for LBTI girls and women. Schools perpetuate and reinforce social prejudices often due to poor implementation of policies by school governance bodies as well as by irregular enforcement of non-discrimination policies by teachers, principals, and other school authorities. Limited education and cultural taboos are among factors that prevent LBTI students from achieving social mobility and increases their vulnerability to violence.

46. **The Committee recommends that States parties take all appropriate measures to ensure the right of all categories of disadvantaged and marginalised groups to education by eliminating stereotyping and discrimination, removing barriers to access, and implementing the following measures:**

a) **address stereotyping particularly of minority and indigenous girls and women, that put them at risk in accessing education, exposes them to violence in the school and the community and on their way to and from schools especially in remote areas;**

b) **address the low socio-economic status and living conditions, particularly of minority and indigenous girls and women that are barriers to accessing education, particularly in light of male preference for schooling in situations of scarce financial resources;**

c) **ensure, when necessary, in collaboration with donors and humanitarian agencies, that adequate provision is made for the education and safety of all disadvantaged groups of girls and women;**

d) **ensure that the application of a mandatory dress code and banning of specific clothing does not hamper access to inclusive education, particularly for those of migrant background;**

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<sup>11</sup> UNESCO. [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education/single-view/news/equal\\_right\\_equal\\_opportunity\\_inclusive\\_education\\_for\\_a/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education/single-view/news/equal_right_equal_opportunity_inclusive_education_for_a/)

e) **eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and women with disabilities by identifying and removing legal, physical, social, financial, attitudinal communication and language, barriers within educational institutions and the community;**

f) **take necessary measures to ensure non-discrimination against girls and women with disabilities at all levels of education by providing inclusive education in learning environments offering reasonable accommodation;**

g) **ensure physical accessibility to educational institutions and prevent principals from blocking the enrolment of students with disabilities, particularly girls, and ensure that curricula, teaching materials and pedagogical strategies are tailored to the unique needs of individuals affected by diverse forms of disability;**

h) **in keeping with Article 4 on temporary special measures, institute incentives to attract and train special education teachers for all levels of education;**

i) **address discrimination against LGBTI girls and women by ensuring policies are in place to address the obstacles that impede their access to education.**

*Access to education during conflict situations and natural disaster*

47. Another factor constraining girls' and women's access to education is the total breakdown of infrastructure for State public service provision due to armed conflict, resulting in the lack of delivery of essential services to the population. In conflict-affected areas, schools are closed owing to insecurity, occupied by State and non-State armed groups or destroyed, all of which impede girls' access to school. CEDAW GR 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations notes (para. 48) that other factors preventing girls' access to education include targeted attacks and threats to them and their teachers by non-State actors, as well as the additional care-giving and household responsibilities which they are obliged to undertake.

48. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) between 2005 and 2012, education institutions were used in conflicts in at least 24 countries across four continents. In addition to the risk of death or severe injury from attacks, students attending classes in schools under occupation by troops and armed forces maybe exposed to physical or sexual abuse, with girls at greater risk than boys. The presence of armed men often discourages families from sending girls to school for fear they will become victims of sexual violence or be subject to sexual harassment. They, therefore, often marry off their daughters at an early age believing that it may afford them protection. Overall, attacks on education and military use of schools and universities have a disproportionate or discriminatory impact upon girls and women.

49. Women and children are the most vulnerable age group during any natural disaster. The destruction or use of schools as community shelters for affected families have serious consequences for access to education causing loss of time for classroom instruction and high drop-out rates.

50. **The Committee recommends that in situations of conflict and natural disasters States parties implement the following measures to minimize their impact on girls' and women's education and to protect their right to education and safety:**

a) **enact legislation, revise military practice and policy and introduce training to prohibit national armed forces and armed groups from using or occupying schools, school grounds or other education facilities and institutions in a manner that violates international humanitarian law and/or the right to education under international human rights law;**

b) **institute measures to protect female students and teachers from physical and sexual abuse by state and non-state actors occupying education institutions;**

c) **assess and address the impact of armed conflict on girls' and women's education;**

**d) recalling obligations under SCR1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, demonstrate a proactive commitment to take necessary measures to prevent targeted attacks on educational institutions and to protect women and girls;**

**e) ensure the meaningful participation of women in monitoring attacks and in the development of preventive, protective and peace building measures and ensure the participation of women, including those from disadvantaged groups, in their development;**

**f) devise effective, coordinated, reconstructive and rapid responses, including both legal and non-legal accountability measures to hold perpetrators accountable;**

**g) systematically investigate and prosecute, in accordance with international standards, those individuals responsible for ordering, taking part in, or bearing command responsibility for the range of violations of international human rights, humanitarian, and criminal law that constitute attacks on education;**

**h) ensure that when schools are destroyed or used as shelters during natural disasters, girls'/women's access to schooling is not unduly curtailed;**

**i) give priority to the rehabilitation of schools impacted by natural disasters especially those serving disadvantaged girls and women;**

**j) Ensure that all new school buildings adhere to prescribed building codes and incorporate disaster resilience, and carry out regular audits on existing schools.**

#### *Cultural barriers*

51. Even where there is adequate provision and accessibility is not a constraining factor, cultural norms and practices, based on the persistence of patriarchal systems and traditional roles associated with girls and women, can become powerful barriers to girls' and women's enjoyment of their right to education.

52. When girls are not in school, they are more likely to be forced to marry. This discriminatory and harmful practice of child and/or forced marriage associated with religious or cultural practices in some societies negatively impacts the right to education. Also, when girls are unable to finish their education because of child and/or forced marriage and pregnancy, they face practical barriers including forced exclusion from school, social norms confining girls to the home, or stigma. Child marriage also contributes to an increased risk of domestic violence, reproductive health risks and limitations to the right to freedom of movement. By failing to curb child marriages, governments fail in their obligation to ensure access to education for girls on an equal basis with boys.

53. In some regions of the world the common cultural practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) hinders and /or ends girls' education. Complications following the procedure can cause girls to be less focused in school or absent resulting in poor performance and ultimately premature termination. In some countries, the high cost associated with the procedure also impacts parents' capacity to subsequently meet school expenses resulting in school drop-out. Further, forced marriage after the procedure which is an initiation into maturity, can also lead to drop-out due to pregnancy or a focus on responsibilities in the home.

54. Poverty, combined with cultural practices, push children into both paid and unpaid work. A 2015 ILO Report on child labour and education indicates that 168 million children aged 5-17 are trapped in child labour: girls are over-represented in the care economy involving work in their own or others' households and also bear the double burden of work inside and outside the home often with little or no time left for schooling. For those who manage to combine school and work, performance often suffers leading to drop-out. In many regions, the practice of child labour is also culturally determined with children incorporated in family-related work in particular seasons or on certain days of the week.

55. The Committee recommends that States parties take the following measures to mitigate the impact of cultural and religious practices on girls' and women's access to education:

- a) protect girls and women from being deprived of their right to education based on patriarchal, religious or cultural norms and practices, in keeping with the Joint CEDAW GR 31/CRC GC 18 on harmful practices;
- b) facilitate dialogues with religious and traditional leaders on the value of educating girls and the importance of addressing practices and customs that act as barriers to their participation at all levels of education;
- c) ensure that the minimum age for marriage, with or without parental consent, is set at 18 for girls in keeping with Joint CEDAW GR 31/CRC GC 18;
- d) integrate FGM into formal and non-formal education, so that the topic is openly discussed without stigma to enable girls and women to receive accurate information on the detrimental and harmful effects of this practice in keeping GR 14 on Female Circumcision;
- e) train teachers, facilitators and youth workers to equip them to educate girls about FGM and support those at risk of undergoing the procedure or have already undergone the procedure;
- f) encourage religious and community leaders to oppose the practice of FGM as well as inform and educate their communities on the dangers of FGM;
- g) formulate re-entry and inclusive education policies enabling pregnant girls, young mothers and married girls under 18 years of age to remain in or return to school without delay and ensure that such policies are disseminated to all educational establishments and administrators, as well as among parents and communities;
- h) address practices that may hinder accessibility to education such as involving girls in unpaid labour in the home;
- i) ensure that all children, particularly girls, under the minimum age for employment are in full-time education, and including where appropriate and consistent with relevant international labour standards, in vocational or technical education.

## H. Rights within education

56. Girls' and women's rights within education relate to the A of acceptability.<sup>12</sup> Acceptability addresses issues of form (treatment) and substance (quality) of education which apply to the school setting as well as educational content and method. These rights require governmental provision of funds, necessary infrastructure, support and supplies for students and teachers. It also requires equal access of girls to the same quality education as boys in terms of teacher quality, quality of amenities and an environment marked by girls and women having opportunities to pursue goals towards self-determination and self-actualisation. Rights within education, therefore, must encompass respect and promotion of girls' and women's human rights throughout the education cycle.

57. The lack of respect and dignity that girls and women experience in educational institutions depends on the gender regime of schools which reflects the wider social order. Such an environment is often marked by entrenched patriarchal ideologies, practices and structures that shape the daily experience of teachers and students. Girls are thereby exposed to this environment, which can be physically, emotionally and sexually abusive for as many as ten years, resulting in the denial of their rights **within** the education arena. Various issues need to be addressed to ensure that girls and women, including female staff, can enjoy equal treatment and opportunity.

<sup>12</sup> See para.14 supra.

*Stratification of schools and knowledge (article 10 a) and b)*

58. Generally, education systems are highly differentiated in ways by which students are sorted, particularly at the point of transition from the primary and secondary level, into schools and/or streams that stress either vocational or academic training, and, in some systems, once placed, movement between the two is challenging. Socio-economic status strongly influences student placement into these different types of schools. Students of high economic status are more likely to attend academically-oriented schools offering high status knowledge that provides a direct pathway to tertiary level education. Highly differentiated educational systems, therefore, maintain socio-economic inequalities quite early in life and well before students complete their education and enter the labour force.

59. In this differentiated education system there are also marked differences in the material resources allocated to schools to support delivery of the curriculum. Schools in lower socio-economic communities are generally more poorly endowed both in terms of material resources and teacher quality vis-à-vis those in higher socio-economic communities, with the latter better positioned to benefit from parent subsidies to offset insufficient public funding.

60. Between and within these school types, gender is an additional basis on which students are differentiated based on perceptions of appropriate subject options for each sex. In academic schools, girls are often clustered in the humanities and under-represented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM subjects) while in vocational schools females predominate in areas such as food and nutrition, cosmetology and clerical studies. The stratification of students and knowledge ultimately lead to girls being propelled into what is socially regarded as low status occupations. This stratification has the potential for further reinforcement in single sex schools where often the only subjects deemed as suitable for the particular sex are offered. Consequently, a girls' school would not offer woodwork and building and construction. The facilitation of girls' and women's right to the same quality education as that offered to boys and men entails providing for the full range of academic and vocational subjects in schools without at the same time reinforcing sex segregation of the curriculum.

61. A critical technical and vocational area in which girls and women are under-represented is in the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Sixty per cent of people around the world are denied the right to access the transformative power of the Worldwide Web with most of them being girls and women. In order to overcome the digital divide between men and women in the use of new technologies and to provide women with equal access to information and employment opportunities in related industries, schools need to address barriers that result in their exclusion.

62. The Convention (**article 10 g**) also calls on States parties to ensure that girls and women have the same opportunities to actively participate in sports and physical education. However, based on prevailing stereotypes, positive outcomes for women's empowerment and gender equality in this sphere are constrained by discrimination in all areas of sports and physical activity. Sex segregation persists and women's participation in decision making is limited at both national and international levels. Further the value placed on women's sport is often lower resulting in inadequate allocation of resources to support women's participation as well as lower remuneration. Media representations of women in sports also influence prevailing stereotypes. Violence against women, exploitation and harassment in sports also reflect traditional male domination in the sporting arena.

**63. The Committee recommends that States parties take the following actions to ensure that education systems allow for equal opportunities for both sexes and for free choice of courses of study and career choices:**

**a) reform and standardise, as necessary, the education system to ensure an equitable distribution of all educational resources in all schools regardless of location and clientele served;**

**b) eliminate ideological and structural barriers in coeducational schools, particularly at the secondary level, for example, cross time-tabling of sex-linked subjects and teacher attitudes that prevent girls from making free choices in terms of subject choice and course options;**

- c) equip teacher trainees and teachers to provide career counselling for students and parents to address and modify entrenched perceptions of sex-appropriate subjects and/or careers;
- d) institute measures to increase female participation in STEM programmes, at all levels of education, by providing special incentives such as scholarships and adopting temporary special measures, in keeping with article 4 and GR 25;
- e) ensure that in single sex schools the full range of subjects, particularly in the technical-vocational areas, are offered so that girls have the opportunity to participate in male dominated areas and vice versa to allow for wider career options;
- f) develop national ICT plans or strategies with concrete targets for achieving gender equity in ICT access in schools and tertiary level institutions backed by specific programmes that have an adequate allocated budget and a plan to collect timely gender-disaggregated data to monitor the targets;
- g) institute clear legislative and policy measures to ensure that when girls/women participate in male dominated disciplines and activities in educational institutions they are protected from sexual harassment and violence;
- h) provide equal opportunities in educational institutions for girls/women to freely choose areas of physical activity and sport in which they wish to engage and to profit from the health and psychological benefits that accrue from such engagement;
- i) address traditional stereotypes and provide facilities that allow for girls'/women's participation in male dominated physical activities and sports in both coeducational and female single sex educational institutions;
- j) institute positive actions, preferential treatment or quota systems, in the areas of sports, culture and recreation, in keeping with GR 25 on temporary special measures, and, where necessary, direct such measures at girls and women subjected to multiple discrimination, including rural women in accordance with GR 34.

*Gender inequality, abuse and sexual violence in schools*

64. Gender inequality in education includes differences in treatment where one sex is favoured or given preferential access to rewards by the school system as with attention, grades, opportunities, praise and more lenient punishment for misbehaviour. Gender inequality is also manifested in unequal access to non-material status and power in teacher-student interactions. In educational settings the way girls experience this is influenced by several attributes including their sex, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity or belonging to other minorities, appearance and language patterns.

65. Another area in which girls and women are adversely affected is the sexual politics associated with their participation in education. Sexual politics in schools refers to gender relations marked by unwarranted sexual overtones. A common example is the sexual harassment of girls in schools and/or on the way to and from school. They may be confronted with sexual harassment and abuse perpetrated by male students, teachers and community members as well as biased treatment in school. Sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence in schools significantly contribute to low self-esteem, poor educational achievement and adverse long-term health and well-being status. As a result of violence, girls are kept out of school, drop out of school or do not fully participate in school. Violence often begins with verbal insults and threatening gestures, which when not challenged by those in authority are followed by violent acts.

66. Disadvantaged groups of girls face increased risk of violence at school because of the multiple forms of discrimination that they face. In particular, HIV status, caste, ethnicity race, and religion increase the risk of abuse and influence the nature of violence experienced. Girls with disabilities face both gender and disability discrimination while LGBTI girls experience both sexism and homophobia.

67. In spite of the fact that sexual harassment and abuse of girls, are so widespread in educational institutions and constitute a key barrier to their right *to* and *within* education, this has not been systematically factored into educational policy and programmes. In many

instances there is no strict accountability mechanism and, in schools, the matter is ignored, treated as victim blaming and with impunity.

68. Sexual abuse of girls may result in unwanted pregnancies particularly during adolescence and there is, therefore, a need to alert them to the problem and its consequences. An important response to the magnitude of this problem in the home, school and community, therefore, is the need to institute, in keeping with **article 10 h) and 12 of the Convention, GR 24 on Women and Health, and GR 35 on gender-based violence against women**, mandatory age-appropriate curricula at all levels of education, on comprehensive sexuality education including sexual and reproductive health and rights, responsible sexual behaviour, prevention of early pregnancies and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Teachers should be specifically trained for age-appropriate delivery at the various levels. In situations where, as at the secondary level the teaching staff is predominantly male, efforts should be made to recruit, train and hire female teachers who can serve as role models and make classrooms safer and more enabling places for girls and young women.

69. **The Committee recommends that States parties undertake the following measures to curtail violence against girls and women associated with educational institutions and schooling thereby protecting their right to be treated with respect and dignity:**

a) **enact and enforce appropriate laws, policies and procedures to prohibit and tackle violence against girls and women in and around educational institutions, including verbal and emotional abuse, stalking, sexual harassment and sexual violence, physical violence, and exploitation;**

b) **recruit, train and hire more female teachers in education institutions where the school faculty is predominantly male;**

c) **ensure that girls and women, affected by violence in schools, have effective access to justice and remedy;**

d) **respond to cases of violence against girls and women in educational institutions through confidential and independent reporting mechanisms, effective investigations, criminal prosecutions when appropriate, adequate punishment of perpetrators, and provide services for victims and survivors;**

e) **ensure that all incidents of violence against girls and women in educational institutions are reported and recorded, check the criminal records of school personnel prior to their employment and develop and enforce codes of conduct for all school staff and students;**

f) **adopt national plans of action to address school-related violence against girls including guidelines for schools, compulsory training for teachers and students in early intervention strategies to address sexual harassment and violence against them;**

g) **designate a government mechanism for preventing and investigating incidents of violence in educational institutions and provide adequate public funding to address the problem;**

h) **provide support services for girls who experience violence, including counselling, medical treatment, HIV/AIDS information and medication;**

i) **develop and introduce age appropriate, evidence based, scientifically accurate mandatory curricula at all levels of education covering comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, responsible sexual behaviour, prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.**

#### *Cyber-bullying*

70. Another form of abuse that girls experience is cyber-bullying carried out through the use of technology and various social media to intimidate, threaten, or harass them. While both boys and girls are involved in cyber-bullying, research shows that girls are almost twice as likely as boys to be both victims and perpetrators. Adolescent girls are often exposed to online victimisation which takes many forms including: name calling,



spreading of rumours, threats, disclosure of confidential information, images/videos, revenge porn, sexual harassment and sexual advances often from strangers.

71. Cyber-bullying has a wide variety of effects on adolescent girls including: emotional effects which can be mild or extreme; feelings of being unsafe and frightened; and, in some instances induced not only suicidal thoughts but actual suicides.

**72. The Committee recommends that although cyber-bullying is not always rooted in the school, States parties undertake the following measures in schools to protect girls:**

- a) alert parents to the spread of this phenomenon and the impacts that it can have on girls;**
- b) develop comprehensive programmes that inform teachers, students and parents on the forms that cyber-bullying can take and its potential impacts as well as provide counselling and support for student victims of cyber-bullying;**
- c) put in place policies that ensure that technologies available in schools are not used for the purpose of cyber-bullying and monitor their implementation;**
- d) establish multiple and readily accessible channels that students can use to report such incidents by establishing peer and teacher counselling services, hotspots in schools and hotlines for anonymous reporting;**
- e) inform girls of the consequences of engaging in such behaviour to their health and well-being as well as sanctions that may be applied;**
- f) enact legislation that defines and penalises ICT-based and online harassment of women and girls in all its forms.**

*Equitable female participation in management structures*

73. The gender regime evident in educational institutions negatively impacts female staff, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels of education systems. This is most evident in terms of their limited upward mobility in the profession and their transition to decision-making positions. In spite of teaching being a feminized profession, universally there is a disproportionately low representation of females in senior and top management positions at all levels of education.

74. Several factors account for the under-representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels of education. These include: limited access to education, especially opportunities for higher education for those teaching at the lower levels; discriminatory appointment and promotion practices; family attitudes; career interruptions; cultural stereotyping; alienation from the male culture of networking and patronage and continued resistance to including women in management positions.<sup>13</sup>

**75. The Committee recommends that States parties institute the following measures to close the gender gap in leadership positions at all levels of education to ensure that the discrimination women face in this regard is eliminated:**

- a) increase women's professional mobility in institutions of higher learning by providing grants and/or scholarships to enable them to acquire advanced postgraduate degrees and introduce incentives/schemes to retain them;**
- b) strengthen efforts to increase the number of females in leadership positions at all levels of education especially university professors in all fields, through the use of measures, including temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, CEDAW and the GR 25;**
- c) review appointment and promotion procedures and remove any discriminatory provisions which act as barriers to women's equal participation in leadership positions in educational institutions and address discriminatory practices in appointments and promotions;**

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO <http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/principal/women.html>

d) address prevailing organisational culture which is unfavourable to women's upward mobility in the teaching profession;

e) establish targets, within a given timeline, to ensure parity in Higher Education positions at senior positions, professorships and as Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors in Universities;

f) establish policies and establish quotas for women's equal representation on higher education governing bodies such as senates, councils and on research bodies.

## I. Rights through education

76. Since 1985, several UN international conferences have focused on human rights, women, social issues and sustainable development and identified numerous actions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Many of these conferences emphasized education as the means for achieving these goals and for improving women's position in society. Access to education is expected to equip individuals to be adaptable to the needs of changing societies and therefore should have a multiplier effect in enabling women to claim rights in all spheres, beyond the school. However, women's rights *through* education are far from being realized.

77. In spite of regional disparities, global data indicate that women are more highly certified and therefore represent the better source of human capital. However, men with lower levels of certification are favoured for certain jobs and positions over women with higher levels of certification, contributing to the universal phenomenon of horizontal and vertical sex-segregation of labour markets. Certification, therefore, does not carry the same social currency for men and women. Further, even where both sexes have equal levels of education men are often also privileged.<sup>14</sup>

78. These systemic patterns become entrenched, particularly in the labour market, which operates on the basis of the male breadwinner ideology resulting in men occupying dominant position in waged work. Consequently, in most societies, women experience lower levels of employment, higher levels of unemployment and higher levels of poverty; are more highly represented as part-time workers; on average earn less than men; are disproportionately represented in vulnerable areas of work and therefore are less exposed to opportunities for experiencing decent work conditions. Furthermore, they are under-represented in decision-making positions at the micro and macro levels of social and political institutions and lack real personal autonomy. Although increased access to education has improved the condition of women's lives and that of their children, the potential of education, as presently exists, to shift the overall balance of power in the economic, political and social spheres and to make a strategic difference in terms of women's empowerment, has not been achieved due to cultural beliefs and practices that reproduce entrenched gendered ideologies, structures and systems.

79. The major explanation for this consistent pattern is linked to gender socialization processes which reproduce and maintain a sexual-division-of-labour, that defines what is feminine and masculine, in turn linked to a public/private dichotomy. In this system, males dominate the public sphere and females the private sphere. The result is that rather than being transformative, institutionalised schooling becomes an instrument of the state for reproducing the gender order and maintaining the male/female, dominant/subordinate and public/private hierarchies.<sup>15</sup>

80. This trend continues into women's participation in political processes and decision-making, where, because women remain poorly represented, they cannot effectively influence policy that affects them. In 2017 the global average of women's representation in elected or nominated government positions was approximately 1:4 female/male representation. In the Lower Houses women represent 23.4% and in the Upper Houses 22.9%. The same trends are evident in female participation on public and private sectors Boards as members or as Chairs.

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<sup>14</sup> UNCSW 2011. *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> UNCSW. 2011. *ibid.*

Women, therefore, continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere and boardrooms as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes.

81. **The Committee recommends that States parties pursue the following measures to increase women's equal participation in social, economic and political processes as well as in decision making positions in all sectors:**

a) **train teachers to adopt constructivist teaching strategies that equip girls/women with critical thinking skills and a sense of positive self-worth and confidence to participate equally with male counterparts in high level and decision-making positions in the social, economic and political spheres;**

b) **adapt the options and the content of girl's/women's education, particularly at the higher levels thereby increasing their participation in scientific, technical and managerial qualifications to ensure access to high-level jobs and decision-making positions, particularly in male dominated professions and jobs;**

c) **strengthen civic and citizenship education in schools as well as gender responsive continuing adult literacy programmes aimed at enhancing women's roles and participation in the family and the wider society;**

d) **recognise the importance of empowering all women through education and training in government, public policy, economics, information technology and science to ensure that they develop the knowledge and skills needed to make full contributions in all spheres of public life;**

e) **protect the right of women to decent work by challenging entrenched horizontal segregation of labour markets where men are privileged and predominately positioned in high status occupational sectors based on patronage rather than merit;**

f) **improve and broaden women's access to information and communications technologies, including e-government tools, in order to enable political participation and to promote engagement in broader democratic processes, while also improving the responsiveness of these technologies to women's needs, including those of marginalized women;**

g) **develop appropriate tools, skills and training programmes, in consultation with women, to equip and empower them to participate in leadership positions and to assume responsibilities in public life;**

h) **take all appropriate measures to eliminate prejudices and gender stereotypes that constitute barriers to women's access to and full participation in social, economic and political spheres.**

## **J. State responsibility: implementation and monitoring**

82. Information laid out in the preceding sections of this GR indicate that although there have been some gains in girls' and women's right *to* education, their **rights** in all three domains – *to*, *within* and *through* – remain an unfinished agenda. The recommendations contained in all sections identify benchmarks for adoption and/or reform of policy and legislative frameworks, as well as the financial and human resources required to provide for and protect girls' and women's rights in these three domains of rights. If, ultimately, education is to be the vehicle for the personal, social, economic and political empowerment of women and the tool for equipping them to seize opportunities to make a direct contribution to national and regional development processes, then attention to these actions are not optional but obligatory. Transformation of systems and structures, however, can only be realized where there is **political will**. States parties need to commit to fulfill internationally binding obligations under conventions such as the CEDAW supported by GRs, particularly GR 28 on the core obligations of States parties.

83. **The Committee therefore urges States parties to take the following actions to ensure timely implementation and monitoring of recommendations in this GR to protect girls' and women's rights of access *to* education, and their rights *within* and**

*through* education, elaborating article 10 and providing linkages to other articles of the Convention and to other GRs of the Committee:

a) ensure wide dissemination of the GR to all stakeholders including all government officials engaged in the education sector and supporting sectors, educators at all levels of the education system, students, parents, the media and relevant national and community organisations;

b) as necessary, translate the document into the national languages as well as those used by various ethnic minority groups in the population;

c) establish a national multi-sectoral task force with representation from the major government sectors involved in the delivery of education and educational services as well as the major non-governmental stakeholders engaged in education to develop a comprehensive implementation and monitoring strategy with clear timelines, benchmarks for measuring achievement of outcomes and with individuals assigned to give oversight to specific dimensions of the plan;

d) ensure that adequate quantitative and qualitative datasets are available and accessible to inform monitoring of outcomes; maximise outcomes by harmonising implementation of this GR with requirements of other international, regional and national instruments that address girls' and women's rights *to, within* and *through* education which are consistent with this instrument.

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