Forum: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

Issue: Relationship between education and women empowerment-eradicating the gender gap

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Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Tonia Dalla, I am 15 years old and I am a student in Anavryta Model Lyceum. It is my honor to serve as a Co-Chair in the Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3) in the 8th session of the Platon School Model United Nations conference. This will be my 8th conference and my first time serving as a Student Officer.

As a co-Chair in the GA3, I am here in order to help every single one of you before and during the conference, ensuring that the lobbying process and debate will be carried out successfully and fruitfully, maximizing the quality of them and providing my assistance whenever is needed. As well as making sure that every single one of you gets the most out of this Conference.

This year's agenda of the Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee includes really interesting topics and the delegates will have the opportunity to discuss and propose measures so as to combat them. This study guide will provide you with a part of the appropriate material that you will need to form an effective resolution. However, you shouldn't base your study only on this study guide but do your own research as well.

If you have any questions concerning the topic and the rules of procedure don't hesitate to contact me using my personal email: toniadalla2002@gmail.com

Best regards,

Tonia Dalla

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

The gender gap is a phenomenon that still exists in both LEDCs (less economically developed countries) and MEDCs (more economically developed countries), as in many countries women still don't have the same rights as men and often don't even have the same access to education or to medical care. A significant example of the gender gap's impact is that women face discrimination based on their gender, as they are often paid less than men for the same amount and quality of work in many kinds of industries; this is called the 'gender pay gap'. Moreover, women don't have the same participation in politics due to many different factors. In comparison to men, a very small percentage of women have a place in political leadership, even in MEDCs, and in several LEDCs – like Saudi Arabia and Qatar- even though women are legally allowed to cast a vote and put themselves for a position in parliament, they are often discouraged by men and even the government itself to do so, due to the deeply fermented gender-based social divide.

A large number of women work 'informally', without any protection and under terrible conditions without knowing their labor rights. In India, for example, about 120 million women (around 95% of women in paid labor) work 'informally', as do around 12 million women in Mexico (around 60% of employed women). Furthermore, many girls are denied basic education based on their gender and archaic stereotypes, such that of the "woman-child breeder".

The gender gap should be eradicated in order for women around the globe to have the same rights and the same opportunities as men. Education can be the first step to the gender equality, because it can act as a basis to women being aware of their rights and of the fact that they are able to have the same opportunities as men, which will in turn help them take more action in claiming them, as they should. This way, even though it won't take a small amount of time due to the deeply rooted patriarchal nature of society, slowly but surely, will be more empowered and will start to put a stronghold in their true place in that society; one next and equal to the male gender.

On 25 September 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the (revised) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which included 17 global goals:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economy growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnership for the goals

The UN has set those goals, which to many seem too unrealistic, in order to make the world better and they have focused on the most pressing issues that must be payed attention to. One of the sustainable goals is the one of gender equality. According to the United Nations: 'Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large'[1]. Evidently, the UN has set a precedent for an attempt to achieve gender equality.

KEY TERMS

Gender Gap

"The discrepancy between men and women, in terms of attitudes, opportunities and status[2]."

Empowerment

"The process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights[3]." In this context, claiming better education can empower women, leading to gender equality.

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[1] "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/.

[2] "Definition of Gender Gap." *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/gender_gap.

[3] "Definition of Empowerment." *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/empowerment.

Gender Equality

Gender equality is defined as "the state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender"[4].

UN Women

"UN Women" is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and was established in July 2010. The innovative nature of this specialized UN agency set up a starting point for nations to take a step towards achieving gender equality and empowerment amongst all women[5].

Gender Discrimination

The discrimination on grounds of sex or gender; sexual discrimination[6].

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Women have been facing gender-based discrimination ever since the beginning of time. The first real change in their position in society took place at the end of the 19th century when they were finally given the right to vote after many years of suffrage; more specifically, New Zealand was the first to do so in 1893. Ever since, all sovereign states followed New Zealand's example, with Saudi Arabia being the last country to grant women the right to vote in 2011. Voting in elections gave some power to women as they were finally given the chance to take part in politics.

Unlike women's suffrage caused by being unable to be politically active, their fight for a right to education has not ended. This problem seems to be more prominent in less economically developed countries. These societies are still very much based on a patriarchal, traditional system where women's purpose is to raise the family's children and take care of their husbands. From a very young age, girls are taught to be householders. Girls who attend school in such areas often face violence. A very prominent example of such violence was when, on the 9th of October 2012 in Pakistan, a Taliban gunman shot Malala Yousafzai in the head when she was on her way to school. According to the Taliban's ideology, girls shouldn't go to school. The Taliban and other similar terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State, are the reason why many young girls in Middle Eastern countries are still not allowed to attend school. They spread fear and uncertainty, in order to enforce an archaic ideology

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[4] "Definition of Gender Equality." *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/gender_equality.

[5] "About UN Women." *UN Women*, www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women.

[6] "Definition of Gender Discrimination." *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries, en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/gender_discrimination.

which goes hand in hand with the kind of regime they want to form in these areas, thus forcing many girls not to fight back and remain in fear and in 'darkness', not being able to decide for their own future.

Malala was lucky, and she survived but many other girls don't, when faced with such attacks. Ever since her attack, Malala has made great steps in order to give more girls the right and access to education. In October 2013, she set up 'Malala's Fund', an organization dedicated to give all girls access to education. Malala was an inspiration for many girls around the globe and because of her continuous efforts many girls have gotten the chance to attend school. Malala being able to attend Oxford University in September 2017 is a metaphor for how standing strong against the face of adversity can help one excel; something all women should always keep in mind.

Another factor that puts a halt on progress and limits the empowerment of women is extreme poverty. In many countries, women don't have access to education because a large percentage of the lower classes cannot often afford to provide their children with education. Also, many families don't send their girls to school because of the very small number of schools in some regions. More often than not, the closest school to some families is miles away and children will have to walk very long distances, and often in dangerous climates, to get to school. Hence, many families will prefer to keep their children and especially the girls at home to prevent them from being exposed to danger and sometimes because they prove to be more useful at home taking care of chores.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created "UN Women". UN Women is an organization dedicated to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs and services needed to ensure that set standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It operates on a global scale to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life.

COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the countries with the largest gender gap. Although women are educated, women empowerment is very limited. Saudi women face a lot of discrimination. They are banned from competing openly in sports, putting on makeup and colorful clothes in public, interacting in public with men to whom they're not related and have only been allowed to drive as of September 2017.

Afghanistan

About 40% of Afghani girls attend elementary school, but only 1 in 20 girls continue their education beyond the 6th grade. There are many reasons why girls don't attend school or continue their education; for instance, some of them have faced death threats or have been attacked, commonly having acid thrown in their faces, permanently scarring or even killing them. Additionally, girls are forbidden to attend the same schools as boys, something that makes finding an accessible place for education difficult, as not many schools exist that are available only to them. In addition, many girls are forced into child marriages, which means they miss out on the chance of receiving education because their husbands rarely allow them to receive one.

Ethiopia

Approximately 80% of women in Ethiopia are uneducated. Although, the education is open to girls in Ethiopia, they only attend school for 2.2 years on average. Poverty is the main barrier to girls' and women's education. Also, teenage pregnancy, child marriage or sexual harassment are some of the reasons why girls leave school at a considerably young age.

Guatemala

Less than 50% of Guatemalan girls have the opportunity to enroll in elementary school and 1 out of 8 will complete the 6thgrade. The country is extremely impoverished and education is a huge expense that is unaffordable by the government at this point in time. Nevertheless, if a family was able to educate its children, they would rather send the boy to school since they encourage the girls to take on more of a 'traditional', domestic role in society.

European Countries \ United States of America

Although in European Countries girls and women legally have access to education, the gender gap still exists. Women often don't have the same opportunities as men, as they are often under-represented in leadership positions in both business and government. And, compared to businesses owned by men, enterprises owned by women are smaller, employ fewer people, and are more concentrated in sectors with limited opportunities for profit and growth.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT
1893	New Zealand	The first country to give women the right to an electoral vote
1900	Egypt	A school for female teachers is founded in Cairo.
	Tunisia	The first public elementary school for girls
	Germany	Universities open to women.
1901	China	Girls are included in the educational system
1905	USA	Nora Stanton Blatch Barney is the first woman to gain a degree in civil engineering
1907	Sudan	The first school open to Muslim girls is established.
	Iran	Compulsory primary education for females.
1908	Korea	Secondary education for females through the foundation of the Capital School for Girl's Higher Education.
1911	Luxembourg	A new educational law gives women access to higher education, and two secondary education schools open to females
1917	Greece	The first public secondary educational school for girls open
	Nicaragua	The first female obtains a university degree
1920	Portugal	Secondary school open to women
1921	Thailand	Compulsory elementary education for both girls and boys.
1923	Egypt	Compulsory education for both sexes
1927	Afghanistan	The monarch introduces compulsory education for the daughters of officials.
1929	Greece	Secondary education for females is made equal to that of males
1930	Turkey	Equal right to university education for both men and women.
1937	Kuwait	The first public schools open to females
1943	Iran	Compulsory primary education for both males and females.
1945	-	**Gender equality enshrined in the United Nations Charter**
1955	Qatar	First public school for girls.
1964	Afghanistan	States the equal right of women to education
1975	-	**UN First World Conference on Women in Mexico City**
1980	USA	Women and men enrolled in American Colleges in equal numbers.
2010	-	**Creation of UN WOMEN**
2011	Saudi Arabia	**Gives Women the right to vote**

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As proven by aforementioned evidence, one of the most reliable ways to eradicate the gender gap is to empower women, using education; therefore, member states should make a significant effort in trying to find ways in order for more women to have access to education. On 22 December 2015 the Resolution (A/RES/70/219)[7] was adopted by the General Assembly and has made a great effort in order to empower women. This resolution proposes some very important points, which you can use in building your own resolution in addition to suggesting new ones:

1. Also recognizes the importance of the full engagement of men and boys for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and commits to taking measures to fully engage men and boys in efforts to achieve the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;

2. Reiterates the need to further intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and recognizes that violence against women and girls is one of the obstacles to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Furthermore, women's poverty and lack of political, social and economic empowerment, as well as their marginalization, may result from their exclusion from social policies and the benefits of sustainable development and can place them at increased risk of violence;

3. Further recognizes the mutually reinforcing links between gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and poverty eradication, as well as the need to elaborate and implement, where appropriate, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, comprehensive gender-sensitive poverty eradication strategies that address social, structural and macroeconomic issues;

4. Encourages Member States to continue to increase, as appropriate, the participation of civil society, including women's organizations, in government decision-making processes in national policy areas, including sustainable development;

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[7] "A/RES/70/219: Women in development" United Nations Web. 29 Dec. 2017

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_219.pdf

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"gender discrimination | Definition of gender discrimination in English by Oxford Dictionaries" Oxford Dictionaries | English Web. 27 Dec. 2017

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gender_discrimination>

MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

For further research you can visit the websites below.

- UN Women: Putting the Women's Agenda as a Priority: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=12&v=co3-Uech1Fc

- VIDEO: The Sustainable Development Summit: http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/01/the-sustainable-development-summit-building-the-2030-agenda/

- Closing the gender gap, according to the UN: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/10/closing-the-gender-gap-according-to-the-un

- Resolution 2010/7: http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2010/res%202010-7.pdf

- "Malala: The girl who was shot for going to school" BBC News Web. 28 Dec. 2017: http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24379018

- "Malala's Story | Malala Fund" Malala Fund Web. 30 Dec. 2017: https://www.malala.org/malalas-story