

XXVII

TECMUN Jr.

United Nations Entity for
Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women

Delegadxs:

El mundo en el que vivimos actualmente pide un cambio. Ahora, no basta solamente con querer que algo suceda, sino que para hacer una diferencia, debemos encontrar las soluciones nosotrxs mismxs. Es fácil perder la esperanza, la motivación y las ganas de luchar, pero no debemos olvidar los motivos por los cuales empezamos en primer lugar. La situación en nuestro país requiere de nuestra acción inmediata, así que lxs invito a ser agentes de cambio, a dar lo mejor de ustedes durante estos tres días de trabajo pero sobre todo, a disfrutar de la oportunidad que tienen de estar aquí y debatir sobre problemas que afortunadamente no tienen que enfrentar a diario.

Cumplan sus objetivos, sin importar qué tan difícil pueda parecer; al fin y al cabo, será su trabajo el que se verá reflejado en el Modelo. Podría hablarles de lo importante que ha llegado a ser TECMUN para mí, pero esto no se trata de mí; se trata de ustedes. Se trata de que en verdad crean que pueden mover al mundo con sus acciones. Sí, se pierden amistades y relaciones por defender tus ideales, pero al final del día se darán cuenta de que sólo las mejores personas se quedarán a su lado, haciendo hasta lo imposible para cambiar al mundo.

Sólo me queda desearles éxito a todxs, y felicitarlxs por haber llegado hasta donde están. Nunca es demasiado tarde para hacer las cosas diferente. Tengan esperanza, motivación y sí, ganas de luchar, porque la vida estará llena de obstáculos y pruebas que lxs harán dudar hasta de ustedes mismxs. Gracias por acompañarme en esta aventura y por formar parte de esta familia.

Sólo está derrotado aquel que deja de soñar.

Carmina León Ramírez

President of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women
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Background of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is an entity that seeks for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, their empowerment, and the achievement of equality between genders. It was created in 2010 as part of the UN reform agenda and is currently based in New York. 45 States Members of the United Nations are members of the Commission at all times, elected by the Economic and Social Council. Its main roles include supporting and encouraging member States in the implementation of policies, global standards and norms to ensure the fulfillment of its goals. Fundamentally, women's equality, such as leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, peace and security, humanitarian action, youth, governance and national planning, sustainable development agenda, and HIV and AIDS.

Topic A

Educational lag in Middle Eastern and Northern African women due to socio-religious aspects

*By: Carmina León Ramírez
Andrea Stella Ramirez Prieto*

Introduction

Among the universal declaration of human rights, the right to education can be found. Although, in many countries, education is available for a great number of people, there are some countries in which a debate is open regarding the accessibility of education for women. The sources that present this debate are mostly related to the power of the patriarchy, alongside the religious customs and beliefs of the population in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Education is a very important factor since it contributes to the national economy. In a recent study, made by the UNESCO and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2002, called the “Financing Education — Investments and Returns, Analysis of the World Education Indicators” in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia. It was proven that by increasing schooling, the economy had grown by 3.7% annually. Private initiative in these countries has less access to highly qualified labor, which derives in less competitiveness. This slows down the whole country’s development and doesn’t favor the empowerment of women and girls in the region.

Fighting the problem legally

Middle Eastern and Northern African countries (MENA Region) have created new laws and policies to close the gender gap but unfortunately, it has not been enough. Girls among the ages 14-16 are forced to assume a maternal role; because of this, some are unable to receive any type of education or find the solution in dropping out of school. In 2014, Egypt implemented a law which allows women to receive assistance in motherhood, within Article 10 of the 2014 constitution; this clause is directly derived from Article 18 of the 1956 constitution. “The State protects and supports (takfir al-da‘m) the family, in accordance with the law, and protects motherhood and childhood. Article 25 of the UDHR similarly declares that: motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance,” (POMEPS, p. 23). These laws are the key to provide aid to girls who have kids, which could allow them to focus on their studies, while at the same time being able to assume their motherhood.

In a study by UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics (2012), enrolment for both boys and girls at an elementary level was found to be almost the same (the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of the net attendance of this group is 0.9931). In contrast, when talking about secondary or pre-university levels, the gap widens. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

Against Women (CEDAW), concluded observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Egypt (5th February 2010). According to this report, one of the main focuses is the concern on the descent of girls' enrolment at both primary and secondary school, as well as the high drop-out rate at secondary school and university. Considering that only primary education in countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia among others was mandatory, parents consider their superior education unnecessary.

Given this problem, Egypt made radical changes regarding education by making not only primary education mandatory and accessible but all sorts of pre university levels.

The 2012 Constitution, extended compulsory education to include the secondary stage/ installment *الثانوية المرحلة*. The same is stipulated in Article 19 of the 2014 Constitution. Therefore, what is labeled as primary education, in Egypt, according to the Constitution presently in force, covers all preuniversity education. (British Institute of International and Cooperative Law, 2016).

Egypt within its international legal obligations is required to direct education towards human personality and respect for human rights. In 2014, Egypt reinforced a series of changes within the Constitution to fulfill their obligations to prevent any type of discrimination against women. This is referred to in Article 13; the principle of non-discrimination against women, which must also apply to the content of educational material, which at the same time shall not perpetuate stereotypes. This helps reform education by teaching young people respect and values, along with a gender perspective.

Women have been demanding a change in two main aspects: private and public. In the private sphere we find rights in marriage, divorce, and domestic violence, while in the public sphere, we find education as in starting to open to political participation which derives in a broader representation of women in congresses. The latter has been proven unsuccessful due to multiple causes, among these the large scale of sexual harassment and repression to female activists, along with the opposition of conservative Islamic politicians. This lack of voice in politics limits any further advance in improving or developing laws.

Female activists' struggles

The Middle East contributes less than other regions in terms of statistics and information on women's participation in politics. In this region, female social participation is not of interest to government officials; countries like Saudi Arabia did not accept women within their political structure until 2015. Unfortunately, there are not many people who watch over the rights of girls and women, whose right to education is affected by the ideology that has predominated in the Middle East.

Political unrest and threats to women and girls' rights has increased female activism, demanding their voices to be heard. Women nowadays are demanding their rights, specifically the one to be heard. By getting more involved in politics, these activist groups need to double down on their commitments, making sure that women and girls understand what they're fighting for. After Egypt's revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood tried to erase all the gains activists had already achieved. Even the women, who were enjoying their new respected rights, weren't necessarily able to live them because they are disempowered by strong social norms and traditions, such as their rejection to women being involved in politics or having a voice. Monitoring groups such as the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE) have found that husbands, fathers, or brothers will sometimes tell women the candidate or political party they should vote for instead of doing it themselves.

Laws in MENA Region are restricting women's right to education and are the perfect example of the lack of interest on behalf of the authorities. Beyond financial support, activist groups in the region expect for the international community to realize that fundamentalism and extremism also afflicts them.

Building teachers' capacity to promote gender equality in education.

The quality of education is a constant problem throughout the MENA Region. "(...) Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North Africa Egypt, young people frequently cited the poor quality of teachers, overcrowded schools, and lack of basic supplies in schools" (World Bank, p. 58). The inappropriate school facilities, the lack of scholar on teachers, and a lack of female teachers, poses an image to young boys and girls on the affair. Likewise, the shortage in availability on safe and reliable transportation to schools is a constant situation for girls all around the region.

There are many early dropout rates from girls in Morocco and on the republic of Yemen. The low education quality from poor facilities, crowded classrooms, and inappropriate teaching, contributes to the constant and repeated dropout rates as well as the low achievement levels.

Teachers may not view themselves as role models, however as the students spend a great amount of time within their school and interacting with their teachers, they become role

models to them; this can either have a positive or negative outcome. Professors educate not only in subjects such as math, physics, chemistry, biology, among others, they instruct values, respect for themselves and others but also ideas. This is why all- female activists encourage hiring more women to assume a teaching role, creating a better image of educated and working women.

It was found that female teachers represent 42% at the secondary level in contrast with 52% at the basic level of education. A higher number of capacitated female professors is needed for many reasons, not only to close the gender disparity in the teaching workforce. Female teachers are also better role models for girls and have a greater capacity when faced by girls, especially when they reach puberty. The increasing number of female educators in MENA region encourages parents to send girls to school because of the learning outcomes that these women represent. The discrepancy of the number of male and female teachers at a secondary level varies depending on the country, but the lack of female teaching force in countries like Iran is alarming.

Education after Malala

Malala Yousafzai as a young girl publicly spoke against the restrictions that were made on girls' right to education. In 2007, the Swat valley was overtaken by the *Tehrik-e-Taliban* Pakistan (TTP or Pakistan Taliban); they began imposing very strict Islamic laws (*Shari'ah*, laws or conduct guides for Muslims) closing and destroying girls' schools. At the same time, they banned women from any role in society and started carrying out suicide bombings.

On October 9, 2012, Malala was shot in the head by a TTP gunman on her way home from school. After she survived the attempt, the incident was made public which arose several protests and her cause was heard worldwide. Her story represents many girls' situation, which is why after becoming the youngest Nobel laureate, UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education was created.

Malala's Fund involves 10 countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, Mauritania, Nepal, Tanzania among others, which main objectives are: expand access to education for girls and women, especially those hardest to reach and affected by conflict and disaster, improve the quality and relevance of education, ensuring that content, teaching practices, learning

processes and environments are gender-sensitive and strengthen policy and capacity to ensure safe learning environments(UNESCO, 2018).

Empowering adolescent girls and young women through education

Education would represent a huge opportunity for women and girls to challenge their culture and have the choice to do as they want with their reproductive and sexual life, while also providing new work opportunities for them. Likewise the potential to contribute to the economy not only to their household but also to society. Along with the strong increase in years of schooling, fertility rates in the MENA Region have been decreasing at a constant rate since the 1980s. Thanks to agencies like the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), 15 million USD have been designated to breaking the cycle of exclusion and vulnerability in which Middle Eastern and Northern African women have been living in their entire lives. Not only funding, but promoting gender-transformative opportunities for female civilians will strengthen social and governance structures, ensuring the country's ownership and accountability.

Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program (NSP), creates elected gender-balanced Community Development Councils, and empowers them to select, design, and manage small city projects. On the evaluation of the NSP found that, not only did it improved villagers' access to services, the program has increased the involvement of women in many aspects of community life. At the same time, senior women have gained respect, and men have become more open to female participation in local governance (Beath and others, 2010). On the same way, education can provide women with opportunities to engage more in politics, their rights, and how to enforce them.

Scholarship programs are one method of encouraging girls to outstand at school and pursue better grades as well as non- traditional subjects. An experiment conducted by Michael Kremer, professor at Harvard, showed that scholarships had several unexpected benefits,

As expected, the test scores of all the girls in the selected schools improved, even those of girls who were unlikely to win. Teacher attendance also increased. Perhaps, as a result, some evidence suggested that the test scores of boys improved as well, even though the boys were not eligible for the scholarships (World Bank, p. 134).

Exclusion leads to economic, socio-cultural and political inequalities. Poverty, gender-based violence, and poor education quality arrive at a time when through their

adolescence, girls begin to manifest sexual and reproductive health issues. Societies tend to pay the price of educational inequality: high child and maternal mortality, poor nutrition, vulnerability to exploitation and lack of voice in public life. Women and girls' education represents development gains for all, like improved family health and education, decent jobs, higher incomes, and greater civic participation.

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Glossary

B

Broader: covering a large area; wide.

C

Compulsory: put into force by laws or rules; obligatory

Civic: related to cityship, having a sense of public responsibility.

D

Derive: develop from, have as an origin.

Discrepancy: a state of difference or inconsistency; variance.

Disparity: clear and obvious difference, lack of similarity; inequality.

F

Fundamentalism: strict attachment to any set of basic ideas or principles.

G

Gender Parity Index: an index designed to measure the access of education between female and males; released by the UNESCO.

L

Latter: being the second mentioned of two; last.

M

Monitory: providing or caring warning.

P

Perpetuate: to preserve, to cause to continue or prevail.

U

Unrest: dissatisfaction or turbulence.

Topic B

Measures to improve the sexual education in Africa to stop HIV and AIDS epidemic amongst women

*By: Carmina León Ramírez
Andrea Stella Ramirez Prieto*

Introduction

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a disease that targets the immune system, and as a consequence weakens the defenses against infections, even cancer. All across the globe this is a very serious problem. In 2017, it was found that 36.9 million people had this virus. The World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa reported 19.6 million people were living with HIV in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region in 2017, among them 650,000 were adolescent girls. On the same year, 6.1 million people were living with HIV in the West and Central Africa Region 250,000 of them were adolescent girls. The numbers of women who acquire it have grown exponentially in the last three years, it is necessary to take action to prevent more women from getting infected.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (70% of the world's population with HIV/AIDS infections), 58% of the infected people were women. Half of all new infections occur among young people (15-24 years old), which is why sexual education plays a very important role and should occupy an important place in girls' and young women's scholar education. African young women are two times more likely to be living with this disease than young men; the reasons behind these numbers are social and economic realities.

Among these realities it is found the lack of knowledge about STIs, women leave them unattended or don't even know they've got them; the lack of access to sexual health services is also a very important part of the problem. Also risky situations like coerced sex, commercial sex -when money, shelter, food, etc. are exchanged for sex-, a much older sex partner -with more experience and therefore a higher chance of having these viruses or STIs-, or the most important one, economic difficulty to have a proper education on the subject, make women and girls vulnerable and expose them to both HIV and AIDS.

Lack of preventive sexual education

In Africa, education plays an important role for young people. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Institute for Statistics, 67% of the countries in Africa have a range of 6-9 years of compulsory education, and only Kenya demands 12 years. Because of this, children don't reach a level of scholar where sex education is offered. In a study made by the Guttmacher Institute in 2010 called Protecting the Next Generation in Sub-Saharan Africa, it was found that 50% of 15-19 year-

olds in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda never received any type of sexual education, since it is not offered within their scholarship in high school. Also, they quit their studies before reaching the grade in which sex education is offered, and even in some cases, they have never attended school.

The lack of proper sexual education forces the young ones to look into this topic by their own means. On a study conducted by Cambridge students in 2012, “Breaking sex education taboos in Africa to tackle AIDS”, children were asked if they had heard of sex and the place where they had learned that information from. Most of them pointed out that they are well aware of sexually related information and seek it in any type of pornography, whether it is found on magazines, advertisements or any material related to sex. Due to this they grow on a great amount of misconception and almost to none information regarding the importance of birth control methods or HIV prevention. “More than 90% of 15–19-year-olds have heard of HIV, yet fewer than 40% of adolescents in this age-group can both correctly identify ways of preventing transmission of HIV and reject common misconceptions about HIV transmission” (Guttmacher Institute, 2010).

A great number of young people start having sexual intercourse before the age 20, especially girls, 77% of them compared with 65% of men who have had intercourse. There are multiple reasons why this happens; among these, it is found peer pressure. “Almost one in five females in Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda report that their first sexual experience occurred through force or because their partner insisted.” (Guttmacher Institute, 2010). This represents a great risk for women: 40% of sexually active women around ages 15 to 19, have had partners in the past year who were at least five years older.

HIV and AIDS: an obstacle to the economy and gender equality

HIV has very specific and different strains, which can now be used to easily track the course of the epidemic. One in every three kids is HIV-positive because of their progenitors, most commonly their mothers. “In July, UNAIDS announced that of all Africans aged 1549 who are HIV-positive, women make up a disproportionate 57 percent. Even worse, (...) of those in the 1524 age group, fully 75 percent were young women” (Fleshman, 2019). Young women are more susceptible to get the infection, because of the continuous and unsafe sexual activity they perform. Gender discrimination regarding prevention programs, education, violence,

women's property and inheritance rights, and access to care and treatment has represented a huge obstacle for UNAIDS. Treatment programs must be structured and monitored to ensure equal access for women. Legislative reforms and the enforcement of women's legal rights could probably stop impoverishment amongst AIDS widows and orphans.

It is not a surprise that in most cases the infection is acquired because of transactional sex, which involves intergenerational sex as well; this concept is known as the sexual intercourse commonly between young girls and middle-aged men in exchange for money and gifts. Because transactional sex seems like the only option facing poverty and growing consumerism, sustained economic development is a long-term solution, which can also provide expanded careers and educational opportunities for young women, ending with unemployment as well. An explicit focus in education and prevention programs could make possible the reduction of sexual exploitation, of which young women are victims.

Even though strategies and campaigns like Abstain, Be faithful or use a Condom (ABC) exist, and have proven to have lowered HIV-infection rates in Uganda (Fleshman, 2019), they're not precisely women-friendly. ABC hardly offers any real choices at all; UNAIDS Deputy Director Kathleen Cravero refers to recent studies made by ONG Africa Renewal, which show high infection rates among monogamous married women all across Africa. So, the problem is not the lack of responsibility from women, but instead, the "epidemic" of gender sexual violence, derived from male gender-biased "sexual education".

The limits to health and access to quality health services

According to the World AIDs Day report made by the UNAIDS in 2011, in South Africa 5.6 million people (approximately 11% of the population) were living with HIV, however as to 2010 only 1.4 million were receiving antiretroviral treatment, and 50% of newly-diagnosed patients fail to obtain CD4 count test results after their recent diagnosis. Which is why most deaths occur before they become patients. In countries such as Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda, 32–65% of sexually active teenagers suggest that receiving contraceptive care as well as STD testing and treating at health facilities would be beneficial, but are afraid and embarrassed to ask for this services. Around 24 up to 44% of adolescents did not know of any source for contraceptive services, and 31-67% had never heard of STDs facility care.

The National Institute of Mental Health, as well as the Harvard University Center for AIDS Research, in 2014 made a study called Barriers to Care among People Living with HIV in South Africa: Contrasts between Patient and Healthcare Provider Perspectives. Which concluded that an impediment to treatment initiation, 20% of the interviewed were in denial on the HIV diagnosis, because of the fear that others finding out and discriminating against them.

Social and demographic factors as poverty, lack of insurance, and inhabiting rural areas are barriers that prevent people from diagnosis and treatment. Patients may also need to travel far to reach clinics, that often requires taking time off from work as well as paying for transportation.

Sociocultural influence

Women's role in African society is mostly related to the country's workforce. 60% of women living in developing countries make a living from working in agriculture; still, only the 10% of African women own livestock, and approximately 1% own their own land (Panella, 2016). This obvious disparity clearly shows how underestimated women's potential actually is. Although women are responsible for most of the country's production, they aren't able to express their concern on the policies and regulations that affect them directly. As the government isn't really worried about women's opinions, therefore their health, there isn't much that can be done in the ideological field.

Women aren't really in a position to demand faithfulness from their partners, so there is a huge risk of infection taking into account that in most cases men refuse to use a condom. Africa Renewal researchers report that this is because they fear of rejection or physical assault; and far from being worried about their own health, ironically, they're more focused on getting through the day without being beaten up. "Real-life prevention strategies for women include reducing the levels of violence against women, protecting their property and inheritance rights and ensuring their access to education", assures Mrs. Cravero.

The paradox of low risk and high vulnerability applies to African women infected with AIDS, particularly. And as the rates of infection keep growing beyond borders, ONG's, international organizations, women's rights organizations, and anti-AIDS activists claim that the solution lies in changing the factors contributing to women's vulnerability with sufficient

commitment and resources. Unfortunately, all these parties interested in dealing with the situation can't progress without the support, involvement, and help from all African countries. Efforts to reduce the burden of AIDS/HIV on women must also engage boys and men, whose responsibility towards a problem that also involves them will mean a huge change in the social rejection suffered by infected women.

Initiatives to prevent and treat HIV

The World Health Organization (WHO) made a review in 2018, "Focus on Key Populations in National HIV Strategic Plans in the African Region", about the National Strategic Plan (NSP) of 47 countries in the WHO African Region with the aim of identifying strengths, gaps and weaknesses in the way that NSPs address key problems on prevention and treatment of HIV. This review made recommendations for improving the consideration of key populations, these refer to a category of populations of special interest in the HIV epidemic, due to higher risk, discrimination or vulnerability on access to services. Among them, we can find female sex workers.

45 countries out of 47 mentioned that the biggest and most important key population is sex workers. These plans rarely mention young people in the context of sex work, although in a few plans the risks of girls engaging in sexual intercourse, is mention to have increased during the last three years. Some plans such as *Côte d'Ivoire* and Rwanda, argue that sex workers should enjoy legal protection, which should enable them to benefit from the strategies of the national response. Few NSPs called for the decriminalization of sex work. Stigmatized and the illegal status of sex work creates a barrier to access medical services, such as HIV testing, treatment (for example, in the NSPs for Burundi, Ghana, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritius, and South Sudan) and proper HIV prevention.

"Some NSPs (for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo) asserted that sex workers should be offered assistance in finding other professional activities. The Malawian NSP observed, however, that, once women are identified as sex workers, they quite often are actively denied access to alternative income-generating opportunities." (World Health Organization, 2018).

In 2011 UNAIDS created the Global Plan Towards the Elimination of new HIV Infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping their Mothers Alive. In this plan it was established that maternal, newborn and child health, as well as family planning programs, should work together to deliver quality results to improve health of HIV patients. As well as national and global support effort acts to deliver accountable results. During 2014, The Third

Report of the independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health made by the World Health Organization, concluded that several changes should be made to ensure the fulfillment of the Global Plan.

First move forward with new initiatives such as Family Planning 2020 (FP2020), the Every Newborn Action Plan, and the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities. Then the creation of partnerships to achieve more than a single institution just as demonstrated in the Every Woman, Every Child; by the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) and Countdown to 2015, which makes continuous reports that help for improvement.

“Provides an assessment of the state of the data to support evidence-based decisions in women's and children's health, and describes elements of the Countdown process that might inform ongoing efforts to hold the world to account for progress” (Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, 2014).

Advised material

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Glossary

A

Antirretroviral : any drug used to treat a type of retrovirus, virus that uses RNA as genetic material.

C

CD4 count test: test that measures the CD4 cells, type of white cells commonly referred as T-cells, which determine how much damage has been done to the immune system.

Coerce: to compel by force, intimidation or violence.

Compulsory: put into force by laws or rules; obligatory.

Consumerism: concept that an always-expanding consumption of goods is beneficial to the economy.

E

Exponentially: constant rise in much greater degree.

I

Impoverishment: making or becoming poor.

Inhibiting: prevent growth; repress.

M

Misconception: a mistaken or erroneous idea.

P

Progenitor: a direct ancestor related by birth.

S

STI: sexually transmitted infections or sexually transmitted diseases, are illnesses acquired generally by sex; blood, semen or vaginal fluid.

Stigmatized: to set some mark of disgrace, shame or dishonor upon someone or something

Susceptible: being sensitive to, easily moved by, easily touched by some influence, agency, force.