

Title: 12 Years to Break Barriers and Leave No Girl Behind: Countdown to 2030

Date/Time: Tuesday, 25 September, 16:00 (TBC)

Location: UN Building

Abstract:

Educating girls is the right and smart thing to do - investing in girls' education delivers significant economic, health and social benefits. Despite global progress, the world failed to meet the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. Globally it is estimated over 130 million girls are still out of school and there are abysmally low levels of learning in many developing countries. Girls of every school-age group are more likely to be excluded from education than boys across sub-Saharan Africa. For every 100 boys of primary school age out of school there are 123 girls denied the right to education. Data suggests that girls who are able to start school tend to pursue their studies. Globally 387 million children (56%) are not on track to learn to read by the end of primary (source: UIS 2017). Most of these are in Africa and South and Central Asia. The most marginalized adolescent girls often face multiple barriers in accessing quality education, exacerbating learning inequalities. Conflict makes it even tougher for girls at the time they most need support: girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school in conflict zones. Refugee girls who are not in school are at greater risk of exploitation, including sexual and gender based violence, trafficking, early marriage and child labour.

Education can also play a key role in tackling deep-rooted gender discrimination, by revising curricula, textbooks and teacher education programmes to ensure that they do not perpetuate gender stereotypes and to address gender imbalance in subject choice.

Through the Sustainable Development Goals, we not only set ourselves the challenge of closing this gap but also set the bar higher by committing to eliminate gender disparities and ensure every girl and boy has the opportunity to complete 12 years of quality primary and secondary education by 2030. Yet, 2030 is only 12 years away and we run the risk of missing this target once more without genuine political commitment and cooperation to ensure no girl is left behind.

Much progress has been made in 2018 to secure concrete action on girls' education. The G7 Summit in Canada and the Commonwealth Summit in the UK agreed on further commitments with a particular focus on supporting adolescent and highly marginalised girls; while they confront enduring barriers to their achievement of positive learning outcomes. The Global Partnership for Education conference in Senegal saw developing countries commit themselves to invest a further \$110 billion in education, coupled with \$2.3 billion of new ODA pledges by donors. The Pan-African High-Level Conference on Education agreed on a comprehensive "Nairobi Declaration and Call for Action on Education" - part of a series of regional events leading up to the Global Education 2030 Meeting that UNESCO will convene in Brussels in December ahead of the UN High-Level Political Forum on the SDGs in July 2019.¹

¹ Pan-Africa High-Level Conference on Education (Nairobi, 25-27 April 2018); Asia-Pacific Education 2030 Consultation (Bangkok, 12-14 July 2018); Latin American and Caribbean Ministerial Conference (Bolivia, 25-26 July 2018); Europe and North American Education 2030 consultation (Strasbourg, 24 October 2018) and Arab Regional Meeting (Venue TBD, 6-8 November 2018).

UNGA presents an opportunity to go further still by ensuring these new political and funding commitments on girls' education are pulling in the same direction and fully aligned with the 2030 Development Agenda. It is also critical that work on girls' education is underpinned by broader work on gender equality (SDG 5), adolescent empowerment and close collaboration across sectors particularly with health (SDG 3). This 'signature' event will therefore draw together different initiatives to highlight synergies and identify gaps, and to galvanise political will and build new alliances. It will focus on uniting the development and diplomatic efforts of the Commonwealth and La Francophonie to expand opportunity for 12 years of quality education for all girls by 2030.

Purpose of the event / objectives:

This event will demonstrate continued leadership on girls' education and adolescent empowerment, and utilise our convening power to:

- Maintain political will and momentum by pulling together the key threads of **global commitments, regional platforms and local energy** on girls' education and adolescent empowerment, to unite initiatives into a coherent narrative, and to announce any new actions.
- Identify **successes and challenges** in implementing SDG4 (Education), including linkages with SDG3 (Health) and SDG5 (Gender Equality), and ways to measure progress including interim "stepping stone" targets that will need to be met if we are to realise the 2030 goals.
- Prioritize **next steps over the next 12 months to tackle the barriers that hold back adolescent girls' education** and capture these in a political statement / call to action to be endorsed by Member States, representing diverse regions.

Outcomes:

- A political statement / call to action co-sponsored by event participants, capturing the essence of our collective commitments (CHOGM/G7/UNGA etc.) and outlining recommendations on girls' education over the next 12 years, to be endorsed by Member States representing all regional groups. (UNGA version of joint statement at UNHRC38 this year)
- New concrete policy or financial commitments to action by Member States, both developing countries and donors, and other partners.