



The International Federation of University Women (IFUW), the Mexican Federation of University Women (FEMU), UN Women (ONU Mujeres) and the Museum of Women co-host an international seminar on quality education for girls and women in Latin America

Mexico City, Mexico 19 September 2014 – The International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)) today co-hosted an international seminar on “Quality Education: Transforming the lives of Girls and Women in Latin America” at the Museum of Women, Mexico City. The event was a joint endeavour between IFUW and its partner organisations - the Mexican Federation of University (FEMU), UN Women (ONU Mujeres) and the Museum of Women - which explored the current education climate for girls and women in the region.

The panel speakers represented diverse and multi-sectoral professional backgrounds including academia, business, international organisations and government. While recognising the significant progress that has been made in the region in terms of closing the gender gap in education, the discussion identified certain socio-cultural barriers that still needed to be tackled at a national and regional level to ensure greater equality in the lifelong education of girls and women.

During her presentation, IFUW Executive Director Danièle Castle emphasised the specific need to prioritise financial literacy in the education system, a life skill traditionally less developed amongst the female population. “Financial literacy is critical to empowering women to take charge of their own economic independence and must be fostered from an early age as part of school curricula. From managing personal and household budgets to knowing how to establish professional businesses and become entrepreneurs, this skillset tackles the financial vulnerability of women, which is often a direct result of outdated norms that see men as the main bread-winners in society.”

Founding President of FEMU, Dr. Patricia Galeana, spoke about the importance of education for girls and women. She emphasised that women not only reproduce biologically but also reproduce cultural patterns, hence the necessity of investing in education since women have a multiplier effect on the entire population. Dr. Galeana noted that girls and boys have now reached parity levels in primary school enrolment in Latin America. She also highlighted that while there is a greater number of female teachers at secondary level, this number is three times less in higher education. When it comes to management positions, the glass ceiling is still present in educational institutions, as only 10% of directors/rectors in higher education centres in the region are women. Dr. Galeana underscored the necessity for concerted efforts to improve the education of women, both by having the appropriate legal framework in place and by incorporating a gender perspective in public policy- particularly in education. “These steps are critical to help generate a new mind set and culture to break the glass ceiling that is impeding the progress and development of our female population.”

Mrs. Paz Lopez, representative of UN Women in Mexico, highlighted the importance of analysing the data in the educational careers of women- both from a gender perspective and from discrimination in other areas of life. She stressed the importance of making visible how women's educational choices are influenced by gender stereotypes and by caregiving roles, which lead them to perform most of the unpaid work in the homes and in the community. This results in the creation of a number of obstacles when women seek to participate in the labour market. Many of these barriers are related to their roles as caregivers, discrimination in the labour market and “self-exclusion”, where society requires them to fulfil their role as mothers and caregivers.

Secondary school education in Latin America is generally on a positive trajectory, though progress has slowed in the last decade. By 2011, the region had 77% net enrolment in secondary school, with higher enrolment of girls than boys.¹ Nonetheless, girls and women still face significant challenges in accessing

¹ UNESCO (2014) <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>.



quality education, especially when from rural, indigenous or weaker economic backgrounds. At the tertiary level, though there are more female than male university students in the region, women are still under-represented in certain fields including Science (45%) and engineering (25%),² underscoring the significant untapped potential in innovation.

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The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and has an international membership. Founded in 1919, IFUW is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. IFUW is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO.

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Learn about our grants & fellowships and our advocacy work. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and Twitter (@IFUWomen).

The Mexican Federation of University Women (FEMU) is a national organisation and member of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW). FEMU has been working on behalf of women's development, defending their human, sexual and reproductive rights as a fundamental key for the integral progress of societies. As an active member of IFUW, FEMU has published over 22 books, and has also organised courses, conferences and national/international seminars. FEMU runs a radio program "Mujeres a la Tribuna" that airs every Friday on Citizen Radio, 660 AM. In 2010, FEMU founded the Women's Museum under the auspices of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the second museum of its kind in Latin America.

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Follow FEMU and the Women's Museum on [Facebook](#) and Twitter (@mujeresatribuna @museodelamujer).

UN Women is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

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² Figures for 2006 by UNESCO (2009) <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001784/178428e.pdf>