

The Right to Safe Access to Education for All Girls and Women

The Issue

The human right to education is unequivocally enshrined in core international agreements and treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Discrimination in Education, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Convention on the Elimination Against All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, and the World Declaration on Education for All, the framework for Action to meet Basic Learning Needs. Nevertheless, it is often the case that women and children, especially girls, do not have access or safe access to education, particularly those belonging to minority groups or those who live in zones of conflict.

Barriers to safe access to education

- War (civil or cross border conflict) where institutions of learning are often suspended or are too dangerous to reach;
- Crime, extremist ideologies, and/or insufficient or corrupt policing can result in schoolgirls being targeted and facing sexual violence and harassment on the journey to or from school;
- Families keeping their girls at home to avoid potential harm;
- Significant distance to the nearest school, particularly affecting rural and indigenous populations;
- Social and economic barriers including school fees, transportation costs, supplies etc.;
- Bullying at school or *en route* to or from school;
- Sexual harassment or aggression by peers or teachers.

GWI's position

The right to education cannot be realised without safe access. Recognising that women and girls are more often denied safe access, governments and education providers must prioritise the security of girls and women.

In order to address the main barriers to safe access to education, GWI urges states to:

1. Implement and enforce the right of all citizens to education as asserted by international instruments;
2. Provide adequate funding to realise those obligations effectively;
3. Take effective action to counter all forms of violence at and near schools and ensure the safe passage to and from institutions of learning and secure campuses, including gender-segregated toilets;
4. Maintain disaggregated statistics on school achievement and school leaving;
5. Raise awareness within the community of the benefits of well-schooled women to their families and their country and include human rights education on the school curricula;
6. Tackle and eliminate bullying and sexual aggression from schools; and
7. Enforce penalisation of sexual aggression by teachers within school and institutions of learning.