Beijing+25 Initiative and Education for Women and the Girl Child*
(*Girl' or 'Girl Child' means birth to 18 years and is all-inclusive.)

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BACKGROUND
Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) References to Education: B.1., L.4., B.5, L.7
The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted by 189 countries in 1995 at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, declared that "*Education is a human right*" and listed women and education as one of the 12 "*critical areas of concern*". BPfA acknowledged that women's literacy is an important key to improving health and education in the family, empowering women in society, and providing an exceptionally high social and economic return.

PROGRESS
To measure progress in education and gender inequality we need relevant data that effectively assesses and addresses gender disparities. Data is improving.
- World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) highlights how the powerful influence of circumstances, such as wealth, gender, ethnicity and location, over which people have little control, plays an important role in shaping their opportunities for education and life.
- Explore disparities across and within countries using WIDE. According to the website, WIDE draws attention to the unacceptable levels of education inequality across countries and between groups within countries with the aim of helping to inform policy design and public debate.
- WIDE currently assesses 16 indicators for access & completion of education and 9 indicators on learning. https://www.education-inequalities.org.
- See UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS Database); http://uis.unesco.org

Secretary-General's Report on Beijing+25; 2020:
Education for girls has improved since 1995. Girls now outnumber boys in tertiary education. In 2018, 90% of girls ages 15-24 years were literate compared to 80% in 1995. South Asia has made the most progress; Africa the least, especially sub-Saharan Africa. Further, 71% of nations report an increase in the number of girls that have access to technical and vocational training. [*Please note: class differences often still determine which girls receive a secondary/tertiary education – our comment*]

UNESCO/UIS & Global Education Monitoring Report: *Are Countries on Track to Achieve SDG4 (2019): The value of educating girls and women*

- The average effects of education on growth and poverty reduction between 1965-2010 in developing countries suggests that increasing the years of schooling of adults (15 yrs. and over) by 2 years would help lift 60,000,000 people out of poverty

- Achieving universal primary and secondary education in the adult population would help lift 420,000,000 people out of poverty, reducing the number of poor globally by more than half.

- One year of education is estimated to increase wages by 10%, and even more, 13%, in sub-Saharan Africa.

What Works In Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment by Gene B. Sperling & Rebecca Winthrop (2016) identified six major policies that improve girls' access to education:

1. **Make Schools Affordable**
   - Attendance doubled in Tanzania after the elimination of fees for primary education in 2002; an estimated 1.5 million additional students, primarily girls, began attending primary schools.
   - Enrollment jumped 70% after fees were cut and major reforms undertaken in schooling in Uganda. Total girls' enrollment went from 63% to 83% and among the poorest fifth of girls, from 46% to 82%. By 2000, the gender gap was eliminated (2003).
   - Providing girls in India with bicycles to get to school increased girls' age-appropriate enrollment in secondary school by 30% and reduced the gender gap in age-appropriate education by 40% (2013).
   - Girls who returned to school after the Zambia Cash Transfer program continued to sustain gains after the program ended; over the long run they were 10 percentage points less likely to have been married and 4 percentage points less likely to have been pregnant (2015).
   - Additional interventions include scholarships, stipends, conditional cash and in-kind transfers, social welfare cards, and the provision of uniforms and books.

2. **Address Girls' Health**
   - In Pakistan, a large-scale, community-delivered school lunch program in 4,035 government primary girls' schools in 29 of the poorest rural districts helped to halve wasting due to malnutrition and to increase enrollment by 40% over the 2-year intervention (2008).
   - The World Food Program's Food for Education project increased enrollment in schools receiving on-site food and take-home rations in 32 Sub-Saharan African countries by nearly 28% for girls and 22% for boys (2007).

- WASH Interventions (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) – increasing the number of toilets in South African schools and spreading out their locations could lower the number of sexual assaults against women by 30% (2015).

3. **Reduce the Time and Distance to School**
   - Indonesia achieved nearly full enrollment by building and staffing conveniently located schools. The country built nearly 60,000 new schools over 4 years. The government also made sure the schools had enough trained teachers, books, and learning materials (2001).
   - In the 1980s Egypt constructed some 2,000 new schools and provided teachers in them. Girls' enrollment in rural primary schools increased about 60%, from 897,000 to 1.4 million from 1990-1991. The proportion of girls in rural schools rose from 35% to 42% (2000).
   - A cross-country study has found that school-age children are 10 to 20 percentage points more likely to attend school if they live in a village with a primary school (2000).

4. **Community Schools**
   - A community remedial education program that hired young women from the community to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills to children who do not have basic skills by third grade found that 2 years after the program learning was increased 0.39 standard deviation, with the highest gains among the least able students. Further, it only cost $5 per child per year (2007).
   - A 16-country review in Africa shows that community schools generally increase enrollment, retention, and, on average, have lower dropout rates (2002).

5. **Flexible School Schedules**
   - Bangladesh's satellite schools operated only 2.5 hours per day, mainly with women teachers, and schedules set to rural children's work schedule. Girls constituted 63% of students enrolled and fewer than 1% dropped out (1991).

6. **Eliminate School-Related Gender-based Violence**
   - 30% of girls in South Africa are raped in and around school (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), Education for All (EFA)2015.
   - Teachers seek sexual favors in exchange for better grades or punish a student with poor grades if rejected (Irish Consortium 2013).

CHALLENGES
UNESCO/UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) & Global Education Monitoring Report (2019): Are Countries on Track to Achieve SDG4 by 2030?

Despite some positive signs, significant education challenges remain:

- Aid to education accounts for 20% of low-income country education budgets, but financing has flatlined since 2010;

- Large disparities are seen between countries and regions;

- The current pace is insufficient to achieve SDG4 by 2030. Countries performance should be assessed against achievable benchmarks and compared to high-performing countries in their same income bracket;

- Individual cross-national learning assessments demonstrate that a large proportion of students do not achieve minimum proficiency in reading; and

- Two factors, in addition to good health, positively affect literacy/numeracy - stimulating home environments and access to early childhood care and education. In 44 low- and middle-income countries, only 7.5% of children under 5 years and only 0.3% in the poorest 20% of households live in homes with at least 10 books. Currently, the pre-primary enrollment globally is 50% (2017) and projected to be 68% in 2030.

Additional challenges include lack of learning mastery (24% of boys and 16% of girls are significantly underachieving on basic literacy measures), 142 million children not in secondary school, a rise of private education that puts marginalized girls and children further at risk as the poor are often concentrated in underfunded public schools or so-called low-fee private schools, and poor children are 6x less likely to get Early Childhood Education. Further, improved levels of education for women have not translated into a reduction in occupational segregation or elimination of gender pay gap. Finally, girls continue to face significant barriers when seeking an education including poor sanitation conditions, fears for safety, inability to pay school expenses, the use of girls' for unpaid domestic labor, and lack of broadband, especially in rural areas.

To put it most succinctly the Secretary-General Report on Beijing+25 (2020) stated: *The major challenge in meeting the global commitment to education is a chronic lack of public investment. UNESCO recommends that countries need to allocate 4-6% of their GDP or 15-20% of their national budget.*

FUTURE RESEARCH/Scholarly:
(Center for Global Development, www.cgdev.org)

One question is what constrains girls' participation in school in settings where gender gaps in attainment remain large, and which strategies are most appropriate to address these constraints. Many countries with these gaps are also struggling to recover from conflict, build state capacity, strengthen democratic institutions, and provide security and social protection to all citizens. *In these settings, it is unclear whether the main obstacles to girls' education are legal, political, economic, or social.*

When obstacles are legal or political, advocacy is likely to play a key role in pressuring governments. When the primary issue is the cost of schooling, policies that are gender-sensitive but not gender-targeted may be more critical — for example, aid to governments, reductions in school fees, and social protection programs that relax household budget constraints (Evans and Yuan, 2019). When cultural and social issues constrain girls' education, grassroots advocacy is likely to play a key role in changing attitudes — but donors and other external actors may be limited in their ability to drive change from outside.

SOURCES FOR THIS DOCUMENT:
BEIJING Platform For Action (BPfA); 1995
Secretary-General's Report on Beijing+25; 2020
UNESCO/UIS & Global Education Monitoring Report: Are Countries on Track to Achieve SDG4 (2019)
What Works In Girls' Education: Evidence for the World's Best Investment by Gene B. Sperling and Rebecca Winthrop; 2016

RELATED DOCUMENTS:
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS – Article 26
CEDAW – Article 10 a-f; 14.2 d; General Recommendation #19
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD – Article 23 disabled child; Article 28 education
A/RES/74/275 – INTERNATIONAL DAY TO PROTECT EDUCATION FROM ATTACK: ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 28/MAY/2020

RESOURCE MATERIALS for Curriculum (to date):
FWMAP Video Series – Youtube
VIDEO SOLAR MAMA
Expert Paper – Maria Virginia Bras Gomes (UN Women)
We Will Rise: Michelle Obama's Mission to Educate Girls Around the World – Amazon Prime
Michelle Obama – *Role Models to the World* – Youtube Video
UNICEF – Children in a Digital World – 2017
UNESCO – UIS – Statistics
The Girl With the Louding Voice – Abi Dare

SUGGESTED ACTIVITES:
Role Play
Community Outreach
Individual Research Projects
Peer Tutoring
Volunteering
NGO Advocacy
Drafting Concept Notes