



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

July 2023

Original: English and French

2023 session

17 July 2023- 20 July 2023

ECOSOC High-level Segment

Statement submitted by Graduate Women International (GWI) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statements, which are being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Statement

Graduate Women International (GWI) urges Member States to apply a systems lens to priorities and policies to push progress and achieve the 2030 Agenda

When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020, few could have foreseen the catastrophic effects the virus would have on the education of the world's children. In fact, [UNESCO](#) has projected that up to 11 million girls may never return to school.

During the first 12 months of the pandemic, lockdowns led to 1.5 billion students in 188 countries being unable to attend school in person. As a [2021 OECD report](#) into the effects of school closure put it: "*Few groups were less vulnerable to the coronavirus than school children, but few groups have been more affected by the policy responses to contain the virus.*" As late as March 2022, [UNICEF reported that 23 countries](#), home to around 405 million schoolchildren, had not yet fully reopened their schools.

COVID-19 highlighted the stark inequalities that exist both across and within countries, with millions of students unable to receive instruction due to a lack of access to connectivity. Post-pandemic the world is facing prolonged education challenges including, but not limited to, addressing learning losses, training teachers for effective digital teaching, managing hybrid learning environments, and ameliorating mental health issues caused by prolonged isolation.

All aspects of the global community - governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations - must come together to 'build back better' in order to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. To get back on track, GWI urges Member States to take the following action:

- Place education (SDG4) at the heart of all recovery efforts and funding allocations.
- Member States must apply a systems lens to priorities and policies to significantly push progress and achieve the 2030 Agenda.
- Create partnerships between government, the private sector, and NGOs to invest in both school and digital infrastructure.
- Provide sustainable, equitable, gender-responsive, quality, inclusive education by ending underinvestment in education in all countries.
- Provide educational opportunities to pregnant adolescents and single mothers to enable them to continue/complete their education thereby disrupting the feminization of poverty due to a lack of education and work-related skills.
- Provide catch-up literacy and numeracy instruction for all students, with a particular emphasis on those most vulnerable and marginalized.
- Reinstate field data collection operations disrupted during the pandemic and require disaggregated and intersectional data using both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Fund data collection to adequately capture the success of policies, determine where resources are needed, and plan future endeavors.
- Incorporate climate change, civics, and socioemotional skills in all curriculums.
- Enhance teacher wellbeing through adequate pay, decent working conditions, and a voice in curriculum design.

Word count: 500
