

## Promoting Gender Equality: Empowering through Education for All

During the HLPF 2023, the pressing issue of gender inequality was highlighted from various angles. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst, exacerbating existing challenges and underscoring the interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For instance, the intersection of water and sanitation with gender becomes evident as women and girls remain disproportionately vulnerable to diseases caused by inadequate sanitation and water scarcity. It is essential to recognize these interdependencies and work collaboratively to address them effectively.

Gender equality is a critical goal that requires innovative and unconventional approaches. Embracing the concept of "business unusual," which involves social entrepreneurship and creative models, can be a powerful step in addressing societal issues. We must recognize that achieving true gender equity goes beyond relying solely on technology or new tools; it calls for bold and purposeful actions. By encouraging innovative solutions and breaking free from traditional norms, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and equal society.

To effectively close the gender gap, new models, standards, and evaluations are required. Creating an enabling ecosystem, fostering sticky communities, and promoting cross-sector cooperation are essential. Using technology and education can be a transformative force in advocating for gender equality. Through these tools, women and girls can be empowered to take charge and lead in developing innovative models that cater to their unique needs and rights.

Furthermore, emphasizing the involvement of men and boys in these conversations is crucial. While there are some existing projects that serve as a good example of improving gender equality education, many of them still neglect the significance of raising gender equality awareness of males and having them learn proper knowledge and unlearning behaviors that are disrespectful or even threatening to females in their daily life.

To foster true gender equality, it is essential to address the responsibility that males bear in creating a respectful and equitable society. Men are an integral part of the gender socio-culture we live in today. It is insufficient to solely provide girls and women with information on self-protection and sexual knowledge. Men must also confront these issues and receive proper sex education from a young age. Men's active engagement is necessary to address the physical gap between genders, as well as the patriarchal socio-cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination.

The responsibility for raising awareness about adolescents, sex education, and reproductive health should not fall solely on women. Men need to be educated on these matters, as they play a significant role in making crucial decisions within gender relationships. Only by involving and educating both genders can we effectively address gender disparities and create a more equal society.

Finally, I want to highlight the importance of starting gender equity education, sex education, and reproductive health programs early in children's education. By providing children with proper knowledge and promoting appropriate behaviors from a young age, we can begin to challenge and unlearn the deeply rooted patriarchal culture that shapes our socio-systems and behaviors. This early intervention is crucial in creating a society that fosters gender equality.

In conclusion, we should move beyond technology as a panacea and focus on creating new models, standards, and evaluations that align with creating a more equitable society. The involvement of men and boys is essential, as they are key participants in the gender socio-culture. Additionally, early education and unlearning patriarchal norms are vital for creating a more gender-equal society.