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# Summary report of the International Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education

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## Acronyms

CLC	Community Learning Centre
ECE/ECCE	Early Childhood Education/Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IBE	International Bureau of Education
ICT	Information and communications technology
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
NFE	Non-formal education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## Acknowledgements

The International Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education was co-organized by the UNESCO National Commission of the People's Republic of China and the Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality at UNESCO Headquarters, in cooperation with the UNESCO Beijing Office.

The organizers would like to express their sincere appreciation to all 85 participants from nearly 30 countries who wholeheartedly participated in the sessions, discussions and field visits in Beijing.

Thanks are particularly extended to the education experts, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners from China and abroad who shared their invaluable experience and knowledge, and engaged in thought-provoking discussions. Sincere thanks are also due to the representatives of the Great Wall Fellowship whose perspectives and experiences enlightened the Seminar's discussions.

This report aims to capture the essence of the seminar's sessions and discussions, and to sustain and maintain momentum on actions for girls' and women's education and gender equality in education.

This report draws on notes and contributions by Ms Florence Migeon and Ms Elodie Khavarani from UNESCO Headquarters, and meeting minutes and notes by Mr Robert Parua, Ms Tianzhou Zhao, Ms Jingning Guan and Ms Li Li from the UNESCO Beijing Office.

## Introduction

On 25 September 2015, at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development, Member States agreed on a new vision for development. At the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lies the principle of “leaving no one behind.” SDG 4 calls on countries to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” and SDG 5 aims to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The Education 2030 Framework for Action, adopted by 184 Member States and the global education community, provides guidance for implementing SDG 4.

While significant progress has been made over the last decades in education, girls and women still make up the large majority of out-of-school children and illiterate adults. According to the latest data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics [2014], 15 million girls will never set foot in a classroom. Out of the nearly 758 million illiterate adults, two-thirds are women, a percentage unchanged since 2000. Even where the enrolment gap is closed, many girls continue to drop out of school prematurely, especially during adolescence, making them vulnerable to abuse and deprivation and curtailing future opportunities in life.

The immense benefits of education on girls and women are widely recognised. These include increased decision-making capacity and improved employment opportunities, greater protection from violence and exploitation, and stronger communities and more inclusive societies.

The International Seminar on Girls’ and Women’s Education, held 4-6 June 2016 in Beijing, explored these benefits along with barriers to the achievement of gender equality in education. It provided a platform for dialogue on the role of education for girls and women, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and specifically in reaching SDG 4 and supporting the achievement of other SDGs. The event also marked the first award ceremony of the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education, which honoured two laureates for their outstanding innovation and contributions to advancing girls’ and women’s education.

The Seminar brought together 85 local and international participants, including experts, researchers, policy-makers and Chinese government representatives, teachers and teacher training institution staff, UNESCO Headquarters, regional and country office staff, and women’s organizations representatives. Also present were individuals involved in the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education, including the Chair, Jury members and Prize laureates, in addition to laureates of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy.

The following sections present a synthesis of information that was shared during the seminar’s sessions, and the findings and recommendations originating from the exchanges.

## Section 1: Summary of sessions

### 4 June 2015 (Field Visits)

Field visits were organized on the first day of the International Seminar for Girls' and Women's Education to provide participants with an introduction to the situation in China, and a hands-on perspective to enhance discussions.

Participants were able to visit various locations, including the China National Museum of Women and Children and the African Art Village located in Songzhuang: an artist community in Tongzhou district.



Participants were also able to experience classes taught at a community college in Beijing where members of the community, youth and adults, are trained in traditional Chinese culture, including Tai Chi, dance and wood painting.

Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr Du Yue, Secretary-General of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO. It set the tone for the Seminar, as four speakers stressed the importance of girls' and women's education for national development, and the achievement of the SDGs. All underlined the commitment from UNESCO and China to promote and advance girls' and women's education globally.



**Mr Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO**

- The new UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education illustrates China's commitment to gender equality in education. It reaffirms and reflects the close partnership of UNESCO with the HNA Group to strengthening girls' education in Asia and Africa through gender-responsive teacher training and professional development.
- Significant progress has been made since the Education for All (EFA) goals were launched in Dakar in 2000, notably in expanding access to education, especially for girls. But the battle is not over.
- Girls' and women's education is important because educated girls have better prospects in all aspects of their lives and personal, societal and developmental benefits. Education for girls and women is a prerequisite for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- UNESCO has a unique mandate to strengthen the education sector's capacity to ensure that girls and women can access, and benefit from, a quality education, reach their full potential and become active and responsible global citizens.
- UNESCO's work in this area includes: cooperation with governments to address the challenges facing girls and women at all levels and in all types of education; supporting gender mainstreaming and equity in technical and vocational education and training (TVET); preventing and mitigating gender-based violence in and around schools; and cooperating with key stakeholders to create safe and healthy learning environments.
- UNESCO has also launched the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education to address gender disparities in literacy and secondary education, and works with sister agencies such as UN Women and UNFPA on the Joint Programme for Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women.



**Mr Han Demin, Academic, Chinese Academy of Engineering and Board member, HNA Group**

- Mr Han introduced the HNA Group (hereafter HNA) and noted the importance it places on corporate social responsibility as a key development policy. In line with its corporate belief of “doing something for society, doing something for others”, HNA actively supports the mandates and programmes of international organizations, including UNESCO.
- In 2014, HNA launched a five-year partnership with UNESCO to promote gender equality in education in Asia and Africa, referred to above by Mr Qian Tang.
- The group strongly believes that girls’ and women’s education is fundamental to the development of knowledge and skills to improve economic and living conditions, and to promote equal rights in society.
- The group is confident in UNESCO’s expertise and influence in the field of education. HNA fully supports the Organization in its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Ms Song Shengju, Vice-President, China Women’s University**

- Ms Song introduced China’s efforts in advancing girls’ and women’s education, including the establishment of supportive policies advancing equal rights and women’s participation in education, and protection under the marriage law.
- The percentage of the national budget devoted to education has grown in recent years. In particular, the national expenditure per student in basic education has increased, which is crucial to girls’ education as the financial support is allocated without gender differences.

**Mr Hao Ping, Vice-Minister of Education of the People’s Republic of China, Chairperson of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO**

- Mr Hao made reference to the remarks made by President Xi Jinping during his official visit to UNESCO Headquarters, quoting: “The rights of women should be ensured so that they have self-respect, self-confidence, and independence”.
- During the past century, China has focused on narrowing gender disparities in education, reflected in the National Education Action Plan 2030 and the Outline Program for the Development of Chinese Women and Children.
- The particular needs of women are now considered during the policy-making process, and there is widespread understanding in China that ensuring women’s rights and improving their social-economic status benefits society.



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## Session 1: Measuring gender equality in education in the context of SDG4-Education 2030

### Introduction to the seminar

*Ms Marielza Oliveira, Director, UNESCO Beijing*

Ms Oliveira opened the seminar by emphasising the instrumental role of education. She described a “gender-biased data crisis” where there is a lack of education statistics among certain populations, including out-of-school children and girls in rural areas. As Agenda 2030 is largely data-driven, she called for a data revolution for girls and women that also improved data for marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, people living with HIV and ethnic minorities. She outlined the seminar’s objectives and expected outcomes, as well as the programme format and agenda.

*Ms Maki Hayashikawa, Chief, Section for Inclusive Quality Education, UNESCO Bangkok*

Ms Hayashikawa introduced the Education 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, specifically SDG 4 which calls for inclusive quality education. She called education both an empowering and a lifelong learning process, and indicated that education should not only relate to formal schooling but also learning for out-of-school populations. She noted the lack of specific reference to gender equality across the targets of the SDGs and called for the development of indicators to measure gender equality.

Mr Robert Parua, Chief of Education at UNESCO Beijing and the session moderator, reflected that measuring gender equality in education remains a major challenge for the global community. UNESCO has established a technical committee, and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is leading on defining core indicators for SDG 4. Mr Parua observed that the alignment of SDG 4 with national education plans is critical, and that plans to achieve SDG 4 must be country-driven and based on national indicators.

### Presentation: Gender parity in education in China

*Mr Han Min, Deputy Director, National Centre of Education Development Research, China*

Mr Han discussed the importance of measuring and monitoring gender equality and parity in China. He stated that in general, China had achieved gender parity yet a gap still exists, notably with adults. For example, 70 per cent of illiterate adults are women, and women lack training opportunities and access to quality education. While literacy programmes promoting lifelong learning and continuing education have been established, including for disadvantaged and marginalised groups, there remains a gender disparity in educational attainment and vocational skills training, especially in poor rural areas.

### Presentation: Gender equality and equity in education in Iran

*Mr Mostafa Hasannejad, Senior Expert of Public Relations, Literacy Movement Organization, Iran*

Mr Hasannejad identified a great need for literacy programmes in Iran. Eighty per cent of women in the country follow literacy courses through the Literacy Movement Organization, and the priorities are marginalised populations including illiterate mothers, nomadic girls and vulnerable adolescents. He presented tools used by his organization to measure gender disparities in literacy, including the census, a literacy database as well as performance and literacy assessments. Mr Hasannejad observed that a specific plan aligned with the country context and needs is under development, in cooperation with UIS. He also noted measures taken to balance the gender gap, such as recruiting local female trainers and carrying out comparative studies and consultative meetings.

## Presentation: Gender equity in Shanghai PISA 2012 results

Ms Lu Jing, Professor and Vice-President, Shanghai PISA Centre of Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences

Ms Lu presented the Shanghai PISA 2012 results, which found that girls in Shanghai perform as well as boys in mathematics (using paper-based testing), but report lower levels of motivation and belief in their ability to succeed in the subject than boys. She observed that these results demonstrate a narrowing of the gender gap in subjects where gender stereotypes are prevalent, but felt that students' motivation and self-confidence are equally as important as subject knowledge. She referenced the 2015 UNESCO report, *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good*, and called for a focus on soft, transferable and non-cognitive skills to achieve gender equality in education, and on addressing gender disparities in digital learning. Lower results were found for girls than boys in PISA's computer-based testing for mathematics, suggesting the need for research to understand the relationship between computer usage and achievements in computer-based assessments.

### Session 1: Questions and Answers

Participants discussed many issues during the discussion, grouped into the following themes:

#### ▪ Gendered data and indicators

Concern was voiced about weak data on girls and women with disabilities. An observation was also made that drop-outs in the past were largely linked to poverty but are now more commonly associated with the poor quality of education, which demotivates students and impedes learning. China's rapid urbanization process was suggested as hampering its ability to collect accurate enrolment numbers, and use of IT-based enrolment cards was suggested as one tool to better monitor drop-outs at school. Input indicators were called for to measure how many programmes are being implemented. The difficulty of measuring literacy skills was also raised, and impact indicators were felt necessary to determine the association between improvements in literacy and women's empowerment.

#### ▪ Role of parents, teachers and the community

Reference was made to a UNESCO Bangkok study entitled *The Complex Formula*, which found that parents' expectations impact girls' performance in science and math. A question was raised on how teachers' expectations and media messages contribute to lowering girls' self-confidence in science and technology, and the role of the education sector in addressing this. Programmes promoting awareness-raising with parents and teachers were recommended.

#### ▪ Curriculum and languages

One person emphasised that literacy programmes should begin in students' mother tongue and include sign language. One participant asked if different curriculum was needed for girls and women, with the Iranian panellist responding that their programme did not use separate curriculum, but rather specialised methods and content for women and girls.

#### ▪ Context and enabling factors

Attention to context, specifically the influence of patriarchal society on girls' and women's education, was recommended, along with better sharing of good practices to achieve gender equality in education. One participant called for stronger political and societal engagement on girls' and women's education in China, and noted that education should go hand-in-hand with broader societal awareness-raising.



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**Session 2: Towards knowledge societies: Innovation in skills development, entrepreneurship education for girls and women and their transition to the world of work (including in science- and math-related topics)**

**Presentation: Gender dimension in the DNA of STEM education: a perspective from Latin America**

*Ms Gloria Bonder, UNESCO Regional Chair on Women, Science and Technology in Latin America*

Ms Bonder identified opportunities and challenges that the SDGs present to current development paradigms to achieve sustainability, social justice and well-being for all. She called for: innovations in education to improve its quality and relevance in complex, unequal and rapidly evolving societies, and the integration of gender equality and gender analysis throughout the 2030 Agenda. She stated that gender-responsive science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education could act as a key driver to more fair, creative and sustainable societies. To achieve this, a new gendered learning ecology is required to assure the equal participation of women and men in the creation of knowledge societies. This ecology should be based on the participation of multiple networks and communities, the strategic use of IT, and participatory, collaborative and interdisciplinary learning. It should raise awareness and promote measures to overcome gender stereotypes in curriculum content, pedagogy and interactions and address gender-based violence in educational settings. Ms Bonder also stressed that education should encourage critical thinking, creativity, citizen responsibility and community-based learning. She concluded by noting that despite the improvements in access to education for girls and women in Latin America, there is much to be done to overcome gender biases and discrimination, particularly in the science and technology fields.



**Presentation: Gender equality issues in education – Evidence from the National Assessment of Education Quality in China**

*Mr Xin Tao, Deputy Director, National Assessment Center of Education Quality, China*

Mr Xin presented the findings of the Center's National Assessment of Education Quality which found no significant difference in mathematic performance between boys and girls; however, girls face disadvantage in science and physical education in their early years, specifically in 4th grade. Girls produced marginally higher scores compared to boys in areas such as motivation and self-confidence. The National Assessment of Education Quality System has provided guidelines to assess quality education, and to promote tailored interventions for child and adolescent development. Future assessments will be conducted on early childhood development, vocational and tertiary education.

**Presentation: Innovating to enrol, retain and promote girls and women in science and technology: experiences from the European Union**

*Mr Maxime Forest, Senior Researcher/Lecturer, SciencesPo (OFCE) and EGERA Scientific Coordinator (EU FP7), France*

Mr Forest provided participants with an outline of the European Union's work on gender in education, from the EU 2020 strategy of building knowledge societies and strengthening women's inclusion in the workforce, to the Horizon 2020 programme, which considers gender

as a crosscutting issue in science and technology. In the EU, gender stereotypes and biases remain pervasive in primary and secondary education. As a result, sex segregation persists when it comes to opting for higher education trajectories and future occupations. He observed that horizontal (study and occupational) segregation is not only about women being concentrated in a narrower set of educational and career paths, but also about remaining largely under-represented in STEM fields. While outnumbering men in law, social science, the humanities and medicine, women usually account for less than 30 per cent of students enrolled in technology, engineering or economics. Mr Forest highlighted the need to ask the right questions to incite gender equality opportunities. At policy level, addressing both horizontal and vertical segregation may give women the resources to move up the occupational ladder. At the institutional level, securing top level support and engaging the entire academic community, both male and female students, teachers and administrators, may lead to change.

#### **Presentation: Facilitating the transition to the world of work**

*Ms Voahangy Hanta Ratiarison, Platform of Associations of ASAMA and Post-ASAMA, Madagascar*

Ms Ratiarison revealed the many obstacles girls and women face to enter the workforce in Madagascar, and the innovation required in skills development and the education system as a whole to overcome these challenges. While further national investments in education are needed, she believes it is also imperative to engage and empower community trainers at the local level. She called for better financing, deeper partnerships, improved information networks and the establishment of a coaching mechanism to sustain progress.

#### **Presentation: Integrated approach to literacy programmes and professional development**

*Ms Aicha Barki, President, Association Algérienne d'Alphabétisation, Algeria*

Ms Barki presented her organization's experience of building women's literacy skills. In order to empower women to be full actors in their society, the organization has established a strategic three-step programme, addressing: (1) literacy, (2) training and (3) work. She noted that the organization carried out an impact study of the strategy, revealing that women taking part in her organization's activities felt more visible, responsive and engaged.

#### **Presentation: Students' training and labour market demands**

*Ms Song Sheng Ju, Vice-President, China Women's University*

Ms Song provided participants with an overview of the state of women's education in China. She indicated that 50 per cent of enrolments in tertiary education are female, with enrolment rates decreasing at doctoral levels. To address gender differences, Ms Song noted that the legal framework had been revised to address the interests of women in education. Her university is the only one in China committed to training female students, with 99 per cent of all enrolments being women. The university offers 21 bachelor programmes covering 8 disciplines, including sciences. The employment rate for graduates has been stable at 95 per cent, reaching 96 per cent in 2015. She noted the importance of considering alternative ways of learning, including inter-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

#### **Presentation: Gender-responsive life skills-based education to reach vulnerable adolescent girls in Western China**

*Ms Wang Guangyu, UNICEF China*

Ms Wang said that UNICEF's gender action plan (2014-2017) aims to promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. UNICEF's work includes teacher training and collaboration with the Ministry of Education through policy dialogues and capacity-building. Ms Wang noted that a common definition of adolescence is needed to increase the targeted

impact of activities and revealed that gender stereotypes were prevalent, including with parents, teachers and the media. She called for the creation of more supportive environments in which girls and women of all ages can operate on an equal basis with boys and men, and for awareness-raising activities engaging all stakeholders.

### **Presentation: Improve the levels of teaching for women in the Yanqing district**

*Ms Wang Ruiqin, Director, Vocational and Technical Education Center, Yanqing District, Beijing*

Ms Wang stated that stable societies demand women's inclusion, and called for intensified efforts to raise awareness and provide women with capacity-building opportunities. She praised joint cooperation with stakeholders from government and women's associations, and stressed the importance of assessing women's needs to inform the design of relevant training programmes.

### **Session 2: Questions and Answers**

The session concluded with a rich discussion on the following topics:

- **Teachers' roles and resources**
  - The obstacles faced by teachers in Latin America and the resources provided to them were brought forward.
  - The changing role of teachers was raised, whereby they are no longer the unique source of knowledge. Teachers should become learners and change the expectations of their role. It is important to ask: what is education today? Who learns? Who teaches?
- **The case of developing countries**
  - One participant inquired about whether horizontal or vertical segregation was more dominant, and what could developing countries do to address this. Both types were seen to represent unequal divisions of power, and that there was a need to tackle both concurrently, and engage all by creating accountability. Another participant shared an example of how low-cost policies have brought results in developing countries.
- **Addressing root causes**
  - Participants considered how to change institutional male-dominated cultures, and how to challenge self-perceptions among women that they are intrinsically not good in STEM fields.
  - There was a call to create space in education to learn about the right to 'decent work,' defined by International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.
- **Funding**
  - Finding sustainable funding sources and mobilizing resources were identified to be major challenges. The example of Algeria was shared, whereby the State established a national strategy for literacy which involved a comprehensive funding scheme, with additional support from Japan and Spain.



6 June 2015

**Session 3 (Part 1): From policies to implementation: Building inclusive and gender-responsive environments (focus on SRGBV, discrimination and inclusion of excluded groups)**

The moderator, Ms Bah Diallo, founding member of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), introduced the session by stating that women's education is the backbone of sustainable development. She noted that the SDGs have been developed through a bottom-up approach that will allow for a more manageable national implementation than the Millennium Development Goals, which had a top-down approach.

**Presentation: Inclusion, equity and gender equality in SDG4**

*Maki Hayashikawa, Chief, Section for Inclusive Quality Education, UNESCO Bangkok*

Ms Hayashikawa shared the fundamental principles of inclusion, equity and gender equality in the context of SDG 4, as referenced in targets 4.1, 4.5 and 4.7. She stressed that inclusion should be at the core of education transformation as it is a process that aims to identify and remove barriers, and ensure the presence, participation and achievement of all learners, including marginalized groups. To implement SDG 4, system-wide change is needed, and UNESCO is supporting Members States to initiate broader dialogue on SDG implementation. She recommended embedding inclusion, equity and gender equality in existing core education policy rather than creating separate policies. She also emphasized the importance of policies at all levels, including the classroom-level, and to ensure cross-sectoral interventions (education, health, social, economic, legal, political or cultural). She shared a range of relevant UNESCO resources, such as the *UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion and Equity in Education*, and the resource pack for supporting inclusive education for curriculum developers by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE).

**Presentation: Improving Access and Quality of Girls' Education through Community-based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Early Year Gender Mainstreaming**

*Ms Ella Yulaelawati, Director, Early Childhood Education and Development, Directorate of Early Childhood Education and Development, Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia*

Ms Yulaelawati stated that the education of girls is an investment, and that girls' empowerment at early years is key. Indonesia has gender disparities in attendance and participation in pre-primary education, particularly among girls from poor families. Early childhood education teachers have limited knowledge and skills, and gender bias, stereotypes and sexism limit girls' potential growth and development, impact their self-esteem and ultimately, their academic performance. Her organization has developed a programme to scale up quality education for girls in rural and marginalised areas through community participation and capacity-building. She called for action to: raise awareness, integrate gender mainstreaming in education into school curricula, develop and disseminate gender-responsive teaching and learning materials, and formulate gender-responsive budgets and targeted action plans. Her organization is one of two laureates of the inaugural UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education (see page 19).

**Presentation: United Nations East Asia Pacific Girls' Education Initiative**

*Ms Cecilia Victorino Soriano, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office*

Ms Soriano shared that adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and gender disparities in education persist in Asia and the Pacific. Twenty-two per cent of young women in South Asia, and 8 per cent in East Asia Pacific become pregnant. She stressed the importance of embedding gender perspectives in education at an early age, and the need for gender-responsive national education sector plans. She also shared the work being done by the

regional UNGEI initiative, including on school-related gender-based violence and education for marginalised groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

### **Presentation: Case study of a county in the Guangxi province - Achievements and Problems of the Policies of Poverty Eradication through Education**

*Ms Xu Li, Professor, Guangxi Normal University, China*

Ms Xu presented the situation in a poor and remote county in Guangxi Province, where women make up 48 per cent of the population living in poverty. The education assistance policy provides for guaranteed access to education for children of families in poverty; however, a gap remains between those who need assistance and those who ultimately benefit from the policy. Ms Xu discussed the key role of education and suggested that poverty reduction policies should be adjusted to reduce the education gap and to ensure a wider and more targeted reach to those in need.

### **Presentation: Advancing equity for women and girls with disabilities**

*Dr. Alessandra Aresu, Country Director, Handicap International, China Programme*

Dr. Aresu noted that 15 per cent of the world's population has a disability, and that women comprise three-quarters of all disabled people in low- and middle-income countries. She shared that gender and disability have consistently been treated separately in development discourse and in the formulation and implementation of equality policies. As a result, intersecting discriminations and multiple rights' violations experienced by women and girls with disabilities are insufficiently addressed through inclusive programmes and policies. Dr. Aresu highlighted that girls and women with disabilities in developing countries have particularly limited access to education and are more vulnerable to violence and abuse than their disabled male peers, or girls and women without disabilities. She called for specific actions to advance gender equality, access to education, and the provision of information on sexual and reproductive health rights for women and girls with disabilities. This includes: ensuring their participation and decision-making power in global and local dialogues on gender equality, developing specific indicators, and collecting quality information, data and good practices to influence policies and programmes.

## **Session 3 (Part 1): Questions and Answers**

This session generated many questions and a rich discussion on the following issues:

### ▪ **Policy**

Participants discussed how to link education with the SDGs in national policies and to support local implementation and evaluation of the SDGs, and how to identify those in need. A new steering committee on education will provide guidance on the implementation strategies at local level. Women's education was seen as having personal, family, national and regional benefits.

### ▪ **Gender budgeting**

The issue of gender budgeting was raised by a number of participants. The panelist from Indonesia shared that there are difficulties with determining the budget allocation to support gender-responsive teaching and learning materials and pedagogy, but that there are 300 districts that have implemented gender mainstreaming in education through various ministries.

### ▪ **Education and the SDGs**

The belief that education is the backbone of the SDGs was repeated many times throughout the session. Some participants felt that there was a need for a regional coordination mechanism that would consider how education cuts across other SDGs, and the identification of indicators that impact on education outcomes. Two regional studies are using assessments as an entry point to create opportunities for improvements in measurement of outcomes.

## Session 3 (Part 2): What works: Good practices in building and maintaining inclusive and gender-responsive learning environments



### **Presentation: Female Students Network Trust**

*Ms Evernice Munando, Director, Female Students Network Trust, Harare, Zimbabwe*

Ms Munando shared the work of the Female Students Network Trust, a civil society organization advocating for the rights and empowerment of girls and women in tertiary education institutions. She emphasised the importance of gender-inclusive and -responsive environments. She shared that her organization is undertaking advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns in collaboration with government entities, adopting a multi-sectorial approach that targets secondary school students and engages boys and men as well as women and girls. Her organization is one of the two laureates of the inaugural UNESCO Prize for girls' and women's education (see page 19).

### **Presentation: Approaches and practices for the education of girls and women**

*Sister Sylvie Ilunga, Collectif Alpha Ujuvi, Democratic Republic of Congo*

Sister Ilunga introduced the work of her organization, Collectif Alpha Ujuvi, which has a strong focus on literacy and training to boost professional opportunities. Women are supported to stand on their own through knowledge-building and use. The organization helps women learn to write, read and calculate through participatory and experience-based methods, and raises awareness on child marriage and gender-based violence.

### **Presentation: Fundacion Transformemos**

*Ms Maria Aurora Carrillo Gullo, Fundacion Transformemos, Colombia*

Ms Carrillo noted that 67 per cent of students in Colombia are female. Her organization has reached 300,000 vulnerable youth and adults with education activities, and has also supported courses and activities in universities. She highlighted the use of language as a tool, and literacy as a starting point for learning. Ms Carrillo also stressed the importance of establishing relationships with various stakeholders, and adapting projects to local contexts and needs. She called for inclusive education and collective action by teachers, students and communities to promote lifelong learning. She stated that to build a more inclusive society, it is important not only to understand one's own history, but to also know the history of others. She concluded that education is the basis of identity formulation and community affiliation.



### **Presentation: Inclusive and gender-responsive learning environment: ActionAid experience**

*Mr Mohammad Muntasim Tanvir, International Policy Manager, Education, ActionAid, Thailand*

Mr Tanvir stressed the need for multi-pronged interventions with youth, schools, families and communities to address girls' experiences, societal attitudes, institutional environments, and laws and policies. He also underlined that working with boys is essential, because it can enable girls and boys to start working together for system-wide change. Mr Tanvir stated that tackling corporal punishment and strengthening school infrastructure was crucial to the creation of gender-responsive learning environments, along with engaging communities to address out-of-school girls and harmful cultural beliefs. He concluded by highlighting the need to translate policies into good practices and good practices into effective policies.



### **Presentation: Language and Literacy**

*Ms Mical Dréhi Lorougnon, President, Savoir Pour Mieux Vivre, Côte d'Ivoire*

Ms Lorougnon heads a non-governmental organization built on the notion that knowledge helps us accept one another and live better together. She voiced that language is a door to reach a different culture and to gain understanding about the way of thinking associated with that culture. In her opinion, learning languages is part of learning cultures. The organization has adopted a multilingual mode of teaching to uphold diverse heritages. She underlined that 'parenté linguistique' (or kinship in language) can impede violence and war, and that reconciliation is only possible through language.

### **Session 3 (Part 2): Questions and Answers**

As this session revolved around good practices in creating gender-responsive environments, the discussion raised many issues including:

- Criteria to select the **language of instruction** at school in settings where many languages are present.
- **Infrastructure** issues such as how to establish separate restrooms in ECCE centres.
- The need for **follow-up mechanisms** for returnees to the education system. On this issue, re-entry programmes linked to the wider community were suggested to have more traction and to be more sustainable than stand-alone programmes.

### **Session 4 (Part 1): Promoting lifelong learning for girls and women (literacy, formal and non-formal education)**

#### **Presentation: How literacy and lifelong learning can contribute to sustainable development and processes of empowerment**

*Ms Ulrike Hanemann, Senior Programme Specialist, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)*

Ms Hanemann recognised that learning is at the heart of transformation and that lifelong learning has the potential to bring life and learning closer together. She proposed an integrated, embedded and holistic approach to skills development, moving the focus from women's literacy to gender empowerment. She cautioned that women may define empowerment differently depending on their situation, and that women must be the drivers of their own empowerment. Ms Hanemann recommended evidence-based policies to empower women through literacy and education, and to enable people to learn at different ages (i.e. entering or leaving the lifelong learning system at any given time). She also noted that

involving men and communities in learning about women's needs is key to shifting beliefs and power structures to support women's and girls' education.

### **Presentation: The changing world**

*Dr. Raafat Radwan, Governorate of Ismailia, Egypt*

Dr. Radwan highlighted the impact of new technologies/ICTs and globalisation on the education system. He called for the establishment of a new framework for education built around skill-based education and lifelong learning. He shared the example of a project which trained women to be community leaders, and the ability of this project to demonstrate that – given the right tools – women can move communities forward.

### **Presentation: Lifelong learning for girls and women – non-formal education in Pakistan**

*Ms Chiho Ohashi, Chief Advisor, Advancing Quality Alternative Learning Project, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)*

Ms Ohashi discussed the need for non-formal education (NFE) to promote lifelong learning in Pakistan. Given the numbers of out-of-school children and limited school capacity, NFE is key to gaining literacy skills and basic education through an economical, flexible and local approach. However, many believe NFE to be second class learning in comparison to formal education. To empower women and provide them with literacy skills, Ms Ohashi stated the need for: a strong policy framework on lifelong learning; data-driven management of SDG 4 and other goals; recognition of alternatives to 'schooling' and 'learning'; and awareness-raising campaigns.



### **Presentation: The girls disappeared: Unfinished literacy 2.0**

*Ms Zheping Xie, Associate Professor of Education Research Institute for Education, Tsinghua University*

Ms Xie revealed that women make up only 10 per cent of the senior faculty population in China, and that the proportion declines at doctoral levels. She also noted that only 20 per cent of female students pursue academia, as compared to 33 per cent of male students. Ms Xie analysed these trends against the historical and value-driven beliefs about women in education in China. She found that social pressure and stereotypes have often impeded women's pursuit of academic or professional opportunities, and that there is a need to address these challenges to instil long-lasting change.

### **Presentation: Education and literacy in Bhutan**

*By Ms Ugyen Tshomo, Deputy Chief Program officer of the Division of Adult and Non formal and Continuing Education, Department of Adult and Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Bhutan*

Ms Tshomo shared that transformative education and literacy are the focus points of the education system in Bhutan, which aims to develop human potential. She spoke about Bhutan's NFE programme, which provides functional literacy and numeracy skills to youth and adults to enhance career opportunities and livelihood skills, and improve individuals' socio-economic situation. Ms Tshomo voiced the need for literacy mapping to identify and localise illiterate populations, and to strategically plan for equitable access to NFE services. She stated that baseline data on adult literacy, partnerships and continuous monitoring, evaluation and support were crucial elements of successful programmes.

## Award Ceremony: First edition of the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova and the First Lady of China and UNESCO Special Envoy for Girls' and Women's Education, Professor Peng Liyuan jointly awarded the first [UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education](#) at a youthful ceremony in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

The two laureates, the [Directorate of Early Childhood Education and Development](#) of the Ministry of Education and Culture from the Republic of Indonesia and the [Female Students Network Trust](#) from Zimbabwe, were recognised for their innovative projects and each received USD 50,000 to support their work.

Ms Bokova pointed to the ongoing challenges that girls and women face in accessing quality education and remaining in the education system. She affirmed UNESCO's strong commitment to girls' and women's education and empowering women and girls around the world.

Professor Peng Liyuan outlined China's commitment to reaching the most vulnerable groups and to ensuring equal access for girls and women to education through laws, policies and financing. She emphasised the importance that China places on international cooperation to advance gender equality, referring to President Xi Jinping's commitments made at the Global Leaders' Meeting in New York in 2015.

The ceremony was attended by more than 500 persons, in the presence of the Minister of Education Mr Yuan Guiren and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Li Baodong. It was moderated by the Vice-Minister of Education and Chairperson of the National Commission for UNESCO, Mr Hao Ping, with Heads of UN agencies in China also present.

Mr Hao highlighted the role of teachers in the provision of quality education, and introduced a teacher who had received numerous awards for her work. From a modest background, the speaker shared that she became a teacher because she believes education can change the destiny of girls from poor families.

The ceremony featured singing and dance performances by girls from three primary schools in Beijing, as well as by African recipients of the Great Wall Fellowships sponsored by China.



Established in 2015 by the 197th UNESCO Executive Board and funded by the People's Republic of China, the Prize rewards outstanding innovation and contributions made to advance the education of girls and women. The Prize also contributes to the attainment of the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda, particularly SDGs 4 on education and 5 on gender equality.

**7 June 2015**

**Session 4 (Part 2): What works: Good practices in the area of lifelong learning for girls and women (including health education and HIV prevention)**

**Presentation: Improve the quality of education for girls and women in community learning centres**

*Mr Qi Zhiyong, Gansu Institute of Education Research, China*

Mr Qi introduced the role of community learning centres (CLCs) which have been established in China to provide community-based NFE, and have proven to be an effective mechanism for capacity-building and poverty alleviation at local levels, including in Gansu province. He then explored what good education for girls and women means, what has been done and what are some good practices in girls' and women's education. He discussed the need to improve content and to establish more rural community centres, as well as to establish a national strategy for western development.

**Presentation: Community service as the motor of empowerment for girls and women**

*Ms Ana Garcia Reina, Poligono Sur (Lifelong Learning School for Community Development), Spain*

Ms Reina introduced the work of her organization, which supports literacy programmes in Andalusia. This region has a 27 per cent illiteracy rate, a 35 per cent school absenteeism rate, and women have many unmet needs. The organization, which cooperates with many stakeholders, provides literacy classes for women based within their children's schools. Additional workshops have also been undertaken to promote healthy living habits and to raise awareness about HIV, as part of a holistic approach. These initiatives have enabled the organization to build the collective memory of women in the area and use it to empower other women.

**Presentation: Basic education integrated with vocational skills training of rural adolescent girls and young women**

*Mr Kazi Rafiqul Alam, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Bangladesh*

Mr Alam explained that community centres in Bangladesh are being used to empower rural populations and to stimulate community development. The organization has set up Community Resource Centres to connect members of the community, and acts as a local advocacy forum with a library, training centre and an IT support centre. Due to its positive impact on the community, the model has been replicated in various countries.

**Presentation: Molteno Institute – toward a literate Africa**

*Mr Masennya Dikotla, CEO, Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy, South Africa*

Molteno Institute was founded through a Rhodes University research project under the assumption that African learners were not learning to read English well because they did not read well in their mother tongue. The Institute serves 9 provinces across South Africa, and its Kha ri Gude project has enabled close to 1 million learners to acquire basic literacy and spoken English skills. The initiative has also impacted on poverty by creating employment, social responsibility and community cohesion.

**Session 4 (Part 2): Questions and Answers**

The moderator commended the good practices presented in this session, and concluded that lifelong learning is crucial to the achievement of SDG 4. He commented on the role that

community-based learning centres have played in promoting lifelong learning and empowering women. Discussion focused on the following issues:

- **Policy**

When asked to clarify whether the CLC programme was part of provincial policy, Mr Qi stated that the programmes were connected with national policy but ownership is based at the local level.

- **Curriculum**

Many participants commented on the role of local or central governments in developing curriculum. The panellist from Andalusia shared that, though the regional government decides on the curriculum, her centre has the liberty to select content relevant for the community's needs. In China, the curriculum is determined locally, enabling an adaptation to particular contexts. In South Africa, the State decides the curriculum, which is based on the country's national development plan.

- **“Gender knowledge”**

The issue of how to mobilise “gender knowledge” was raised, and panellists concurred that more was needed on a number of issues, including power and patriarchy. One participant shared a perception that women were increasingly managing projects, including CLCs, suggesting some change in power structures.

### Session 5: On the road to 2030: Strategies and actions to enhance girls' and women's education and advance gender equality in the context of the SDG4-Education 2030 Framework for Action

#### **Presentation: Promoting gender equality in education**

*By Mr Song Wenzhen, Deputy Director of Office, National Working Committee on Children and Committee Under the State Council, China*

Mr Song underlined the importance of improving the level and quality of women's education, to impact on women's social status and employment opportunities, political participation, and overall development. He also noted education's contribution to building harmonious families, explaining that men are also victims of gender inequality as they are expected to uphold and provide for the family alone. Mr Song emphasised the importance of addressing gender equality throughout the education system (teacher training, teaching materials and content), and recommended the establishment of policies to evaluate gender equality and improved statistical analysis of gender issues in education.

#### **Presentation: Equity in Education in China**

*Dr Margo O'Sullivan, Education Officer, UNICEF China*

Dr O'Sullivan began by stating that equity is at the top of the education agenda in China. A study using 2010 census data with over 1.2 million people found that China has reached gender parity. She pointed out that challenges remain, including access to early childhood care and education and reaching the most vulnerable children in rural areas. Since 2001, the number of child-friendly schools has increased, particularly after the Ministry of Education added inclusion as one pillar of compulsory school standards. Dr O'Sullivan also noted that there was an ongoing need for social and emotional learning, and shared that UNICEF China is exploring the use of e-tools to measure this learning with Beijing Normal University. She called for attention to improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools to reduce absenteeism and drop-outs, and to address the needs of “left behind” children, or the 61 million children whose parents have migrated. These children are the least likely to successfully complete schooling.



## Presentation: Women and Education – UN Women programmes

*Ms Julia Broussard, Country Manager, UN Women, China*

Ms Broussard referred to the *My World* survey, where 6.5 million people – across all age groups, cultures, belief systems, and genders – identified education as their top priority. She called for linkages between gender equality and education to achieve the SDGs, and said that education helps women make informed decisions and determines their job opportunities. She voiced concern over the gender wage gap in both informal and formal employment, and limited access by women to decent work. Women hold jobs with lower pay and less job security, despite evidence that putting income in the hands of women offers an opportunity to lift entire families out of poverty. Ms Broussard shared UN Women’s efforts to tackle gender equality in education, including: a joint UN Women/UNESCO/UNFPA programme focused on providing access to education to adolescent girls and women; An extra-curricular, non-formal education programme called *Voices against Violence* that looks at the root causes of violence and encourages a culture of respect between boys and men; and a UN Women China programme called *Peer Leadership for Health Relationships* being implemented at the Beijing Royal School, a private K-12 institution. The programme promotes positive masculinity and gender equality among young men. Ms Broussard recommended that all governments include gender equality in the formal school system and foresees the need for dialogue on the roles of boys and girls, women and men in society, and how education allows everyone to fulfill a role in the achievement of equality in society.

## Session 5: Closing remarks

Ms Marielza Oliveira, Director of UNESCO Beijing, noted that this session demonstrated that gendered expectations and cultural roles were still prevalent. She stressed that education is not only about the formal system, and that actions are also required through non-formal and informal education. She asked participants to identify one most significant action to be taken for gender equality in education. Panellists and participants shared actions, which included a rethinking of the concept of education in a changing context, addressing gender bias in teaching and learning materials, engaging men in the fight for gender equality, and building broader awareness of power relationships that need to be negotiated and equalised.

## Closing Ceremony

*Mr Han Min, Deputy Director, National Centre of Education Development Research, China*

By quoting an old Chinese saying that “A Journey of a Thousand Li Begins with the First Step”, Mr Han shared that a step-by-step approach was needed in order to achieve SDG 4, and this Seminar has allowed one of the steps to be taken. He stated that a consensus had now been reached and concluded that without gender equality, SDG 4 may not be achieved.



## SECTION 2: The way forward

This section summarizes the main findings and recommendations stemming from the seminar. For ease of reference and readability, they are presented below as an **ABC of gender equality in education**. It may be used as an easy guide to facilitate and navigate the way forward to gender equality in education.

### 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

- Scale up quality and inclusive education for women and girls to achieve SDG 4 and other SDGs
- Establish multi-sectoral action to achieve all SDGs and achieve gender equality in education

### Advocacy and awareness-raising

- Raise awareness of the importance of gender equality in education at all levels of society: among girls and women, boys and men, parents and teachers, local leaders and national authorities
- Advocate for collaborative action, promoting positive role models and engaged governments

### Bias and stereotypes

- Identify and redress gender bias and stereotypes in and through education from an early age, and engage parents, teachers and the media
- Address gender differences in educational experience and subject choices, particularly in the area of STEM, which lead to occupational segregation and reduced opportunities

### Concept of education

- Clarify the concept of education in a changing context, and the role of lifelong learning in the achievement of gender equality
- Identify what kind of education is needed now and in the future for sustainable development

### Data

- Collect sex-disaggregated data to improve understanding of where and in which contexts gender inequalities in education lie and use data to better target and monitor policies and programmes
- Establish a more comprehensive set of indicators to measure gender equality in education

### Education today

- Continue to strive for gender parity in education, while simultaneously aiming for gender equality in education and the empowerment of women and girls

### Funding and gender budgeting

- Ensure adequate resources, including capacity-development in gender-sensitive strategies and awareness, and gender-responsive budgeting for targeted action planning
- Diversify funding, establishing synergies and cooperation across government sectors to address cross-cutting and intersectional issues, along with other funding streams

## **G**ender-responsive learning environments

- Address gender bias and gender discrimination in the academic, social and physical learning environment
- Promote safe and inclusive learning environments that have appropriate infrastructure, including WASH facilities, and are free from gender-based violence

## **H**olistic approach

- Ensure a system-wide approach that applies multi-level and cross-cutting interventions, and draws on a consultative process with learners and communities
- Embed actions within gender-responsive sector planning that promotes laws and policies, resource distribution, and teaching and learning practices towards gender equality

## **I**nclusion: from women to gender

- Address gender norms, values and attitudes that are detrimental to gender equality in education, and engage men and boys in efforts to achieve this
- Address the intersection of gender with other issues that impact on educational disadvantage, including poverty, location, ethnicity and ability

## **J**urisprudence

- Introduce laws and policies that promote gender equality in education, and monitor and ensure the implementation of these at local levels

## **K**nowledge in education

- Provide children and young people from ECCE onwards with age-appropriate knowledge and skills to promote more gender equal societies
- Promote non-formal learning and second chance opportunities for out-of-school students to build knowledge and skills, including through CLCs or other community-based programmes

## **L**earning and literacy

- Ensure literacy programmes better target women and girls, who make up nearly two-thirds of the total illiterate population globally, addressing those most in need
- Support the learning of cognitive dimensions that prepare students for labour market, in conjunction with the “non-cognitive skills” that promote learning to live together

## **M**onitoring and evaluation

- Localise SDG targets and indicators at country-level, and develop indicators that will measure gender issues beyond enrolment to include learning outcomes and other aspects
- Document and identify what works in achieving gender equality in education and share lessons learned

## **N**etworks and partnerships

- Build a strong network of partners and enhance harmonisation and synergies across education, health, child protection, gender equality and other sectors
- Promote partnerships with governments, women’s groups, and other community organizations, encouraging all partners to work together to achieve gender equality in education

## **O**wnership

- Promote joint ownership of curriculum and education programmes, including local-level ownership for improved sustainability



- Ensure synergies and cooperation within and across sectors to address cross-cutting and intersectional issues and promote joint ownership of gender equality outcomes

## **P**olicy and good practice

- Review policies at all levels (i.e. national, regional, school, classroom) and embed inclusion, equity and gender equality in existing policies, where possible
- Translate policies into good practices and good practices into effective policies

## **Q**uality Education

- Improve the level and quality of education to impact women's social status, increase their economic prospects and civic, social and political participation
- Establish high quality pre- and in-service teacher training that helps teacher to understand their own gender biases, stereotypes and gendered teaching practices, and equip them with skills

## **R**oles

- Address stereotyped gender roles in school and families that lead to educational and occupational segregation
- Expand opportunities for female role models within schools and professions, including the STEM fields, and profile the role of male champions for gender equality

## **S**ystem of power

- Promote discussions of gender issues, power and human rights, and promote respectful, non-violent and equitable relationships
- Engage men and boys to address unequal gender power structures, and engage women and girls in decision-making and leadership opportunities

## **T**rainning and capacity-building

- Provide pre- and in-service training for teachers in gender-responsive pedagogy and classroom management approaches, and teaching and learning materials to apply in educational settings
- Strengthen the capacity of non-formal and community-based learning centres to reach out to communities with literacy and other programmes

## **U**niversal

- Prioritise the universal achievement of primary and secondary education laid out in the SDGs

## **V**ocational Education

- Support gender mainstreaming and equality in technical and vocational education
- Promote vocational training for girls and women to strengthen their skills for the labour market, expanding their access to waged employment and decent work

## **W**orld of work

- Scale up access to skills development tailored to local needs, including TVET, STEM education, non-formal education programmes and second chance programmes for women and girls
- Revise curriculum to enable students to critically reflect on gender norms, expectations and stereotypes including what are seen to be 'suitable occupations' for women and men

## **Y**outh

- Engage youth in identifying actions to achieve gender equality in education, and draw on their perspectives, energy and skills to achieve the SDG agenda

## Conclusion

The seminar served as an occasion to promote inter-regional and international experience-sharing in the field of girls' and women's education. It also provided an opportunity to expand on the existing knowledge base on girls' and women's education, in the context of the SDGs and the Education 2030 Agenda. As intended, the seminar provided a platform for dialogue and facilitated the sharing of good practices in the field between education experts, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners from close to 30 countries.

Discussions strongly reconfirmed the role of girls' and women's education in eliminating poverty and inequalities, improving health, and accelerating economic growth and development. At the conclusion of this seminar, many participants said that they felt inspired to advance girls' and women's education and to move forward this agenda through relevant actions and initiatives.

It is hoped that the experiences and lessons shared throughout the seminar will substantially benefit the advancement of gender equality in education, and ensure concrete contributions to the achievement of SDGs and the Education 2030 Agenda.

The Seminar raised awareness and stimulated discussion beyond the Seminar walls, with information shared across the Chinese Social Media Network, WeChat, reaching over 1,000 views. The first edition of the [UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education](#) also garnered great interest internationally. It was highlighted throughout international media, on UNESCO's main website and via the official UNESCO Twitter (1,280,000 followers) and Facebook accounts (377,000 followers), reaching some 2,300 people and an aggregate of 15,000 website views.

To enable further exploration of the content of the seminar, all seminar documents have been uploaded onto an online platform, which can be accessed [here](#). All photos taken during the Seminar can also be accessed [here](#). For participants in China, presentations and photos may be accessed [here](#).