



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

Implementation of articles 21 and 22 of the Convention

Reports by specialized agencies on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

Summary

In accordance with article 22 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system have been invited to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, at its eighty-first session, reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities.

* CEDAW/C/81/1.

** The present report was submitted late owing to delayed inputs from other sources.



I. Introduction

1. The right to education lies at the heart of the mission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Organization's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and it has been entrusted to lead the implementation of Goal 4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

2. UNESCO provides global and regional leadership in education, supports its member States worldwide in strengthening their education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education, with gender equality as an underlying goal and principle. Its work on education and gender equality is guided by the UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019–2025. The strategy is focused on system-wide transformation to benefit all learners and targeted interventions to support the empowerment of girls and women. It is aimed at achieving the vision of UNESCO of enabling girls, boys, women, men and all learners to realize their rights and potential in and through education.

3. The right to education is enshrined in international law through numerous legally binding international treaties. The right to education of girls and women is a high priority for UNESCO, with the Organization promoting gender equality throughout the education system, including in participation in (access), within (content, teaching and learning context and practices) and through (learning outcomes, life and work opportunities) education. In order to achieve this, UNESCO provides technical support to its member States to align constitutional, legislative and policy frameworks with international normative instruments and supports the development and implementation of gender-transformative strategies that tackle key barriers to the full participation of girls and women in good-quality educational opportunities.

4. The Organization also measures the status of national constitutions, legislation and regulations related to girls' and women's education rights across the world through Her Atlas, an interactive online tool that constituted a valuable resource in compiling the present report. The UNESCO initiative "Her education, our future" – to which Her Atlas contributes – is designed to accelerate action on girls' and women's education by leveraging political and financial commitments, and leadership. From a more general perspective, the Observatory on the Right to Education monitoring tool, which sheds light on inequalities in countries by publishing data on the implementation of the right to education at the national level, has also provided useful documentation for the present report.

5. To ensure, monitor and advocate for the right to education without discrimination, UNESCO regularly monitors the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education through periodic consultations, in which it requests member States to submit national reports on the implementation measures that they have taken. In order to follow up effectively on the information obtained, an analytical report synthesizing the findings of the national reports is then prepared. In 2020, the tenth consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation was launched, resulting in a collection of 82 national reports. The information contained in the national reports has served as a source for the present report.

6. UNESCO has a major role and responsibility within the United Nations system for the implementation of a number of the provisions contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in particular article 10, which provides that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to

eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education.

II. Measures taken by countries

Dominican Republic

7. The Dominican Republic is a party to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960, which it ratified on 30 August 1977.

8. The right to education for all without discrimination based on gender is enshrined in the Constitution of the Dominican Republic. In article 39, it is stated that: “All persons are born free and equal before the law, receive the same protection and treatment from institutions, authorities and other persons and enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities, without any discrimination for reasons of gender, colour, age, disability, nationality, family ties, language, religion, political or philosophical opinion, social or personal status.” The right to education is enshrined in article 63, in which it is specified that: “All persons have the right to a comprehensive, good-quality, lifelong education, under equal conditions and with equal opportunities, with no limitations other than those derived from their aptitudes, vocation and aspirations”.

9. According to the General Law of Education of 1997, basic and intermediate education is free, but only basic education is compulsory. However, it is stipulated in the Constitution that intermediate education is also compulsory, bringing the total number of years of free and compulsory primary and secondary education to 12 years, starting at the age of 6 years. For comparison, under the Education 2030 Framework for Action, States must guarantee at least 12 years of free primary and secondary education, of which a minimum of 9 are compulsory. One year of free and compulsory pre-primary education is also guaranteed under the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, which is aligned with the minimum requirements of the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

10. Child marriage is a discriminatory practice that places the educational development of girls in particular at risk, violating their right to education by increasing the likelihood of dropout. Moreover, children who are not in school are more likely to get married. In January 2021, the Civil Code was modified to set a minimum age for marriage of 18 years for all girls and boys (it had previously been set at 15 years for girls with parental consent and a judicial exemption).

11. Under article 48 (e) of the Code on the Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents, sanctions, withdrawal, expulsion or any discriminatory treatment on grounds of pregnancy of a girl or adolescent are prohibited.

12. According to the *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Gender Report – A New Generation: 25 Years of Efforts for Gender Equality in Education*, the share of girls enrolled in secondary technical and vocational education and training is more than 60 per cent in the Dominican Republic.

13. Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) was 4.04 per cent in 2019, which is in line with the target of 4–6 per cent set out in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

14. While the Dominican Republic submitted a report for the eighth consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, it has not submitted a national report since then, including for the tenth consultation (2020–2021). The country should be encouraged to participate more systematically and especially in the next consultation.

Gabon

15. Gabon has not ratified the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. The country should be strongly encouraged to ratify the Convention.

16. The Constitution of Gabon does not explicitly guarantee the right to education but only “equal access for children and adults to education, vocational training and culture” (art. 1). Article 2 provides that: “The Gabonese Republic shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, sex, opinion or religion”. However, the right to education regardless of sex is enshrined in article 3 of Law No. 21/2011 on the general orientation of education, training and research: “The right to equal access to education, instruction, culture and training is guaranteed to all, regardless of creed, religion, race, sex, political affiliation or any other social distinction”.

17. Under Law No. 21/2011, compulsory primary and secondary education is guaranteed from age 6 to 16 years, together with three years of compulsory pre-primary education; however, no provision has been identified that guarantees free education. Under the Education 2030 Framework for Action, States undertake to guarantee free education for at least 12 years at the primary and secondary levels and for one year at the pre-primary level.

18. With regard to child marriage and its adverse effects on the right to education of girls, in the Civil Code, the minimum age of marriage is set at only 15 years old for women (18 years for men). In addition, age exemptions may be granted by the President.

19. According to 2019 data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, gross enrolment rates in pre-primary education are similar between girls (43.7 per cent) and boys (42.3 per cent). In 2020, completion rates at lower secondary were 26.9 per cent for girls and 23.7 per cent for boys; in upper secondary education the percentages were even lower, at only 13.9 per cent for girls and 10.10 per cent for boys. At the tertiary level, gross enrolment rates were 23.4 per cent for women and 18.8 per cent for men.

20. According to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2019, public expenditure on education represented 2.99 per cent of GDP in Gabon, which is lower than the target of 4–6 per cent set out in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

21. While Gabon submitted reports for previous consultations on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, it did not submit a national report for the tenth consultation (2020–2021). The country should be encouraged to participate more systematically and especially in the next consultation.

Lebanon

22. Lebanon ratified the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education on 27 October 1964.

23. The right to education is not explicitly recognized in the Constitution of Lebanon, however, article 10 provides that: “Education shall be free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morality and does not affect the dignity of religions. The right of communities to have their own schools shall not be infringed upon, subject to the general prescriptions on public education enacted by the State.” A general principle of non-discrimination is enshrined in article 7: “All Lebanese are equal before the law. They shall enjoy equal civil and political rights and shall be equally subject to public duties and responsibilities, without any distinction”.

24. According to national reports submitted to the United Nations, the principle of free and compulsory primary education in public schools is enshrined in Act No. 686 of 16 March 1998 and, under Act No. 150 of 17 August 2011, basic education is compulsory and free for the basic education cycle (up to 15 years of age) in public schools. Furthermore, under Act No. 211 of 30 March 2012, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is authorized to distribute textbooks free of charge to students attending pre-primary education or receiving basic education in public schools. No legal provision has been identified that guarantees free and compulsory pre-primary education. However, in addition to being required to guarantee at least 12 years of free primary and secondary education, of which at least 9 are compulsory, under the Education 2030 Framework for Action, States are required to guarantee one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education.

25. Regarding child marriage, which has a direct impact on the realization of the right to education, in Lebanon there is no civil code governing marriage. Instead, personal status is governed by the 18 religious communities, each of which sets a minimum age for marriage.

26. It was reported that the legal age for work, which was set at 13 years by the Act of 1946 on the Labour Code, was amended to 14 years by Act No. 536 of 24 July 1996. However, UNESCO has not been able to access the text of this law. In either case, the law should be brought up to the age of 15 years to align with the end of compulsory education as the difference in the years can lead to children dropping out of school to work.

27. No legal provision has been identified that protects against all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, and protects the education of pregnant girls and young mothers.

28. In the *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Gender Report – A New Generation: 25 Years of Efforts for Gender Equality in Education*, it was noted that “in Lebanon, 77 per cent of secondary school students said women should work mostly on becoming good wives and mothers and 66 per cent said there were many jobs women should not do”, revealing entrenched negative gender stereotypes.

29. According to the Malala Fund, over 40 per cent of Syrian school-aged children in Lebanon are out of school, and only 10 per cent accede to secondary level. Refugee girls continue to face significant barriers to education.

30. Following the 4 August 2020 explosion at the waterfront, 85,000 students in Beirut have had their access to education disrupted, with more than 220 schools damaged or destroyed by the double blast, along with 20 vocational training centres and 32 universities. This exacerbated a situation that was already challenging as a result of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that began in March 2020. UNESCO, together with the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, launched the Kodrat project, an e-learning platform aimed at supporting teachers in the use of new teaching modalities. As part of its “Li Beirut” initiative, UNESCO provided psychosocial support to children, parents, teachers and school administrative staff in the areas affected by the Beirut blast.

31. UNESCO Institute for Statistics data from 2019 show that public expenditure on education represented 2.59 per cent of GDP, which is below the target of 4–6 per cent set out in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

32. Lebanon submitted a national report on the measures taken to implement the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education for the tenth consultation (2020–2021).

Peru

33. Peru has been a party to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education since 19 December 1966.

34. The right to education for “every person” is enshrined in the Constitution of Peru of 1993, as amended in 2009, which contains a provision on non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, origin, race, language, religion, opinion, economic status or any other distinguishing feature.

35. The right to education is also enshrined in the General Law of Education of 2003, as amended in 2012, which provides that education as “a fundamental right of the individual and society is guaranteed by the State, within the framework of the Political Constitution of Peru and the law”. In article 2, it states that the right to education notably refers to “the right of access to quality, equitable, relevant and inclusive education and to free public education”. Moreover, “accessibility implies the inclusion in the education system of persons with special educational needs and excluded and vulnerable social groups, without distinction as to ethnicity, religion, sex or any other cause of discrimination”.

36. Under the Constitution of Peru, “initial, primary and secondary education are compulsory” and “in public schools, education is free”. Primary education lasts for six years starting from the age of 6 years, but neither the duration of secondary education nor the age at which it ends is specified. Early childhood education, including pre-primary education, is compulsory and free of charge in public schools from the age of 3 to 5 years.

37. The minimum age for marriage for both sexes is 18 years, but exceptions are permitted where there is judicial consent, with the absolute minimum age being 16 years. The minimum age of employment is 14 years, with exceptions being permitted for children from the age of 12 years.

38. The General Law of Education of 2003, as amended in 2012, protects the right to education of adolescents who are pregnant or mothers. In article 14 of the Code on Children and Adolescents of 2001, it is stated that “a girl or adolescent who is pregnant or a mother should not be prevented from starting or continuing her studies”.

39. Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics indicate that, in 2020, Peru dedicated 4.2 per cent of public expenditure expressed as a percentage of GDP to education, which is in line with the target of 4–6 per cent set out under the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

40. The number of illiterate men and women in Peru decreased between 1980 and 2018, but the literacy gap between men and women remains marked – with illiteracy rates higher among women. In 2018, of a total of 1,334,124 illiterate people aged 15 years and older, 337,620 were men and 996,510 were women. Of a total of 51,730 illiterate people aged between 15 and 24 years, 23,740 were men and 27,930 were women.

41. Peru submitted a national report on the measures taken to implement the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education for the tenth consultation (2020–2021).

Panama

42. Panama is a party to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960, which the country ratified on 10 August 1967.

43. The right to education for all is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Panama of 1972, as amended in 2004. Article 91 provides that “all have the right to

an education, and the responsibility to become educated”. Article 19 contains a provision on non-discrimination on the basis of sex, race, birth, social class, disability, religion or political ideology.

44. According to the Organic Law on Education, as amended by Law No. 34 of 1995, education is a right and duty of the human beings, without distinction on the basis of sex. Article 1 provides that it is the responsibility of the State “to organize and manage the public service of education in order to guarantee the efficiency and effectivity of the national education system, which comprises both official education, taught by official units, and private education, taught by private people or entities”.

45. Under the Organic Law on Education, compulsory primary and lower secondary education is guaranteed for a duration of nine years, starting at 6 years of age. Free primary and secondary education for a duration of 12 years is also guaranteed. However, under the Constitution, tuition fees can be requested for higher secondary education as this level is not compulsory. Pre-primary education is stated as free and compulsory for a duration of two years, however, it is specified in the law that the tuition-free and compulsory nature of pre-primary education will be implemented progressively.

46. The minimum age for marriage for girls is 18 years of age, with no exceptions possible. The minimum age for employment is 14 years of age.

47. No legal provision related to the right to education of girls who are pregnant or mothers was identified.

48. The number of illiterate men and women in Panama decreased between 1980 and 2019, but the gap between men and women remains significant: in 2019, of a total of 132,219 illiterate people aged 15 years and older, 59,644 were men and 72,575 were women. Of a total of 7,822 illiterate people aged between 15 and 24 years, 3,889 were men and almost 4,000 were women.

49. According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics data, in 2019, Panama dedicated 3.1 per cent of public expenditure expressed as a percentage of GDP to education, which is lower than the target of 4–6 per cent set out in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

50. While Panama submitted reports for the previous consultations on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, it has not submitted a national report since then, including for the tenth consultation (2020–2021). The country should be encouraged to participate more systematically and especially in the next consultation.

Senegal

51. Senegal ratified the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education on 25 September 1967.

52. The right to education is enshrined in the Constitution of Senegal, but only for citizens; thus the right does not apply to all people within the territory as it is limited to citizens (art. 8). Reference is made in the Constitution to the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of sex (art. 1) and to the principle of gender equality (art. 7). This right is also enshrined in legislation.

53. In Senegal, compulsory and free primary and secondary education from the age of 6 to 16 years is guaranteed by law, but that is not the case for pre-primary education.

54. The legal age of marriage is set at 16 years old for girls and 18 years old for boys. This age limit can be waived on the basis of compelling reasons by the President of the regional court.
55. Corporal punishment is prohibited in primary schools, but is not explicitly prohibited at other levels of education.
56. In accordance with circular No. 004379 of 11 October 2007 of the Ministry of Education, pregnant girls may continue their studies after childbirth, on the condition that they present a medical certificate confirming their fitness to resume classes.
57. The Programme for the Improvement of Quality, Equity and Transparency 2018–2030 is the strategic plan and framework for operationalizing the education policy for the period 2018–2030. The strategic objectives are: “quality school” – to improve the quality of education and training in all its dimensions; “a school for all” – to strengthen, at all levels, the coverage, diversification and equity of the education and training available; and “a viable, reliable and peaceful school” – promoting integrated, inclusive, partnership-based, decentralized, transparent and efficient sectoral governance.
58. While Senegal submitted a report for the previous consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, it has not submitted a national report since then, including for the tenth consultation (2020–2021). The country should be encouraged to participate more systematically in the next consultations.

Uganda

59. Uganda ratified the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education in September 1968.
60. The right to education is enshrined in article 30 of the Constitution of Uganda, which contains provisions on equality and on non-discrimination based on sex (art. 21). However, only the right to basic education is recognized in the Education Act, and therefore these provisions do not apply to all levels. No provision has been identified that prohibits discrimination on the ground of gender or sex in the Act.
61. Only primary education is compulsory, for a duration of 7 years. However, additional years of education are provided free of charge. It is stated in article 9 of the Education Act that no person or agency shall levy or order another person to levy any charge for purposes of education in any primary or post-primary institution implementing the State-funded universal primary education or universal post-primary education and training programme.
62. The minimum legal age of marriage is 18 years, with no exceptions possible.
63. The Children (Amendment) Act 2016 sets the minimum age for employment at 16 years; however, compulsory education ends at the age of 13 years, therefore there is no alignment of ages between compulsory education and the minimum age for work.
64. In circular No. 2/2015, the types of violence that are prohibited in the education system, including corporal punishment and psychological, physical and sexual violence, are set out. It is also established in the circular that measures of support, guidance, counselling and appropriate and child-friendly communication mechanisms must be observed in the educational institution.
65. Unlike for the previous consultations, Uganda did not submit a national report for the tenth consultation (2020–2021). The country should be encouraged to participate in the next consultation.

Uzbekistan

66. Uzbekistan ratified the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education on 08 December 1997 and participated in the tenth consultation of UNESCO on the monitoring of the Convention.

67. The right to education is enshrined in article 41 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan, which contains a provision on equal rights and non-discrimination on the ground of sex (art. 18). The right to education irrespective of gender is also guaranteed in the relevant legislation.

68. Uzbekistan adopted a new law on education in 2020. The legislation provides for 12 years of compulsory pre-primary, primary and secondary education, starting from the age of 6 years. One year of pre-primary education has been compulsory since 2019. General secondary education (up to grade 11 – the final year of secondary education) is provided free of charge. In the Family Code, it is stipulated that women and men can contract a marriage from the age of 18 years, however, in exceptional cases this can be lowered to 17 years with the agreement of the mayor.

69. Uzbekistan has reported that corporal punishment is prohibited in general education and specialized institutions through a specific paragraph in the regulations addressing the standard rules and rules for specific institutions, but UNESCO has been unable to access these regulations.

70. Uzbekistan reported in the course of the tenth consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education that a decree has been adopted with a view to increasing the share of women in higher education.

71. Uzbekistan submitted a national report on the measures taken to implement the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education to the tenth consultation (2020–2021).
