



Child marriage allowed in 20 countries impeding the right to education, says UNESCO on International Women's Day

07 March 2018

Only 44% of countries have made full legal commitments through international treaties to the cause of gender parity in education, according to this year's Gender Review, published by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report on 8 March, International Women's Day. This is the key finding of its sixth annual Review, which surveyed 189 States to assess whether they ensured that girls and women fully benefit from the right to education.

"In 1990, the world committed to admitting equal numbers of boys and girls into primary school by 2005. Since then we have set ourselves a more ambitious set of gender equality targets with a deadline of 2030, but we must not forget that, despite considerable progress, one in three countries have yet to achieve the original goal," said Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO.

"All of us – from governments to teachers, communities and families – have a role to play in pushing for change when discrimination arises," added Azoulay.

The Review, produced with the support of [United Nations Girls' Education Initiative](#) (UNGEI), looks at the causes of slow progress towards gender equality in education, and how such issues may be addressed. Recalling countries' legal commitments to the right to education for girls and women through international treaties, it focuses on three: the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW](#)), the Convention against Discrimination in Education ([CADE](#)), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([ICESCR](#)). Seven countries had not fully ratified the conventions.

"Having a signature on an international treaty does not always guarantee strong gender equality in education. The treaties do, however, provide a possible path for governments to be held to account, and should be considered an important measure of commitment to the rights of girls and women," said Manos Antoninis, Director of the GEM Report.

Governments need to adopt laws and policies that remove obstacles preventing girls from attending school and enjoying equal treatment in the classroom, according to the Review, which calls on people to join the GEM Report campaign: [#WhosAccountable](#).

In many countries, laws – especially those that permit early marriage or allow schools to exclude pregnant girls – act as barriers to education. According to a 2016 Human Rights Watch (HRW) study, Tanzania routinely tests girls for pregnancy, expelling more than 8,000 who test positive annually. Twenty countries, which have ratified the CEDAW, have expressed

reservations on the article regarding child marriage, turning a blind eye to forced marriage and the denial of the right to education for girls.

The Review reports that 34% of countries have not achieved parity in primary, 55% in lower secondary, and 75% in upper secondary. It highlights a wide range of measures to remove barriers to education for girls and to hold governments to account for gender inequalities. These include periodic review of curricula, textbooks and teacher training programmes; adequate school infrastructure including single sex sanitation facilities; increased representation of women in education leadership positions; stronger policies to tackle school-related gender based violence, and establishing codes of conduct for students and teachers.

Media contact: Sarah Barden, +33 (0) 1 45 68 05 75 s.barden@unesco.org

For more information, the Gender Review can be downloaded [here](#).

[#WhosAccountable campaign](#) spreads the word that only 55% of countries allow their citizens to take their government to court over violations to the right to education.