

# UNESCO's Atlas of Girls' and Women's Right to Education

## Presentation

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized in 1948, for the first time, a universal right to education. Despite progress achieved in recent decades, the right to education remains more a statement of principle than a living reality for many. Among the disparities, gender inequality and related discriminatory practices remain especially flagrant in education. Girls and women continue to constitute the majority of out-of-school children and illiterate adults. Poverty, early marriage, pregnancy, gender-based violence and traditional attitudes as to the role of girls and women are among the many obstacles that stand in the way of women and girls fully exercising their right to participate in, complete and benefit from education.

Yet, the international community has reaffirmed many times its commitment to achieve gender equality in education, notably through international human rights law. The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE) lays down core elements of the right to education. It prohibits any form of discrimination in education based on sex, *in law and in fact*, and provides for equal opportunities and chances to succeed in education, regardless of gender. The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the only legally-binding text focusing on the specific needs and circumstances of girls' and women's education and adopts an explicit gender perspective, ensuring to all an equal right of access to education, equal rights within education and equal rights through education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 highlights the specific issue of gender equality in education, notably through target 4.5, which requires States to "eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable" by 2030. Indicative strategies to implement target 4.5 include the necessity to strengthen national legislation related to gender equality in education.

UNESCO promotes a gender perspective in education through its normative action, in particular the monitoring of the implementation of the right to education and non-discrimination, and by ensuring that countries respect those frameworks and develop their legal and policy frameworks in order to conform to international obligations.

In this context, strengthening the right of girls and women to quality education through the implementation of international instruments is key to eliminate discrimination and to realize equality of rights between genders beyond the rhetoric. This cannot be achieved without solid national frameworks that are rights-based, gender responsive and inclusive.

As part of the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy on Gender Equality in and through Education, UNESCO has developed this Interactive Atlas of girls' and women's right to education, conceived as an advocacy and monitoring tool, to enhance public access on the status of national constitutions, legislation and regulations aimed at advancing girls' and women's education rights.

### **Countries are invited to contribute!**

Please note that this work is continuously in progress and our goal is to keep the information contained in the Interactive Atlas complete and accurate. Therefore, if there is any incorrect information, UNESCO strongly encourages and invites States to share comments and suggestions, supported by relevant legal texts, by sending an email to [righttoeducation@unesco.org](mailto:righttoeducation@unesco.org) or writing to:

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