SIMULATION COMMITTEE GUIDE

UNCSW

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Presidents' Letter

Dear Delegates,

We are Susana and María José and we welcome you to this year's edition of CCBMUN. It is an honour to be your presidents for UNCSW this year. Being 12th grade students that have had experience in several models over the years, we understand the importance and occasionally the pressure that these models represent. They are a way to transmit well-structured and comprehensive arguments regarding global issues that, in some way or another, involve us all, no matter if you are a student preparing to be a delegate for the first time, or, in our case, a president managing a committee. So foremost, we intend to support and help you through every step of the way, as learning how to use your voice and skills in matters such as this is crucial for achieving what most consider a 'better world'. We also want to encourage you to take this experience in a respectful and serious manner.

UNCSW is a committee based around the protection and empowerment of women. It is one of the most recently founded official UN committees, being established in 1996, but nonetheless one of the most relevant in today's sociopolitical climate. The debate topics we chose are based on such current issues that revolve around legislation, international cooperation, and economic development, all of which are aimed at aiding women's status worldwide. From our simulation topic we intend for you to be open minded towards what is to be discussed, to be objective about the actions needed in order to effect change, and be creative regarding said solutions– we want to hear the best representation of your countries' interests and how well they address the matter in question. This year, education in the sub-Saharan region, women's reproductive rights, and impunity in cases of violence against women will be addressed.

Above all, we want to make sure your experience in this model is enjoyable. As such, in case you have any queries about the topics, your role, or about the model itself, don't hesitate to contact us at . We will be happy to help.

Yours sincerely,

Susana Usuga and María José Medina (UNCSW Chair)
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Simulation topic: *Lack of education in the sub-Saharan region*

I.   History/Context

Education for all is still something not fully achieved in the world, especially when focused on the female demographic of the sub-Saharan region. The stem of this issue can be traced back to colonialism, cultural traditions, among other socio economic factors that have seen themselves exacerbated by post-industrial globalised society. In this committee, history is something that must be addressed, this is something that structures and focuses the debate on specific related issues.

Pre-colonial to colonial era

Contrary to popular belief, pre-colonial sub saharan Africa was not completely dismissive of the importance of women's education, some tribes allowed an equal opportunity to access this to both girls and boys, while some didn't. However, pre colonial education was mostly based on religious oral tradition–teaching language and useful survival skills so that each member could fulfil their specific role. "*Indigenous education ensured cultural continuity between one generation and the next and was essential to the continuance of the intellectual, and survival of the mental, spiritual, emotional, and health of the cultural unit and its environment… emphasis laid on the holistic development of the child*". (Seroto, 2011). It is important to highlight, women were typically given motherhood-oriented roles, where they held the position of educators, caregivers, healers, etc.

Figure 1: Colonial powers in sub-saharan Africa, Geopolitical features, GPF Team, 2016

Colonisation of the region led to different challenges and more importantly a great loss in matters of culture, knowledge and indigenous tradition, as foreign imperial powers sought

to impose their own language and culture as a way to assert greater control. Defined as cultural assimilation, gaining control by means of the mind assured much more stability than gaining control through brute force or violence– it assured the supremacy of the imperialist ideals and morals over the indigenous. In the sub-Saharan region, countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, and Portugal had control over the majority of the territory and thus control over the structure of the education system of the region.

Colonial education is based on establishing the hegemony of the invading nation, forgoing all previous traditions for the citizens to integrate into the structure of the new established order. As during this time, having an education was a great advantage in the job market, this was something not accessible to all. Being literate, knowing basic arithmetic, among other things school is meant to teach children, was regarded as something only very few could afford and as the societal traditions of the time held women only in a position of submission to the men in their lives, they commonly didn't get access to education, and the education very few did have access to was from missionary schools which still saw a great unbalance between the learning rate of girls and boys. Additionally, people native to the colony were also in a position of disadvantage, as high earning jobs were reserved for those imperial society termed superior (conforming to race stereotypes, being literate, having superior education, having financial means, etc), leaving high-physical effort and low-paying employment as the only viable means to subsist and gain mobility on the new mainstream. The system was designed to groom a new labour force that could serve the interests of the colony without clashing with its power structure.

Kuznets curve: The challenges of the 20th century

Further progress into what missionary schools taught, education in the sub-saharan region saw remarkable progress throughout the 20th century and after the independence era. Though highly irregular and completely unevenly distributed "*average educational attainment increased from 0.2 years of schooling in 1900 to 2.3 in 1970 and 5.7 in 2010*" (Baten et al, 2022), meaning that access to education was slightly more widespread but there was still great disparity between who had access to these opportunities and how early on they gained said advantage, where gender posed a great challenge for equal access to schooling. However, when compared to the rest of the colonised world, sub-saharan Africa was not remarkable, rather following a global trend in regards to gender equality in education. The statistical curve to reference this trend is called the "Educational Gender Kuznets curve" where by the 80s Africa had the highest gender disparity rate.
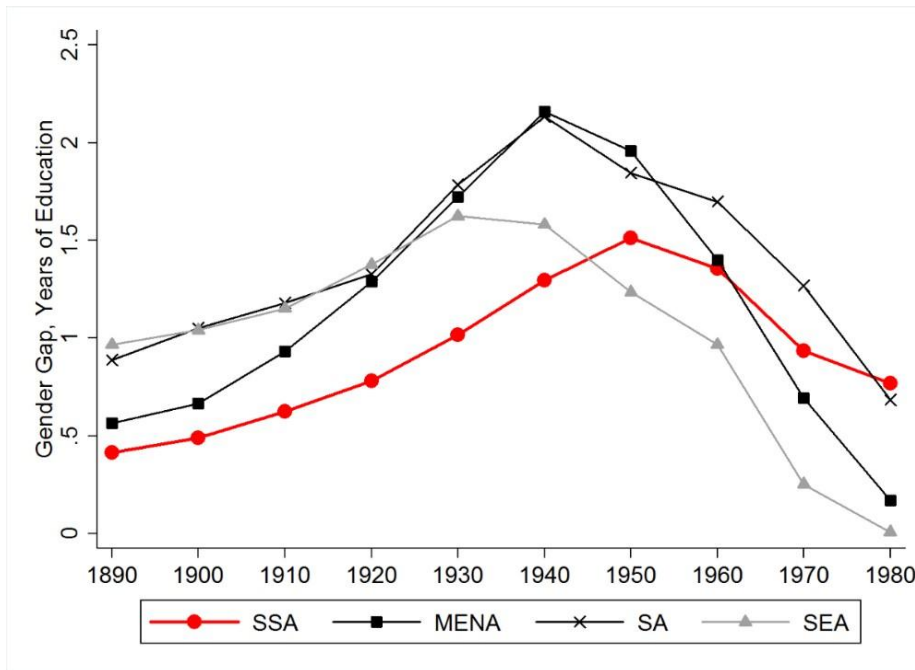
Figure 2: Gender gaps in developing world regions over time, *"Educational Gender Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Long-Term Perspective"*, Baten et al, 2022

Nonetheless, it was during this time Sub-Saharan and overall Africa underwent the most drastic socio-political changes, where three dozen new states were formed between 1945 and 1960 (US government statistics). By the establishment of new independent states posed a great challenge in matters of policy and order, the progress of education became slow. Territories where colonial rule had once established arbitrary borders and rule now saw themselves in a changed global scene. As by this time, there was the veering pressure from the Cold War, claims of possession over previously colonised territories became a matter of dispute mainly in African countries, as they were rich in natural resources and NATO members sought to lay claim over these in hopes to prevent the further spreading of communism. Again, this posed an impediment over the fragile new infrastructure of the newly installed governments in the world.
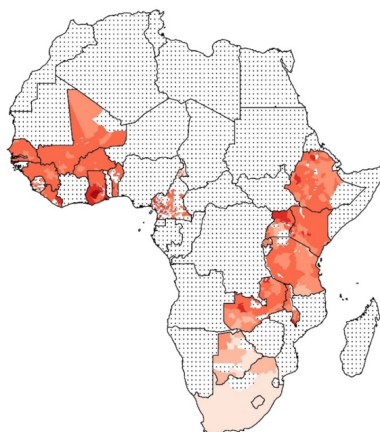
Figure 3: Sub-national gender gaps in education, *"Educational Gender Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Long-Term Perspective"*, Baten et al, 2022

Sub-saharan Africa ventured into the modernity of the 20th-century still with the lacking education of missionary-based western education. Even after independence, these regions were always prone to conflict, never developing their infrastructure– railroads and interconnectedness to give rural areas easier access to urban areas, as well as establishing spaces to promote a more well-rounded and educated population that would contribute to the developing economy.

II. Current Situation

The current situation varies in different countries across the Sub-Saharan region, however, there are various undeniable challenges that are common in many nations within the region.

<u>Access to Education</u>

The main challenge is getting the education in the first place;factors such as poverty, gender inequality and unfair cultural norms, such as early marriage, highly contribute to low school enrollments among girls. According to the World Bank (2020), Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of education exclusion in the six developing world regions. After the COVID 19 pandemic, over 5 million girls in Sub Saharan Africa are in risk of never returning to school. Access to education in Sub Saharan Africa's main struggle is poverty. Apart from the already existing disparities in gender, school fees are an obstacle for girls in poverty conditions to pursue their education and careers. Some other barriers are more specifically aimed at gender, for example, many girls drop out of school due to pregnancies and the need to support their families after that.
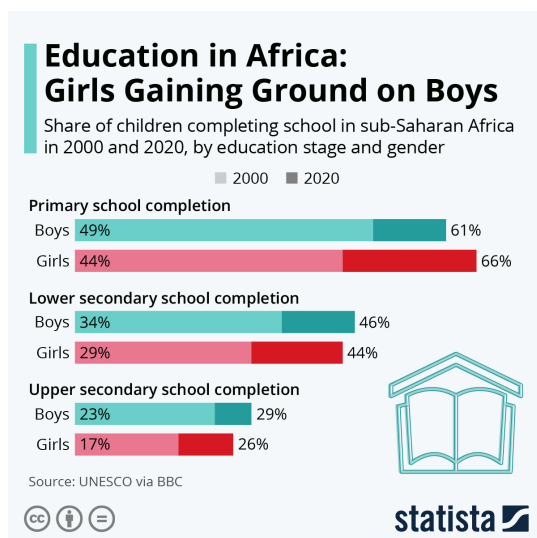

Education in Africa: Girls Gaining Ground on Boys

Share of children completing school in sub-Saharan Africa in 2000 and 2020, by education stage and gender

■ 2000 ■ 2020

Primary school completion
Boys 49% ——— 61%
Girls 44% ——— 66%

Lower secondary school completion
Boys 34% ——— 46%
Girls 29% ——— 44%

Upper secondary school completion
Boys 23% ——— 29%
Girls 17% ——— 26%

Source: UNESCO via BBC

statista

Figure 4: "Education in Africa: Girls Gaining Ground on Boys" World Economic Forum (2022)

There have been notorious advances during the last year regarding the gap in education among girls and boys in Sub Saharan Africa, for example, in primary school, as seen in the figure above, the 66% of girls complete their education cycle, however in lower and upper secondary school there still exists a gap.

Social Norms as an Obstacle

Social Norms: ideals that create shared expectations and dictate informal rules that influence how people should behave.
Gender Norms: Social norms that are correlated specifically with gender, and that reinforce systemic gender inequality and undermine the rights of women.

Now, relating this to the education of girls in Sub Saharan Africa, these social norms are barriers to girls who need to complete their education. For example, due to discriminatory policies in schools, girls with early pregnancies (thus for the social, political and religious climate), are forced to drop out of school early, this factor is also linked with child marriage, which is related to the unfair power dynamics and the discrimination existing in countries with high poverty and violence rates, child marriage is more prevalent among women in rural areas. Social norms push girls into dropping out of school by the time of marriage, to dedicate solely to childbearing.

Another very important and determining factor, that will be mentioned multiple times, is poverty and child labour, due to the gender norms regarding girls educations, and the perception on education in boys and girls, during financial hardships which are common in poor countries, parents are likely to prioritize boys education (UNGEI, 2022). The lack of female teachers and school staff is also a barrier to guaranteeing a safe and inclusive space for girls to study and complete their education. One of the main problems is that gender norms and stereotypes are learned from early childhood, and the issues are not addressed in early education.

Enrollment and Dropout rates

As mentioned earlier, there are multiple factors that make girls in Sub Saharan Africa drop out of school and not even enrol at all, these factors include, early marriage, pregnancies and "household responsibilities" all of which can be explained by the gender norms and inequalities existing in Sub Saharan Africa. This, of course, affects their development as adults in their daily lives; according to a gender report made by UNESCO (2022), two thirds of adults who lack literacy skills are women. Also, according to the same report, if existing

laws about child marriage in Sub Saharan Africa were enforced, it would result in a 39% increase of years of schooling.

Quality of Education

It is important to notice, that due to the existing poverty conditions in Sub Saharan Africa, even when girls get to be enrolled in schools, the quality of them is compromised. There is a lack of teachers, textbooks etc which affect skill acquisition in a negative manner. Also, there are times in which the security of the girls gets compromised in their schools due to attacks driven by gender violence, according to UNICEF, girls in Sub Saharan Africa are prone to suffering sexual harassment, bullying, and physical violence.These can be tackled along with poverty in the area.
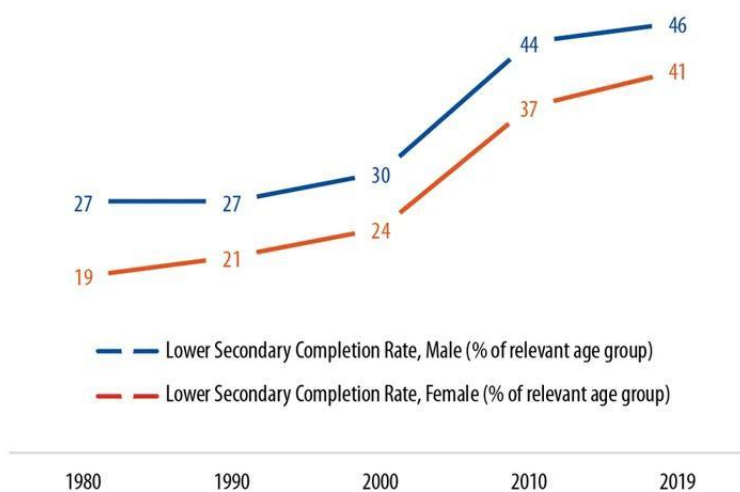
Progress Made

However, NGOs, the UN and governments in sub Saharan Africa have made significant advances in getting girls to be educated, comparing it to recent years, girls have improved their rates in school enrollment, mainly for primary school.

Chart 3

Education gender gap
Boys in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely than girls to complete their secondary education.

(sex-disaggregated lower secondary completion)

- — Lower Secondary Completion Rate, Male (% of relevant age group)
- — Lower Secondary Completion Rate, Female (% of relevant age group)

1980   1990   2000   2010   2019

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Data as of September 2021.

As seen in the figure above, the gap narrows with time, however there is a lot of progress to be made to guarantee girls' quality education in the Sub Saharan Region.

III.   Key points of the debate

- Economic barriers for the lack of education for women and girls
- Gender norms in SSA and their correlation to the education for girls.
- Child marriage, early pregnancy and child labor and their correlation to education
- Guaranteeing quality public education in SSA.
- Spaces for women to work in the education field in SSA.

IV.   Guiding questions

1. Does your country supply free education to all children?
2. Does your country support gender equality and parity?
3. Is the culture of your country supportive of the conservative gender roles in a family? How does this affect girls' education?
4. Does your country have the resources to finance education campaigns and institutions for girls? What percentage of girls have the opportunity to study in primary/secondary school?
5. Does your country have policies regarding educational rights?
6. What are the challenges that your country faces in providing quality education for girls, if any?
7. How could your country help/invest in education for the sub-Saharan region?

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