**Reference: WHRGS/HRC/RES/47/5**

**Call for submission for a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the realisation of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl**

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**Introduction:**

This report investigates the influence of the current COVID-19 pandemic on girls’ right to equal access to education in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as the Amman Center for Human Rights (ACHRS) is situated in Jordan and therefore specialises in Jordan.
The report responds to the questionnaire of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

**Methodology:**

This report is based on secondary sources, mainly deriving from reports written by international and regional organisations present in the country. As not all questions were applicable or in our power to adequately answer, we have committed to answering the most applicable questions to Jordan and taking into account the data available to us.

**Background:**

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jordanian government has largely adopted stay-at-home policies regarding education - therefore, favouring distance learning through online platforms rather than in-person activities. During early lockdowns in response to the pandemic, all schools and universities were closed and the Ministry of Education introduced a remote learning programme delivered through an online service (darsak.jo) and two national TV channels.

 During the period March 2020 and February 2021, schools in Jordan were closed for 148 days, ranking Jordan the 20th country for full school closure worldwide. The cost of keeping schools closed is significant as children who fall behind in their education are more likely to drop out, affecting Jordan’s human capital outcomes and the ability of young people to access jobs and economic opportunities in the longer term. According to UNICEF, simulations suggest that students have lost up to 0.9 years of schooling in Jordan, adjusted for quality. It is estimated that in Jordan students’ future earnings may fall as much as 8 percent.

 Enrolment increases with per-capita income, most likely due to low-income households. In addition, there are also consistent differences between Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees, with Jordanians generally having stronger education metrics; this is based, once again, in wealth inequality, as Syrians’ refugee status makes it more difficult for them to work formally in certain high-wage sectors.

**Answer to Question 1:**

Unfortunately, ACHRS does not have access to such detailed information yet, as it appears difficult to find disaggregated data regarding this topic - especially by gender. Nevertheless, some important aspects will be presented in order to better describe the Jordanian situation regarding access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, it is fundamental to take into consideration the access to online learning of children in the country. Indeed, even if many do, universality has not been achieved yet: according to the World Bank, 16% of children in Jordan do not have access to internet - which consists of 16 percentage points below the OECD average, whereas one out of three children do not dispose of an electronic device that can be used for schoolwork. Moreover, these numbers strongly increase when considering low-income households, as less than 30% of students belonging to the lowest income groups dispose of a computer for online learning, and only 50% have access to the internet.

 An important contribution to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls’ access to education in Jordan was the study carried out by Jones et al., titled ‘Intersecting barriers to adolescents’ educational access during COVID-19: Exploring the role of gender, disability and poverty’. Through the use of surveys and considering groups of Jordanian adolescents, the authors highlight some unexpected aspects regarding gender inequality in education - as it appears that it has not increased during the pandemic. Indeed, according to this study, older boys were slightly more likely to report an increase in chores and childcare responsibilities than girls (86 % compared to 81 %). Furthermore, among enrolled students, 63 % of older girls reported that their family had reduced their chores, compared to 45 % of older boys. This gender difference was also reinforced by access to support from formal education providers. During closures, 85 % of older girls and 56 % of older boys reported receiving learning support from their formal school; 64 % of older girls had been in contact with a teacher in the past seven days, compared to 43 % of older boys. Among older girls, 40 % (compared to 25 % of boys) reported having a mobile app provided by their family. Moreover, girls were significantly more likely to be accessing online education programming on the internet than their male peers and were also more likely to receive support from their schools and teachers in studying at home. Nevertheless, this only consists of one study that comes with its own limitations - therefore, gender inequality in the country needs to be taken into account. Especially because, regardless of the fact that girls and women are highly represented in both secondary and higher education, women’s presence in the labour market is still incredibly low: the International Labour Organisation states that only 15% of Jordanian women are employed in the labour market - a lower percentage compared to other countries in the region, such as Lebanon (23%), Saudi Arabia (22%) and Palestine (18%).

**Answer to Question 3:**

Jordan is one of the countries most affected by the Syria crisis, hosting the second highest share of refugees per capita globally. Syrian refugee children are likely to be disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Indeed, long-term reductions in household income will have a negative impact on children’s school enrolment and access to digital devices that are key to benefit from distance learning. ILO’s preliminary data suggests that Syrian workers are more likely to have permanently lost their jobs due to the pandemic than Jordanian workers, and phone surveys among almost 1,600 Jordanian and Syrian workers revealed that 35 percent of surveyed Syrians who were employed before the crisis lost their jobs permanently, compared to 17 percent of Jordanian workers. While the sample is not representative at the national level, it suggests that Syrian households are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impact of COVID-19. As such, many Syrian refugee children are likely to suffer greater learning losses than their Jordanian peers.

One positive case that emerged in the country is the one young people who are part of a UNICEF-supported national non-formal education programme, Makani, who were supported to access distance education modalities. Across the sample, 25 % of adolescents in Jordan were enrolled in any informal or non-formal educational programmes prior to the pandemic in March 2020. Among this group, some 28% of younger adolescents and 38% of older adolescents who were enrolled in any informal schooling or non formal programme received learning support from this programme during closures. These adolescents reported that they received additional learning support during lockdown, which they greatly appreciated, as it gave them the opportunity to interact with programme facilitators and ask questions about their school assignments through phone and WhatsApp.

**Conclusions:**

It is mandatory for governments and development partners to invest in gender- and disability-responsive programming to ensure universal access to distance education. It is

also essential that teachers and complementary non-formal education providers are equipped with training so that they can implement distance education in ways that do not reinforce pre-existing social and educational inequalities.

 Such gender-responsive approaches need to be informed by context-specific understandings of pre-existing gendered educational disadvantages, and recognise that girls and boys may be disadvantaged in different ways in terms of access to different types of distance education modalities and support from teachers and families.