**UNESCO input to the OHCHR questionnaire**

**on intersecting forms of discrimination and the rights of women and girls**

**Background**

The promotion of gender equality stands at the core of UNESCO’s mandate - it has been a global priority since 2008. The Organization considers it a fundamental human right, a precondition for advancing development and eradicating poverty, and a building block for social justice and prosperity. It is a critical factor for the achievement of all internationally-agreed development goals, as well as a goal in and of itself. UNESCO’s vision of gender equality is in line with relevant international instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women ([CEDAW](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ([1995](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf)) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNESCO’s Gender Equality Action Plan for 2014-2021 (GEAP II) provides an operational framework for the implementation of UNESCO’s Global Priority Gender Equality. UNESCO’s strong field presence, its strategic partnerships and networks, its experience in advancing norms and standards, and building capacity for policy development and implementation make it a leading contributor to efforts promoting women’s rights, women’s empowerment and gender equality in its fields of competence and through a transversal approach.

**Responses to the questionnaire**

**Question 2.a**

The draft ***UNESCO policy on work with indigenous peoples*** *(*to be submitted for consideration by UNESCO’s Executive Board at its 201st session in April 2017*)* reserves a prominent place for gender equality*.* UNESCO recognizes that indigenous women and girls face multiple discrimination at several levels: as indigenous, as female, as poor, as rural, etc., and integrates in its programmes ways to empower them (through education, sciences, culture, communication and information) regarding political participation and leadership, the fight against violence, etc.

Tackling multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence against women is a recurrent issue in small and medium-scale project proposals submitted through National Commissions for UNESCO or by non-governmental organizations in official partnership with UNESCO, for support and funding under the umbrella of the ***Participation Programme*** (which provides support to activities that are related to UNESCO’s mandate and fields of competence).

**Question 2.c**

Taking a life cycle perspective, the ***UNESCO, UN Women and UNFPA Joint Programme ‘Empowering Adolescent Girls through Education’*** aims to strengthen the nexus between the education, health, social services and labour sectors to promote gender equality and girls’ and women’s empowerment. Special emphasis is placed on discrepancies and discrimination in secondary level, including school-related gender-based violence. Currently implemented in Mali, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania, the Joint Programme targets the most vulnerable girls at higher risk of poverty, discrimination, exclusion and violence, with budget support mobilised by UNESCO from KOICA amounting to $15 million ($5 million per country) over a five-year period. Other budget and technical support for holistic gender-responsive multisectoral programmes that address education, health and hygiene, income generation and community development for women and girls is provided through the ***UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls’ Right to Education*** (~$11 million, benefiting nine countries).

**Question 2.d. *The International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR***, launched by UNESCO in 2004, serves as a platform for advancing international cooperation, solidarity and advocacy for inclusive urban development free from all forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, in areas as diverse as education, employment, housing provision and cultural activities. With more than 500 member cities across the world, ICCAR has been advocating for inclusion and diversity by sharing good practices, knowledge and expertise, and by advancing joint action through the development of participatory city-level policies and initiatives. Through each of the seven regional and national coalition’s Ten-Point Plans of Action, member cities commit themselves to providing leadership at the city level to address issues of discrimination and exclusion. Some of the examples of city-level initiatives that support this commitment are the following:

* In Ottawa (Canada), the City developed, together with the City for all Women Initiative (CAWI), the Equity and Inclusion Lens as a tool to support inclusive policy-making. The City of Toronto (Canada) recognizes the contribution made by its citizens through a series of annual awards, including the Constance E. Hamilton Award on the Status of Women that honours contributions to improving the social, economic, cultural and political status of women in Toronto.
* The City of Bern (Switzerland) and the City of Vienna (Austria) have been supporting mentoring projects that improve the access of qualified immigrant women to information and networks of the labor market by connecting them to professional women (mentors).
* The City of Nuremberg (Germany) established the Women’s Office, which provides advice and support to women victims and witnesses of discriminating behavior.
* The City of Barcelona (Spain) instituted the Observatory of Human Rights that collects information about the typology of cases of racism and xenophobia, aggression and abuse of law enforcement, employment discrimination, and violence against women, children, elderly and disabled people; the City has also established an Observatory on gender violence.
* In Tevragh Zeina (Mauritania), a programme promoting participatory democracy that includes awareness-raising activities on women’s rights and training sessions for the political and economic participation of women in society has been established.
* The City of Montevideo (Uruguay), lead city of the Latin American and Caribbean Coalition, has established a campaign programme called “Violence begins with inequality” that combats gender-based violence.

The ***UNESCO-HNA Partnership for Girls’ and Women’s’ Education*** ($5 million, seven countries) and the ***UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls’ Right to Education*** are contributing to addressing gender stereotypes that perpetuate gender discrimination in education, and school-related gender-based violence through support to: community mobilisation to address harmful gender norms and practices and to empower women and girls; gender-responsive pedagogy, education content and classroom practices; skills development for women and girls, including skills for life and work; and the creation of safe, inclusive learning spaces that enhance girls’ and women’s education, well-being and empowerment.

In the field of public-private partnerships, an important example is the ***TeachHer Initiative*** launched in June 2016. Spearheaded by the Permanent Delegation of the United States of America to UNESCO and UNESCO, along with private sector partners, this initiative seeks to reinforce the cooperation between governments and educators with a view to ensuring that teachers benefit from the training they need to prepare girls to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts/Design, and Mathematics (STEAM), and to address systemic and unconscious bias against girls in these fields.

With a focus on the corporate world, an innovative training programme was developed and piloted in June 2015 in partnership with Koc University (Turkey). Its aim is to increase women's leadership in the private sector and encourage corporations and their senior management to change recruitment, professional development and promotion policies to open up space for professional women based on their skills and capacities. Within the framework of UNESCO’s cooperation with NGOs, the Fourth International Forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, held at UNESCO Headquarters in June 2015, put the emphasis on “the role of *women’s in fighting poverty*” addressing *inter alia* the promotion of the productive capacities of women to secure decent jobs, higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, greater security, protection from violence and capacity to influence institutions and public policies determining growth and development.

***UNESCO’s project on “Engaging men and boys in the achievement of gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean”*** (Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua) was launched in late 2015 to identify trends, initiatives and programmes that work on male roles and masculinities linked to gender-based discrimination and violence, and to develop concrete projects and initiatives. Capacity-building was, moreover, provided to officials from the judiciary system, including judges, and from Family Counseling programmes. Building on this successful project, UNESCO will duplicate it in Africa (Harare) and in Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok) where the issue of gender-based discrimination and violence is persistent. The projects will be carried out in collaboration with relevant Ministries, International Development Research Centres, universities, UN agencies and women’s NGOs.

International days related to women’s rights serve as a conducive framework for relevant initiatives. For instance, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) in 2016 provided the setting for an awareness-raising campaign that included the creation of an Orange Zone at Headquarters and a rich social media component. The focus was placed on the effects of climate change in exacerbating violence against women and girls. Also on the occasion of the International Women’s Day (8 March), in 2016 a Conference on “*Violent Extremism and Radicalization: Women as Victims, Perpetrators and Agents of Change*” was held, focusing on women´s different roles in the recent rise in violent extremism and radicalization and how women counter violent extremism and radicalization.

**Question 3**

“***Counting (on) Women in Politics: Experiences from Morocco and Tunisia***” was an innovative multi-year research project financed by Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT). It assessed political participation of women in both countries and culminated with a Conference at UNESCO in June 2016 with strong policy recommendations to remove bias against women’s participation in the political life of their countries. In the same vein,the***Global Women Leaders’ Forum***in Sofia, Bulgaria, in May 2016, pointed to the challenges women face at decision-making levels in all spheres, helping to identify effective strategies to guide future generations of women leaders in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Question 6**

The UNESCO, UN Women and UNFPA Joint Programme ***‘Empowering Adolescent Girls Through Education’*** seeks to strengthen national and subnational social and governance structures’ capacities to use technology, innovation, knowledge, and data to create gender-responsive educational opportunities.

Since the establishment of the Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre (PWRDC) in Ramallah in January 2006, UNESCO has been working on action-oriented research that addresses the unique situation of women and girls in Palestine. Research commissioned and generated by the Centre is used to highlight the difficulties faced by Palestinian women as they assert their rights and demand a more active role in society at all levels.  In particular, the PWRDC analyzes and disseminates information on the status and condition of women to local women’s organizations, policy makers, legislative and municipal bodies and other relevant partners; promotes initiatives that create a better understanding of the human rights of women and gender equality, including the enhancement of women’s political participation; support networking and the sharing of information on women across the Arab region and globally; facilitates capacity-building, networking and empowerment for women’s organizations especially related to information management. Key publications within the PWRDC deal with issues such as: Palestinian women’s empowerment; women and poverty, education under occupation; needs assessment of young women in refugee camps; fact sheets on violence against young women; the role of Palestinian policewomen in combating violence against women; etc. The Centre has also been engaged in a range of training programmes on action research and policy-oriented research, aiming at building research capacity amongst government officials, NGOs and other members of civil society in order to broaden and deepen the research base on women’s rights in Palestine. The Centre also supports a library with a collection of materials on a broad range of gender issues, with a special focus on the situation of Palestinian women. The library currently holds thousands of books in Arabic and English. In addition to the library, the Centre documents the situation of Palestinian women through oral history projects, interviews, books and fact sheets. Within the project “Building Gender Accountability in Palestine”, work is underway in cooperation with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the transformation of the Center into Gender Policy Institute (GPI) - a semi-independent research institution under the auspices of the Palestinian Ministry of Women’s Affairs.

**Question 8**

UNESCO pays special attention in its submissions to the Universal Periodic Review to issues of social inclusion and the implementation of the rights of people in vulnerable situations, including migrants, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and children, with a special focus on vulnerable women and girls. UNESCO reports on the Member States’ constitutional, legislative and policy frameworks on inclusive education and gender equality related to the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960).

Tapping into the mechanism’s full potential would be greatly facilitated by: highlighting intersecting forms of discrimination and the rights of women and girls in the concluding observations of treaty bodies; an increased focus on such issues by submissions of UN bodies; advocacy among Member States building *inter alia* on such instruments as Resolution 32/ L 25 to promote recognition of the critical importance of urgently addressing intersecting forms of discrimination in general and their impact on women and girls.