5 December 2023

Reference: WHRGS/HRC/RES/54/19

**Call for submission for a report on how climate change can have an impact on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and has the honour to refer to Human Rights Council resolution 54/19 on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl.

The Human Rights Council requested OHCHR to submit a report, based on evidence, before the end of its fifty-seventh session, on **how climate change can have an impact on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, highlighting how the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl can contribute to the climate change agenda and making recommendations** using information provided by all United Nations Member States, United Nations entities, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, the treaty bodies, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

In this regard, OHCHR is seeking inputs from Member States and other stakeholders to inform the preparation of the aforementioned report. OHCHR would appreciate receiving written contributions, responding to the information requested in the annex.

Submissions should be received by **1 March 2024** and be:

* Limited to 5 pages, in Microsoft Word format;
* Written in English, French or Spanish, as much as possible;
* Sent by email to **ohchr-registry@un.org** with **aydan.figaroa@un.org**in CC**,** including in the e-mail subject line: **input to HRC report on equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, pursuant to HRC resolution 54/19**.

Submissions will be made publicly available, in full and as received, on the OHCHR website, unless otherwise requested.

Any enquiries may be addressed to Aydan Figaroa at **aydan.figaroa@un.org**.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.

**ANNEX**

1. **The most important barriers for girls to their equal enjoyment of the right to education**, in relation to:
	* Potentially harmful impacts of climate change, including those on environmental degradation, and/or;
	* Root causes of their unequal enjoyment of the right, exacerbated by climate change.

Please explain, as much as possible, how such barriers affect the following four elements of the right to education:

* Availability (including an adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of girls);
* Accessibility (including physical accessibility, affordability, and access without discrimination);
* Acceptability (including quality of education);
* Adaptability (adapted to the needs of students and of societies).

*The planetary crisis of climate change and environmental degradation causes human rights harm, disproportionately affecting people in already vulnerable situations. Harmful gender norms, stereotypes, biases, discrimination, and structural inequalities exclude women and girls from enjoying a fair share of nature’s benefits and participating in environmental decision-making while imposing disproportionate impacts related to the climate emergency, biodiversity collapse, and pervasive pollution. Among the several intersecting forms of discrimination, climate change and natural disasters affect the full enjoyment of the right to education for children.*

*Climate change-related disasters, as well as climate-induced displacement, may keep children out of school. At the same time, repeated schooling disruptions due to climate change-induced disasters may increase the chances that education is stopped for good. Children with lower levels of educational attainment are more vulnerable to environmental shocks and stresses. In most cases, girls are the first to be removed from schools and bear the majority of the burden of supporting their mothers in maintaining the household. Barriers to girls’ education – like poverty, child marriage, and gender-based violence – vary among countries and communities.*

*Poor families often favor boys when investing in education. A 1% decrease in per capita income is associated with a 0.57% increase in the likelihood of girls being out of school versus 0.52% for boys of primary school age. The same is true at secondary school age for girls and boys in the same age group. It is also reported that other non-income, social, and cultural factors cause more girls to drop out of school in some economies. In some places, schools do not meet the safety, hygiene, or sanitation needs of girls. In others, teaching practices are not gender-responsive and result in gender gaps in learning and skills development. Setbacks caused by natural disasters, wars, and other such misfortunes that result in extended school closures or lack of access in the early stages of a person’s life can have an irrevocable impact on lifetime earnings and opportunities. If girls miss the opportunity to learn vital skills and knowledge early in life, their progression, learning, and retention are jeopardized. The same outcome is true if girls do not have the opportunity to complete their education.*

*The innate abilities of girls as well as their roles in society may be undermined by community norms, parental attitudes, and financial resources. Norms and lack of access to textbooks and educational materials may discourage girls from learning, affect academic performance, and lead to premature school dropouts. Norms regarding age at marriage also intersect with education. Gender‐based violence (GBV) in and around schools has consequences for school attendance, learning, and attainment for all children, particularly girls. The literature confirms that GBV is perpetrated by both students and teachers, including sexual, physical, and psychological abuse of students at, and in transit.*

1. **Concrete measures taken to respond to the barriers faced by girls indicated above**, in relation to the four elements of the right to education. Particular attention to those who are marginalized and excluded due to the additional layers of discrimination would be most welcome.

*As mentioned above, there are many barriers to education for girls, including inadequate sanitation facilities, poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, gender-based violence, child marriage, and other forms of harmful practices and violence against girls. Moreover, school‐level factors dealing with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure may be potential barriers to schooling for girls, given the importance of proper sanitation to avoid illnesses that cause absenteeism, to ensure children are properly hydrated during the school day, as well as potentially for gender‐related reasons including safety and the need for privacy and running water during menses. This recalls interventions that address inadequate health and childcare services at school, including addressing inadequate menstrual hygiene management and the lack of adequate food.*

*In this vein, cross-sectoral programming should be increased to address the multiple gendered barriers to girls’ education in crisis contexts. Education systems should be strengthened to ensure that all children with disabilities can access quality education. One of the concrete measures is activism that local educators and advocates may do. They may push for policy-level changes to ensure that education is granted to children. This brings about a different distribution of funds and economic resources. The quality of education is impacted and improved. Additionally, supplemental programs, policy reforms, and environmental laws that provide information to policymakers and local stakeholders may improve attitudes, and information about school re‐entry may help reduce remaining barriers to girls.*

*A change in the community's knowledge and norms about the value of girls' education, as well as in parents' attitudes may positively affect school participation and address the lack of support for girls' education, child marriage, and adolescent pregnancy. To reduce GBV, governments may modify school policies and practices to create a safer environment, through the development and implementation of codes of conduct and safety policies. This also will address barriers related to the lack of safe spaces and social connections; and a gender-insensitive school environment. Interventions that address insufficient academic support may assist in addressing problems related to school attendance and provide after-school group remedial education in core skills.*

1. **The most important existing gaps and challenges in education to empower all girls to contribute to the climate change agenda**, including in their adulthood, such as in the context of:
	* Developing the understanding on the right to healthy environment and the issues relevant to the impacts of climate change, including those on environmental degradation, through the integration of climate and environmental education into curricula;
	* Direct response to climate change, through their leadership and participation;
	* Building their resilience and capacity to adapt in the context of climate change, including access to skills development and technical and vocational education and training.

Please explain, if relevant, how such gaps and challenges affect the four elements of the right to education.

*Researchers and scholars affirm that girls’ education can strengthen climate strategies in three ways: by empowering girls and advancing their reproductive health and rights, fostering girls’ climate leadership and pro-environmental decision-making, and developing girls’ green skills for green jobs. In simpler terms, education can assist people in identifying climate change risks and hazards, and in enhancing their abilities and understanding to reduce and mitigate these risks. Young people can gain the knowledge and skills to challenge dominant power and oppression structures that perpetuate global warming and environmental degradation, both within their communities and globally.[[1]](#footnote-2)*

1. **Concrete measures taken to empower all girls through education to contribute to addressing climate change**, including in their adulthood, and if relevant, in relation to the four elements of the right to education.

*Education for girls is the starting point for securing the rights of women and girls globally. Educating girls also helps build more resilient communities that are equipped to tackle the effects of climate change. Equitable access to quality education provides girls and women with the necessary information, skills, and resources to lead climate action at multiple levels: protecting themselves and their families; nurturing climate-smart farms and businesses; and bringing their powerful voices to decision-making at the family, community, national and global levels.*

*The most vulnerable and least skilled members of these populations, women and girls, experience most acutely the impact of climate change, particularly extreme weather events and natural disasters. Climate change increases humanity’s vulnerability to the shocks of weather-related disasters; it also exacerbates existing gender inequalities that obstruct opportunities for girls and women’s social and economic empowerment. Considering that the climate crisis disproportionately impacts women and girls and pushes more girls out of school, the international community needs to invest in education, women’s equal participation in decision-making, green innovation, livelihoods, and policymaking. In doing so, the international community should combine holistic social and economic support. While girls’ education is one of many promising and cost-effective solutions to climate change, investing in it is a foundational strategy for addressing the underlying gender inequalities driving much of the unequal impacts of climate change experienced by girls and women, as well as those threatening the achievement of the SDGs.*

1. As much as possible, we would appreciate to receive the following information in relation to your responses to the points 1-4 above:
	* **Data disaggregated by sex/gender, age, disability**, and if possible, also by other grounds, including income, race/ethnicity, geographic location and migratory status;
	* **Information on girls who are in vulnerable situations and/or who face intersecting forms of discrimination**, such as those who are affected by humanitarian crises, armed conflicts and disasters; living in poverty; married, pregnant or have children, with disability, and/or belonging to minorities or indigenous communities.
1. <https://plan-international.org/uploads/2023/11/Climate-Change-and-Girls-Education_TechReport_Nov2023.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)