

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women,
Reqelford MUN 2025,
Reqelford International School,
Rampally, Hyderabad.

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Ensuring Equitable Access to Quality Education for
Women and Girls through the Elimination of Structural
Barriers and the Promotion of Learning Opportunities

Letter from the Executive Board

Honorable Delegates,

We are pleased to welcome you to the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This committee will convene on the agenda: *Ensuring Equitable Access to Quality Education for Women and Girls through the Elimination of Structural Barriers and the Promotion of Learning Opportunities*.

For millions of women and girls, access to quality learning remains obstructed by entrenched systems of exclusion. From discriminatory laws and cultural norms to economic hardship and digital divides, the barriers are as varied as they are persistent. These structural impediments do not just limit individual potential; they perpetuate cycles of poverty, inequality, and disempowerment across generations.

This agenda demands more than policy prescriptions. It calls for a reckoning with the systems that normalize gender-based educational disparities. Delegates must interrogate how curricula, infrastructure, and funding models reflect and often reinforce gender bias. We urge you to examine the intersectionality of these barriers, recognizing how race, geography, disability, and displacement compound the educational marginalization of women and girls.

Your deliberations must be grounded in both empathy and evidence. Consider how inclusive pedagogy, community engagement, and technology can expand access. Explore how international cooperation, legal reform, and targeted investment can dismantle the scaffolding of exclusion.

Education is not a privilege, it is a right. And when women and girls are empowered through learning, entire societies flourish. We look forward to a session defined by courage, clarity, and commitment, a session that honors the voices too often silenced and builds pathways for those yet to be heard.

Let this Commission be a testament to your resolve, your intellect, and your unwavering pursuit of gender justice.

Godspeed!

Sanjitha Moka
Chairperson

Sana Unnisa
Co-Vice Chairperson

Rohan Palloboina
Co-Vice Chairperson

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, the rights and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.



In 1996, ECOSOC in resolution 1996/6 (see p. 20) expanded the Commission's mandate and decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+5), as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's and girls' enjoyment of their rights in political, economic, and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to ECOSOC for follow-up.

The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's and girls' rights, documenting the reality of their lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

UNDERSTANDING THE FLOW OF UNCSW

UNCSW, DAV Intra-MUN will be following the UNA-USA Rules of Procedure. Explained below is the chronological flow of the committee.

Roll Call

At the commencement of each committee session, the Chairperson shall conduct a Roll Call upon all the Member States in order to state their status of attendance. Member States may respond “present” or “present and voting”.

- Representatives stating “present and voting” shall have no right to abstain from any vote on the substantial matter.
- Representatives stating just “present” retain the right to abstain during substantive voting procedures.

If any of the Representatives were not present during the Roll Call, upon their arrival they shall send a note to the Executive Board, clarifying their status of presence

Setting the Agenda

Setting the agenda is the first procedural step within the committee. A Motion to establish a primary legislative focus must be introduced. Delegates may propose only agenda topics set forth by the Secretariat prior to the conference.

Following the agenda setting, deliberations will proceed into formal and informal debate sessions, structured as follows:

Formal Debate

General Speaker’s List (GSL)

The General Speaker’s List determines the order of speakers for the designated agenda topic and remains open for the duration of discussion. The default speaking time is 90 seconds but may be adjusted via Motion.

In the General Speakers’ List (GSL), delegates have the opportunity to address any aspect of the agenda. You can delve into specific subtopics and this open format encourages new perspectives and ensures the agenda is explored in depth.

Informal Debate

a. Moderated Caucus

A Moderated Caucus facilitates focused discussion on critical subtopics within the agenda. A Delegate may raise a Motion for a Moderated Caucus by specifying the total duration (not exceeding 30 minutes), the individual speaker time (not exceeding the General Speakers' List limit), and the specific sub-agenda to be discussed. This motion allows for a more structured and narrowly focused deliberation on pressing issues within the broader topic.

Example:

"I, the Delegate of Argentina, would like to suspend formal debate and enter a moderated caucus on the topic: Eliminating Gender-Based Violence in Educational Settings for a total period of 15 minutes with a speaker time of 60 seconds."

b. Unmoderated Caucus

A Motion for an Unmoderated Caucus must specify the total duration, which shall not exceed 15 minutes. During an Unmoderated Caucus, formal debate is suspended, allowing delegates to engage in discussion of sub-agendas, motions to pass, informal negotiations, draft legislation, and build consensus.

Example:

"I, the Delegate of Finland, would like to suspend formal debate and enter an unmoderated caucus for 10 minutes."

c. Round Robin

A Round Robin is a variation of the Moderated Caucus, designed to ensure that more delegates get to share their views on a specific topic. Unlike standard moderated debate, Round Robin sessions follow an interactive format:

- Delegates raise their placards to indicate interest in speaking.
- The current speaker selects the next delegate from those with placards raised.
- Each delegate may speak once, with the speaking time predetermined by the motioning delegate (usually not exceeding one minute).

Round Robins encourage inclusivity while maintaining focused discourse on a designated subtopic. While Round Robins prescribe individual speaker time and an overall duration, delegates are afforded some flexibility: they may choose to conclude their remarks earlier than allotted, or take slightly over the suggested speaking time where appropriate.

Example:

“I, the Delegate of China, would like to suspend formal debate and enter a Round Robin Session on the topic: Improving Infrastructure for Girls’ Education for a total period of 15 minutes with a speaker time of 45 seconds.”

d. Consultation Sessions

A Consultation Session is an informal variation of moderated debate, designed to enable dynamic and spontaneous exchange among delegates. Unlike a Round Robin, where speakers follow a set order, Consultation Sessions allow delegates to stand and speak freely without requiring placard recognition from fellow delegates or the dais. Meaning, Consultation Sessions require no recognition. Instead, delegates may stand and speak spontaneously to share thoughts, respond to previous remarks, or offer suggestions on technical clauses or thematic coherence. This format encourages organic discussion. Delegates may interject respectfully, offer comments, or respond directly to previous speakers, mirroring real-world diplomatic consultation more closely than structured caucusing.

To preserve decorum and ensure equal opportunity to speak, the Executive Board reserves the right to intervene if the session becomes disruptive whether due to excessive cross-talk, interruptions, or disregard for basic parliamentary courtesy.

The total duration and general topic of the Consultation Session must be specified by the motioning delegate. Speaker time is flexible, though contributions should remain concise, constructive, and relevant to the agenda.

Example:

“I, the Delegate of Canada, would like to suspend formal debate and enter a Consultation Session on the topic: Combating Gender Stereotypes in Teaching Materials, for a total period of 10 minutes.”

Documentation .

In the Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), the documentation process culminates in the formulation of an outcome document known as *Agreed Conclusions*. These are formal, consensus-based recommendations negotiated and adopted by Member States that outline policy directions, and commitments related to the agenda at hand.

The documentation process within the committee begins with the drafting of individual policy papers. Each delegate prepares a written document that outlines their assigned country’s position on the agenda, identifies key challenges, and proposes relevant policy solutions. These papers are

usually based on data, case studies, and references to international frameworks or prior commitments.

Following the submission of individual papers, delegates with aligned perspectives or regional affiliations collaborate to produce a Group Paper. This intermediate document synthesizes shared priorities and recommendations, serving as a collective expression of the bloc's stance.

The final stage involves the negotiation and drafting of the Agreed Conclusions, which are informed by the Group Papers. These conclusions represent the committee's consensus-based recommendations and are structured to reflect both the diversity of viewpoints and the unified direction of policy efforts

Agreed Conclusions differ from draft resolutions in other UN committees because they are non-binding, yet highly influential in shaping international gender policy and mobilizing governmental and institutional efforts worldwide.

Structure of Agreed Conclusions

- Header
Contains essential details such as the name of the committee (UNCSW), the session/year, the agenda topic, and reference to the priority theme.
- Preambulatory Paragraphs
Provide context, recognition, and reaffirmation of past commitments . You can also choose to highlight existing challenges and systemic issues contributing to gender inequity in the agenda area.
- Action-Oriented (Operative) Paragraphs
Outline measures, recommendations, and policy pathways that Member States are encouraged to adopt.

Unlike Draft Resolutions, Agreed Conclusions are less restrictive in format. Each clause is typically written as a full sentence and ends with a period rather than a semicolon, allowing for more narrative and policy-oriented expression. This structure enables delegates to focus on clarity and policy depth rather than rigid formatting, while still maintaining diplomatic tone and cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most powerful tools for social transformation, economic empowerment, and the advancement of human rights. Yet, for millions of women and girls across the globe, access to quality education remains a distant promise. The barriers they face are not simply logistical or incidental, they are structural, deeply embedded in systems that perpetuate inequality, marginalization, and exclusion. Addressing these barriers is not only a moral imperative but a strategic necessity for building inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies.

The challenge of ensuring equitable access to education for women and girls is multifaceted. In many regions, girls are less likely to enroll in school, more likely to drop out prematurely, and often receive lower-quality instruction when they do attend. These disparities are compounded by intersecting factors such as poverty, disability, ethnicity, displacement, and rural isolation. Cultural norms and gender stereotypes further restrict educational opportunities, often assigning girls domestic responsibilities or subjecting them to early marriage, thereby curtailing their academic potential before it can be realized.

Structural barriers manifest in various forms: underfunded schools, lack of gender-sensitive curricula, inadequate sanitation facilities, absence of female teachers, and policies that fail to accommodate the specific needs of girls. In conflict zones and humanitarian settings, education systems are often disrupted entirely, leaving girls especially vulnerable to exploitation and long-term exclusion. Even in more stable contexts, digital divides and economic constraints can limit access to online learning and vocational training, reinforcing cycles of disadvantage.

To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive and intersectional approach is required—one that not only expands access but also enhances the quality, relevance, and safety of educational environments. This includes investing in infrastructure that supports girls' attendance, such as safe transportation and menstrual hygiene facilities; reforming curricula to challenge gender bias and promote inclusive narratives; training educators to recognize and address gender-based discrimination; and implementing policies that protect girls from violence, harassment, and exploitation within and around schools.

Moreover, the promotion of learning opportunities must extend beyond traditional schooling. Lifelong learning, digital literacy, vocational education, and community-based programs are essential to reaching women and girls who have been historically excluded from formal education systems. These pathways must be flexible, culturally responsive, and designed to meet the diverse needs of learners across different life stages and circumstances.

Technology offers promising avenues for expanding access, but it must be deployed thoughtfully. Without deliberate efforts to close the gender gap in digital access and skills, technological

solutions risk reinforcing existing inequalities. Initiatives must ensure that women and girls have the tools, connectivity, and support needed to participate fully in digital learning ecosystems.

Ultimately, the goal is not merely to place girls in classrooms, but to empower them through education that is transformative, inclusive, and rights-based. This means centering the voices of women and girls in the design and implementation of educational policies and programs, and holding institutions accountable for outcomes that reflect true equity. It also requires sustained political will, cross-sector collaboration, and robust data systems to monitor progress and identify gaps.

Education is not a privilege, it is a right. And when women and girls are equipped with knowledge, skills, and confidence, they become agents of change in their families, communities, and nations. The elimination of structural barriers and the promotion of meaningful learning opportunities is not just an educational agenda, it is a blueprint for gender justice, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Structural barriers are deep-rooted challenges in the education system and society that mainly affect women and girls. These barriers limit their access to quality learning opportunities. They often exist due to laws that are not properly enforced, gaps in policy implementation, and poor infrastructure. For instance, even when laws guarantee universal education, girls often struggle to access their full right to education due to weak enforcement, administrative delays, and a lack of political support.

Another major issue is inadequate school facilities, especially in rural or disadvantaged areas. Many



schools do not provide safe transportation, functional gender-segregated sanitation facilities, or secure environments. These features are essential for girls to attend school regularly. Lack of separate toilets and proper menstrual hygiene options puts extra pressure on girls, leading to high rates of absenteeism and dropouts during adolescence. Additionally, the shortage of female teachers and role

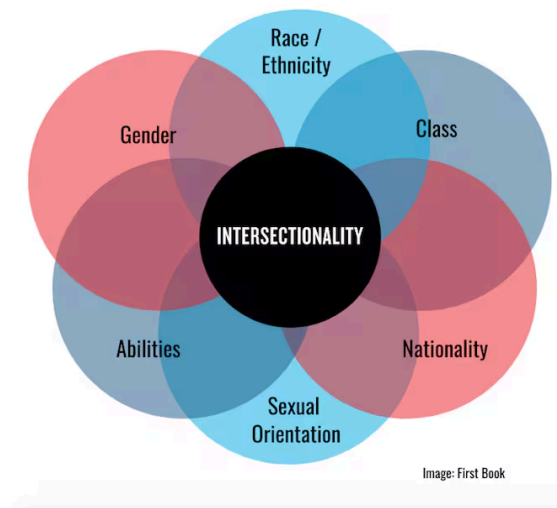
models can discourage families, particularly in conservative settings, from sending their daughters to school due to concerns about safety and propriety.

Harmful gender stereotypes and social norms often come through in the curriculum, teaching methods, and school policies. These norms support the idea that girls' main roles are domestic. This mindset leads to early marriage and a belief that investing in girls' education is less important than that of boys. Violence in and around schools, such as bullying, harassment, and sexual assault, creates an unfriendly environment for girls, making them less likely to participate.

SOCIOECONOMIC AND INTERSECTIONAL BARRIERS

Socioeconomic barriers connect closely with structural issues but focus on the economic situations of families and communities. For girls from low-income households, the direct and indirect costs of education like uniforms, transportation, and school supplies create significant challenges. Often, families end up prioritizing their sons' education over their daughters'. Financial needs may also force girls to work at home or seek jobs, which reduces their school attendance and learning success.

Intersectionality highlights how discrimination based on gender intersects with factors like caste, ethnicity, disability, geographic location, and religion. This intersection leads to compounded disadvantages for certain groups of girls. For example, girls from scheduled caste, tribal, or minority backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities or living in remote areas, frequently encounter more discrimination and fewer resources, which harms their educational access and progress. These overlapping identities heighten vulnerabilities, making it harder for these girls to escape poverty and marginalization.



Socio-cultural norms and expectations worsen the socioeconomic challenges. Early marriage, traditional gender roles, and expectations about caregiving and household duties often pull girls out of school at a young age. This situation also reduces the importance families place on their education. In fragile or conflict-affected regions, communities might deprioritize girls' education due to safety concerns or ongoing instability.

CASE STUDIES

1. Political Regimes and Ideological Barriers — Afghanistan

Equitable access to education can be swiftly dismantled by regime-level decisions. Afghanistan presents one of the starkest examples: following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, secondary and higher education for girls was abruptly banned. This reversal erased nearly two decades of progress, including an 80% primary enrollment rate and the widespread presence of female teachers. Today, Afghanistan is the only country where girls are barred from education beyond primary school. Nearly 2.2 million adolescent girls remain excluded, and UNESCO warns of dire social and economic consequences. While informal schools, radio lessons, and NGO-run classes attempt to fill the gap, they lack the legitimacy and reach of a formal system. This case illustrates how political ideology can instantly create structural barriers that violate the right to education.



2. Violent Extremism and Insecurity — Nigeria

In northern Nigeria, violent extremism has rendered schooling unsafe, particularly for girls. The 2014 abduction of 276 girls by Boko Haram in Chibok drew global attention, but the threat persists. Schools remain targets of militant violence, and parents fear sending daughters to class due to risks of abduction and forced marriage. UNESCO data shows that nearly half of the



world's out-of-school children live in conflict-affected areas, making insecurity a global structural barrier. Even where schools remain open, dropout rates among girls are high, as daily attendance is undermined by fear and instability.

3. Displacement and Early Marriage — Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon

Conflict and displacement create subtler but equally damaging barriers. Among Syrian refugee communities in Jordan and Lebanon, early marriage is often seen as a protective or economic necessity. Girls face long journeys to school, unaffordable transportation, and household responsibilities. In Jordan, 2013 data revealed that 25% of registered Syrian refugee marriages involved girls aged 15–17—nearly double the national rate. These conditions push girls out of classrooms and into early marriage, reinforcing cycles of exclusion and limiting future opportunities.



4. Legal Reform vs. Cultural Practice — Gambia, Ghana, and Bangladesh

Legal reforms alone cannot dismantle structural barriers when cultural norms persist. In Gambia, child marriage was criminalized in 2016 with penalties of up to 20 years, and Ghana launched a national task force to combat the issue. Yet customary and religious laws continue to permit early marriage, leading to premature school dropout. Bangladesh offers a similar contradiction: despite stipend programs that increased female enrollment, child marriage remains prevalent due to a legal loophole allowing underage marriage in “special circumstances.” These cases show that enforcement and cultural change must accompany legislation to achieve meaningful progress.

5. Digital Inequality and Technological Access — Global Pandemic Response

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and deepened digital divides. An estimated 463 million students lacked access to remote learning due to limited internet, devices, or electricity. Girls were disproportionately affected, as families often prioritized boys' access to technology.

Initiatives like the UN-backed “E9” partnership between countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Nigeria aim to close this gap. For girls, digital inclusion also requires addressing social norms that restrict their use of technology and ensuring safe, inclusive online spaces. The pandemic revealed both the risks and potential of digital education as a frontier for equity.

6. Menstrual Health and School Attendance — Africa and South Asia



Menstrual health remains an overlooked but critical barrier. In rural areas of Africa and South Asia, girls often miss school during menstruation due to the lack of private toilets, running water, or sanitary supplies. Repeated absences can lead to permanent dropout. In humanitarian settings, such as refugee camps, the absence of sanitation facilities exacerbates the problem. However, targeted interventions—free sanitary pads, separate latrines, and community education—have shown measurable success in improving

attendance and retention. This case highlights how dignity and hygiene are foundational to educational access.

EXPECTED TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A comprehensive human rights-based dialogue centered on the evolving frameworks for equitable access to quality education for women and girls is anticipated. Delegates are encouraged to examine the institutional, legal, and socio-cultural barriers to inclusive learning while navigating intersectional challenges, global precedent, and the transformative potential of education. The following thematic areas are expected to shape committee deliberations:

Socio-Cultural Norms & Gender Roles

Delegates will address cultural biases that prioritize boys' education and explore strategies to shift public attitudes through media, outreach, and incentives.

Legal Frameworks & Policy Enforcement

Focus will be on strengthening education laws, ending discriminatory practices, and aligning national policies with global commitments like CEDAW.

Economic Barriers & Household Constraints

Delegates will examine indirect costs, child labor, and poverty-related dropout, proposing financial support schemes and infrastructure investment.

Safety, Violence & Learning Environments

Discussions will center on school-related gender-based violence, emergency education in conflict zones, and creating safe spaces for girls.

Digital Access & Inclusive Technology

Delegates will debate closing the digital divide through device access, internet affordability, and protections against online abuse.

Health, Hygiene & School Retention

Menstrual health, nutrition, and support for adolescent mothers will be key to improving attendance and long-term retention.

Crisis Response & Displacement

Focus will be on education for displaced girls, early marriage risks, and partnerships with humanitarian agencies for continuity of learning.

Financing & Global Cooperation

Delegates will explore funding gaps, donor partnerships, and data-driven monitoring to support inclusive education systems.

TIPS FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

When preparing effective speeches, several strategies can enhance their quality and impact. Speaking, for example, involves creating a structured outline to help speakers remember the order, main topics, and difficult words. A successful outline includes an introduction, body, and conclusion, with transitions to maintain flow. Here are a few key points:

1. A good introduction captures the audience's attention, establishes credibility, and states the thesis and main points. The body of the speech provides supporting materials like facts and statistics, while the conclusion reiterates the main points and leaves a strong final impression.
2. Verbal and nonverbal actions also contribute significantly to a speech's success. Maintaining eye contact conveys confidence and credibility. Effective pronunciation and articulation bolster the speaker's knowledge and authority on the topic. Engaging body language, such as standing confidently and using gestures, communicates energy and naturality.
3. Pacing and tone are crucial. Speaking too fast can lead to misunderstandings, while a slow pace might lose the audience's interest. Tonal variety, avoiding monotony, helps retain attention. Seeking feedback during practice sessions, or recording for self-critique, can also improve delivery .
4. Speeches must be clear, culturally sensitive, and engaging.

Delegates are advised to develop a clear and comprehensive understanding of the agenda. Begin by researching your assigned country's stance on women's access to education and gender-responsive governance. Explore national legislation, party structures, voting records in UN bodies, and institutional mechanisms for political inclusion. This includes policies on reservation, representation quotas, leadership training, and reports submitted to treaty-monitoring committees.

There are numerous resources on UN websites and across the internet about the same. While it's essential to gather your information from official sites, being prepared makes the difference between a delegate and a *winning* delegate. Hence, even Wikipedia is a good place to start, so you can use their sources at the bottom to find more information about the agenda. Having a strong historical context, current policy landscape, and the intersectional challenges faced by women in politics will help you prepare for the entire conference.

REFERENCES

In compiling this background guide, we aimed to provide a comprehensive resource to support dialogue on the human rights dimensions of women's political participation. Through analytical framing, regional case studies, and comparative policy models, this guide explores the institutional frameworks, legal mechanisms, and socio-cultural dynamics that influence inclusive representation in governance. Drawing from a diverse range of authoritative sources including UN entities, gender equity commissions, academic literature, and field studies, our goal is to strengthen delegate understanding of the agenda and its alignment with the broader mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women. We hope this document facilitates informed, principled debate.

1. <https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education#:~:text=Gender%20equality%20is%20a%20global,all%20adults%20unable%20to%20read>
2. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/key-data-girls-and-womens-right-education#:~:text=Similarly%2C%20the%20out,for%20at%20least%2012%20years>
3. https://gem-report-2019.unesco.org/gender-report/structural_inequality/#:~:text=lack%20of%20other%20options,Women%E2%80%99s%20Refugee%20Commission%2C%202016
4. <https://www.unicef.org/wash/menstrual-hygiene#:~:text=Gender%20inequality%2C%20discriminatory%20social%20norms%2C,hygiene%20needs%20to%20go%20unmet>
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6. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146803#:~:text=restricted%20in%20remote%20and%20poorer,into%20secondary%20school%2C%20or%20if>
7. <https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/when-going-school-act-faith#:~:text=Research%20by%20UNESCO%C2%A0shows%20that%20half,education%2C%20%E2%80%9Cleaving%20behind%20entire%20generations%E2%80%9D>

The references provided in this guide offer foundational insights into the structural barriers and emerging opportunities surrounding equitable access to education for women and girls. Delegates are encouraged to broaden their scope of inquiry by examining national education policies, the effectiveness of gender-responsive reforms, and strategies to address socio-cultural and economic exclusion. Special attention should be directed toward comparative analyses of inclusive learning models and the intersectionality of gender with poverty, displacement, and digital access. A nuanced understanding of these dimensions will enrich committee deliberations and support the development of evidence-based, transformative proposals aligned with the broader mandate of gender equality and human rights.

CONCLUSION

Advancing equitable access to quality education for women and girls demands not only policy reform but a deep engagement with the socio-cultural and structural barriers that perpetuate exclusion. As delegates examine recent developments—from legal guarantees of free schooling and gender-responsive budgeting to comparative case studies from regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East—it becomes essential to balance national realities with global standards of educational equity. This agenda invites rigorous inquiry into how legislation, societal norms, and institutional design converge to shape girls' access to learning and long-term retention.

As you enter committee deliberations, we encourage you to uphold the values of structured debate, impartial analysis, and unwavering commitment to gender equality in education. Thoughtful negotiation and evidence-based argumentation will be vital in shaping resolutions that are both systemically transformative and grounded in inclusive principles. We wish you a meaningful and impactful session. May your contributions reflect insight, conviction, and a shared vision for educational justice.

Thank you.