



AFRICA HEALTH
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AHO STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

AFRICA HEALTH ORGANISATION

LUCY GIBSON

MA INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA

EMAIL: INFO@AHO.ORG



Table of Contents

Preface:	3
Introduction:	4
Background:	5
Principles:.....	5
Situation Analysis:.....	6
Proposal Strategy:.....	7
Goals and Objectives:.....	8
Goal 1: To foster girls' attendance, retention and motivate girls' participation in class.....	8
Goal 2: To go beyond basic education	9
Goal 3: To end the stigma around period poverty and improve sexual health education.....	10
Goal 4: To expand the hiring of female teachers.....	11
Goal 5: To empower girls	12
Time Frame:	12
Resources Required:	12
Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation:	13
Summary:	14
References:	15

Preface:

It gives me pleasure to present AHO Strategy and Plan of Action on Girls' Education in Africa. Today, approximately 60 million primary school children are missing from classrooms and half of them live in sub-Saharan Africa (60 million girls, 2019). Moreover, large gender gaps still remain in terms of access to and learning achievement in education in many settings across the world. 16 million girls will never set foot in a classroom and women account for two thirds of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills

A number of obstacles limit women and girls from fully exercising their right to participate in, complete, and benefit from education; to name a few, poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women. The nature of the challenge of achieving education equality is multi-faceted and a number of these obstacles are compounding heightening the complexity.

Please join me to express my gratitude to Lucy Gibson, an MA International Development student from the University of East Anglia in Norwich who tirelessly worked hard to research and write this important document. Lucy is an inspiration to many women and girls around the world. Africa Health Organisation (AHO) will be eternally indebted to Lucy and hope that what she wrote in this document will come to fruition and achieve Lucy's wish to see every girl in Africa achieve her dream of being educated and contribute positively to the society.



Graciano Upenyu Masauso MBA, MSc, MA, BSc, MCITP, ACIE
Founder, President, Director, CEO
Africa Health Organisation (AHO)

Introduction:

The Incheon Declaration, signed in May 2015 by representatives of the global education community, embraced Sustainable Development Goal 4 as the single universal education goal. This aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, including ensuring that all girls and boys have complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education (UNESCO, 2019).

Education is both a fundamental human right and an enabling right, as it enables other human rights to be realised (Nussbaum, 2010). Education needs to be inspired by a humanistic vision which is based on human rights, dignity, justice, and shared responsibility.

Today, approximately 60 million primary school children are missing from classrooms and half of them live in sub-Saharan Africa (60 million girls, 2019). Moreover, large gender gaps still remain in terms of access to and learning achievement in education in many settings across the world. 16 million girls will never set foot in a classroom and women account for two thirds of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, ND). In sub-Saharan Africa, girls who do go to school can expect as little of five years of schooling in total (Mundy et al., 2015).

A number of obstacles limit women and girls from fully exercising their right to participate in, complete, and benefit from education; to name a few, poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women. The nature of the challenge of achieving education equality is multi-faceted and a number of these obstacles are compounding heightening the complexity.

The positive news is that in the past decade the enrolment rate of girls of all ages is becoming more equal to that of boys. However, education systems are struggling to cope with this increased school-age population, and in sub-Sahara African countries, where education demand is rising dramatically, there are huge shortages of teachers. To meet the target of universal primary and secondary education by 2030, the region needs 7.6 million new teachers to fill the posts left vacant by those leaving the profession (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, ND). Additionally, increasing the number of female teachers should be emphasised as this can have a positive impact on girls' education, demonstrating a role model to them and encouraging them to continue their schooling.

Lastly, it is important to highlight both the instrumental and the intrinsic value of girls' education. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are fundamental tools which enable girls and women to take control of their own lives and obtain the capabilities needed to lead the lives that they value (Nussbaum, 2010). Basic quality education enables girls to access health information, the knowledge to provide economic support for their families, it reduces the rate of child marriage and pregnancy. According to UNESCO (2013), 2.1 million children under age 5 were saved between 1990 and 2009 because of improvements in girls' education. Ultimately, when girls are educated, healthy, and empowered, families are healthier. Furthermore, there is a higher chance that an educated woman will send her children to

school, increasing the intergenerational sustainability of education. In essence, education facilitates the tools a girl needs to help break out of the cycle of poverty.

This document will outline some of the key components required to address the evolving challenges in the context of girls' education, and a framework for stronger integration of some of the main cross-cutting issues. A key component of this Strategy and Plan of Action is that education is seen as a tool for increasing human capabilities, that education provides the skills girls require to access an improved quality of life, not just in terms of economic factors, but also regarding health and social factors.

Background:

This Strategy and Plan of Action on Girls' Education proposes a series of actions for meeting the multifaceted challenges which limit the opportunities of girls from receiving quality education. The strategy focuses on actions which aim to increase and sustain attendance, as well as, stressing the importance of equal treatment of girls within the school setting.

Africa's efforts and the work done by AHO on girls' education are guided by the commitment to meet existing global, regional, and country targets. Namely: SDG4 to ensure that all girls and boys have complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education

Principles:

- a) Emphasize the modification of determinants rather than simply addressing their effects.
- b) Target activities not only to individuals but also to highly vulnerable geodemographic areas, and to reducing inequalities in access. Including an awareness that formal education systems do not suit all, therefore alternative means of schooling ought to be in place.
- c) Recognize opportunities for intervention throughout the life course, such as the promotion of life-long learning.
- d) Coordinate joint activities at the local, national, transnational, and regional levels. Promote a multisectoral approach
- e) Identify integrated, sustainable, evidence-based interventions and formulate, monitor, and evaluate them in a unified manner.
- f) Ensure autonomy, the exercise of human rights, and social participation.

Situation Analysis:

AHO urges engagement in three main proposals

1. For gender equality to be at the centre of education policy, promoting the view that girls have as equal a right to education as boys.
2. To remove the stigma around girls' education and challenge traditional practices concerning child marriages.
3. Enable girls to go to school and stay in school.

Implementing these recommended strategies needs to appreciate and reflect specific realities and situations, at the continental, national, and regional level (specifically including the contrasting contexts between urban and rural areas)

It is clear that barriers to education are multifaceted, encompassing policy, infrastructure, education (schooling and instruction), household and family resources, and community beliefs and practices. Not all these barriers are directly related to government actions, such as community beliefs and practices, however, governments do hold responsibility of school-related infrastructures, curricula and policies (Williams, 2001)

Areas of action include the surveillance of the regional variance in ratios of boys to girls in school attendance at the primary and secondary school level, resistance to girls education (whether for cultural or financial reasons), access to quality teaching and school facilities, the ratio of female to male teachers.

Important and evolving challenges include:

- a) Need to review and update education policies and strategic frameworks to reflect work that is carried out.
- b) Need for sustained and strengthened surveillance at all levels of the education system to detect challenges to girls' education and to trigger appropriate responses
- c) Need for all partners, stakeholders and communities to increase their efforts in fostering the development and accessibility of an education system which promotes equal opportunities for all.
- d) Need for evidence-based interventions by education stakeholders and initiatives.

Proposal Strategy:

Recognising the importance of having clear targets and maintaining a proactive and multi-faceted approach to addressing the challenges facing girls' education in Africa, has resulting in the following list of targets

5 strategic areas are proposed:

1. Increased attendance ratio of girls to boys at primary and secondary level. Raise awareness that remaining at home increases vulnerability to violations of their human rights such as child marriage and unintended pregnancies.
2. Improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training to ensure that girls have the skills required for a successful transition into adulthood and decent work. This extends to improving adult literacy rates.
3. Ensure that girls' specific needs around menstrual health are met so that girls are able to go to school and stay there
4. Increased number of female teachers to act as role models and encourage school attendance of girls
5. Female empowerment, to remove gender hierarchies in society and encourage female leaders and role models in communities. To make female education a societal norm.

To accomplish these targets, the Strategy and Plan of Action for Girls Education has identified the following components:

1. need to have the essentials like desks, books, food, drinking water and separate toilets for girls and boys at school.
2. need for increased numbers of quality teachers and teacher training programmes, especially female teachers
3. need to address specific cultural beliefs about female education.
4. need to go beyond views of basic and universal education goals and address significant diversity across the continent of Africa and within communities
5. need to challenge the stigma around female menstruation and period poverty

These components require adaptation, to be applicable to a specific program context, such as the specific circumstances of individual countries, including national policies and mandates.

Making quality education available for all is the responsibility of every sector in society, identified here with each goals' objectives calling to governments, AHO, and communities. Governments, however, should take a primary role in financing and creating policies to make girls' education a priority.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: To foster girls' attendance, retention and motivate girls' participation in class
To see school as a space in which girls can make their voices heard and have their first leadership opportunities.

Objectives:

1.1 Call all governments in Africa to integrate into the national civic education curricula a programme akin to the AHO's AHO Education for Change programme, which supports girls and boys to understand how gender inequality impacts their education and their lives and how to advocate for change.

1.2 Call for AHO to organise a means to reduce the costs of schooling. This includes the direct costs (e.g. books, uniform, and school fees), but also the indirect costs (e.g. the responsibility of caring for siblings, domestic work duties, and income-generating activities).

1.3 Call communities to encourage their girls to go to school and see it as an opportunity to improve quality of life.

Indicators, Baselines, and Targets:

Indicator	Region	2020¹ baseline	2025 target	2030 target
Percentage of female children of primary school age who are not in school.	Sub-Saharan Africa	29%	24%	19%
	Northern Africa	23%	18%	13%
Percentage of female adolescents of lower secondary school age who are not in school.	Sub-Saharan Africa	33%	28%	23%
	Northern Africa	28%	23%	18%
Percentage of female youth of upper secondary school age who are not in school	Sub-Saharan Africa	57%	52%	47%
	Northern Africa	46%	41%	36%

¹ UNESCO (2020) *World Inequality Database of Education*. Available online: <https://www.education-inequalities.org/> [Accessed: 06/01/2020].

Goal 2: To go beyond basic education

To go beyond basic education, targeted investments are needed to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical, vocational education and training. Ensuring adolescent girls and young women have the skills for decent work to help a successful transition into adulthood.

Objectives:

2.1 Call all governments to recognise the diverse needs of the people of Africa in terms of access to education and that education is a life-long process.

2.2 Call to AHO to assist in making education service provisions more flexible. Including, but not exclusive to, mobile learners, pastoral communities, refugees, or internally displaced persons. For example, partnering with mobile book-lending services to sustain literacy once learnt, such as the African Library Project.

2.3 Call to communities to see learning as a life-long process and engage with opportunities for adult learning classes to improve the adult literacy rate.

Indicators, Baselines, and Targets:

Indicator	Baseline	2025 target	2030 target
Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above) in Sub-Saharan Africa	58% ²	65%	70%
Number of African Library Project Schools	2,866 ³	3,200	3,500
% of children from nomadic and pastoralist communities that get primary or basic education	10% ⁴	20%	30%
% of girls with a disability who completed primary education (% of age cohort)	36% ⁵	45%	55%
Number of teachers who training in inclusive education (per 10 teachers)	1 ⁶	4	8

² World Bank (2020) *Literacy Rate, Adult Female (% of Females Ages 15 and Above)*. Available online: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.FE.ZS?end=2018&locations=ZG-1W-Z4-8S-Z7-ZJ&start=2018&view=bar> [Accessed: 06/01/2020]

³ African Library project (2020) *About the African Library Project*. Available online: <https://www.africanlibraryproject.org/> [Accessed: 06/01/20].

⁴ Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (2007) *Educating Nomadic and Pastoralist Children*. Available online: <https://www.penhanetwork.org/sites/default/files/uploads/manual/documents/Educating%20Nomadic%20%26%20Pastoralist%20children%20Final%202020-03-10.pdf> [accessed: 20/02/2020].

⁵ World Bank (2018) *The Challenge of Inclusive Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Available online: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/171921543522923182/pdf/132586-WP-P168381-PUBLIC-WorldBank-SSAInclusive-Disability-v6-Web.pdf> [accessed: 20/02/2020].

⁶ PASEC (2014) *Education System Performance in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa - Competencies and Learning Factors in Primary Education*. Dakar: Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie

Goal 3: To end the stigma around period poverty and improve sexual health education
 To improve girls' attendance and performance at school, to break down taboos and misconceptions around menstruation, and raise girls' self-esteem.

Objectives:

3.1 Call all the governments to ensure that teachers receive adequate training in sexual health education and that curricula provide comprehensive, accurate sexual and reproductive health information.

3.2 Call to AHO to campaign for the resources to ensure that all girls, including those in marginalised and remote communities, can access free sanitary products. As well as, conduct outreach so that young people know about the services available and how to access them.

3.3 Call to communities to challenge traditional practices which impact girls' educational opportunities, such as gender roles in the household, child marriage and child pregnancies. Community involvement can build local support for interventions and help programs more effectively address adolescents' need (Biddlecom et al., 2007)

Indicators, Baselines and Targets:

Indicators	Region	Baseline	2025 target	2030 target
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	Sub-Saharan Africa	103 ⁷	80	60
Prevalence of HIV, female (% ages 15-24)	Sub-Saharan Africa	1.88% ⁸	1.5%	1%
Days of school girls missed in a year due to lack of sanitary towels	Sub-Saharan Africa	20% ⁹	10%	5%

⁷ World Bank (2017) *Adolescent Fertility Rate (Births per 1,000 Women Ages 15-19) Sub Saharan Africa*. Available online: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=ZG> [accessed: 19/02/2020].

⁸ World Bank (2018) *Prevalence of HIV, Female (% Ages 15-24) Sub Saharan Africa*. Available online: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.HIV.1524.FE.ZS> [accessed: 19/02/2020].

⁹ SDGA (2018) *State Department for Gender: Justification of the sanitary towels programme*. Available online: <https://gender.go.ke/sanitary-towels-program/> [accessed: 20/02/2020].

Goal 4: To expand the hiring of female teachers

Muralidharan and Sheth's (2013) results suggest that female and male teachers tend to be more effective when they teach their own gender. That learning for girls increases when they are taught by female teachers relative to male teachers, and that boys do not suffer negative effects when they are taught by female teachers relative to male teachers.

Objectives:

4.1 Call all governments to reduce the inequality in the ratio of male teachers to female teachers, especially in teaching older children in higher grades, where male teaching dominance is well recorded.

4.2 Call to AHO to campaign for the recognition of the potentials that an increased number of female teachers can have for girls' education, including providing a role model to girls and encouraging them to continue their schooling.

4.3 Call to communities to encourage more females to recognise teaching as a viable career and provide the necessary skills and opportunities for in-depth teacher training.

Indicators, Baselines and Targets:

Indicator	Region	2014 Baseline ¹⁰	2025 target	2030 target
Share of primary school teachers who are female	Middle East and North Africa	60%	60%	60%*
	Sub-Saharan Africa	45%	50%	55%
Share of secondary school teachers who are female	Middle East and North Africa	46%	51%	56%
	Sub-Saharan Africa	29%	34%	39%

* AHO recommends that the female to male teacher ratio should remain at 60%, to ensure that all pupils feel represented in school.

¹⁰ Roser, M. (2019) *Teachers and Professors*. Available online: <https://ourworldindata.org/teachers-and-professors> [Accessed: 08/01/20].

Goal 5: To empower girls

To see achieving gender equality as crucial to creating inclusive, open and prosperous societies

Objectives:

5.1 Call all governments to take on this commitment and to write curricula which promotes gender equality.

5.2 Call to AHO to campaign for girls' empowerment. To demonstrate that when gender is not a means of marginalisation, societies become more prosperous and resilient.

5.3 Call to communities to see the education of girls as important of that as boys. A call to reconsider traditional practices and stereotypes concerning gender roles.

Time Frame:

This Plan of Action will be implemented over the period 2020-2030.

Resources Required:

AHO recommends that African governments total expenditure on education ought to be 7% of the national GDP. This is proposed with an awareness that resource allocation is context depended and that there will be exceptions and caveats. In essence, total government spending will be dependent on the educational infrastructures and capacities that need to be built to ensure that all children can receive a quality education. In 2016, the United Kingdom allocated 5.5% of its GDP to education. African governments will need to go above this when expanding capacity and expanding the education sector. For example, in 2009, Botswana's total expenditure on education was 9.6% of GDP, the AHO commends this and suggests that this level of expenditure may be required to achieved the desired results in other African countries. AHO recognises that government money alone will not suffice to reach these targets and therefore calls to other institutions and organisations to help.

In the long term, once education infrastructures and capacity are stable, the AHO recommends that the minimum per enrolled pupil amount of government funding per year should be \$2000 per primary pupil, and \$3000 per secondary pupil. This level of investment is essential in order to respond relevantly and to facilitate collaboration at the regional, subregional, and national level between stakeholders in addressing the challenges facing education and specifically girl's education.

Readdressing the serious inequalities which girls and women face in regard to education is considered to be economically efficient as well as equitable. It should also be noted the returns on such a project, in terms of Human Capital theory but also in line with Human

capabilities are significant. For example, the McKinsey Global Institute (2015) found that if a women's level of participation in the labour market was the same as men, there is the potential to add up to \$28 trillion to annual global GDP in 2025. It is the AHO's belief that the direct and indirect benefits of expanding and improving the quality of girls' education exceeds their cost of implementation.

AHO cannot execute this Plan by itself. Cooperation with other organisations and institutions is essential for its execution.

Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation:

With a view to determine strengths and weaknesses of the overall implementation, causal factors of successes and failures, and future actions, a final evaluation will be conducted.

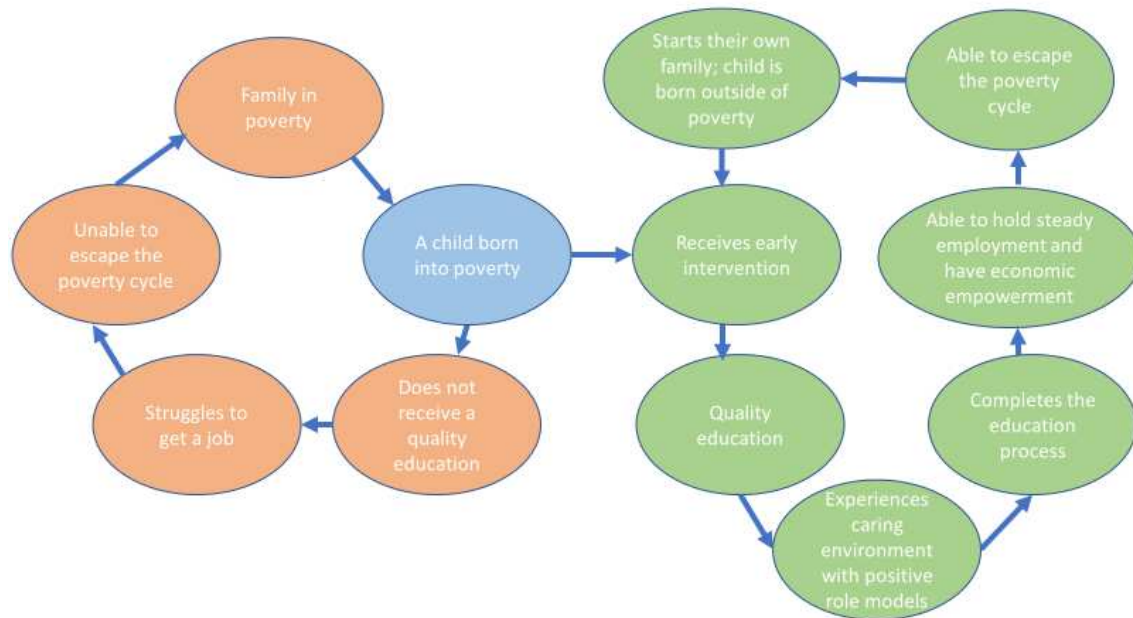
AHO will use annual information shared by the countries to assess the progress of activities. Data gathering techniques for impact evaluation will include interviews, analysis of documents, and observations of schools and classrooms. Statistical data from project reports and a review of cost data will also occur.

AHO shall implement a monitoring and evaluation system to allow the documentation and biennial reporting of progress in the execution of the Strategy and Plan of Action, as measured by the following indicators:

- Number of countries that have developed policies to foster an increasing attendance of girls at both the primary and secondary level
- Proportion of national budgets allocated to education policy and specifically girls' education.
- Number of countries with up-to-date information and biennial reporting on school attendance and attainment.
- Number of vulnerable areas that have implemented programs or interventions that integrate education policies to promote both the instrumental and intrinsic benefits of education.
- Number of countries with teacher training plans in place, including ones which promote girls' education.
- Number of vulnerable areas that have mechanisms at the municipal level to permit the participation of women and other community actors in education and development planning.

Summary:

In essence, education facilitates the tools a girl needs to break out of the cycle of poverty. When girls are educated, healthy and empowered, families are healthier and there is a higher change that an educated woman will send her own children to school, thus increasing the intergenerational sustainability of education. This is summarised in the following diagram.



AHO urges

- priority to be given to intersectoral actions that will enable the educational gender gap to be closed.
- a dialogue between ministries, the public sector and civil society to emerge.
- the establishment of integrated monitoring, evaluation and accountability systems for policies, plans, and interventions to determine their impact in terms of improving girls' education.
- processes to be put in place for internal review and analysis of the relevance and viability of the Strategy and Plan of Action based on national priorities, needs, and capabilities.

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