

## 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written statement by Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC)

*Agenda item 6: Principles of effective governance for sustainable development*

### **Achieving Education -and Health- for All**

The global movement towards education -and health- for all will directly facilitate the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As an enabler of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), education and health can become the driving force behind poverty reduction strategies, in the service of humanity, democratization of the resources and an input for regional social and economic development – especially relevant for universal health coverage and access.

Using global collaborative platforms, education and health can provide equitable access to and participation in the understanding of different cultures and customs across the world. As these platforms are now being designed and developed, the principle of equity and the diverse needs of the global communities needs to be built-in from the beginning. The Education Sector and Health Sector, through inter-governmental cooperation programs strengthen international collaboration. It is the sharing and collaboration that secures increased transparency, reproducibility, and credibility of evidence-based knowledge. All these are of paramount importance to society.

The Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) aims to mobilize humanity's collective intelligence, which involves the youth, educators, civil society, governments, businesses, corporations, and stakeholders. There is a rich diversity of ways of knowing, which relies on a broad and open process. The 17 SDGs are integrated and education -and health- for all is the backbone of the strategy of "leaving no one behind". Our initiatives also address discrimination and poverty. Interesting inequalities (including those based on disability and gender) are often *cross-cutting issues* in policy and programmatic design and bilateral and multilateral donors commonly provide technical assistance to support governments in achieving their goals in these areas.

**Education:** Digital technologies offer considerable potential to improve and scale up distance learning and to build more open, inclusive, and flexible education systems after the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) into life and work has already fundamentally changed the way people interact within their societies in both developing and developed countries. Governments who have invested in this area have done so based on a recognition that AI skills are essential for both the current and future economy of their country and also for the full participation of citizens in social life. An understanding of what AI is, how it works and what it can do, empowers students with the ability to better understand their world, advocate for their own and others' rights, and leverage technology and data for public good.

Tele-school has impelled investment in school connectivity. Digital technologies can also help to close the urban-rural divide in education attainment. Our projects and programs make a strong case for a new social contract for education, grounded in two principles: ensuring the right to quality education throughout life and strengthening education as a public endeavor; and a common good.

The pursuit of gender equality and rights of women, girls, and minorities remains a crucial goal of the WHEC, since its inception. Our e-Learning, e-Health and e-Government initiative was launched on 24 October 2002, in collaboration with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> It is serving with pride about 12 to 13 million subscribers every year, worldwide, in 227 countries and territories. Our educational programs ensure that students are prepared for the future in both life and the workforce, with a focus on skilling, reskilling and upskilling – *Learn to do* and *Learn to Learn*.

Our first task is swift and targeted action to recover the learning losses inflicted by the pandemic, particularly affecting marginalized groups. WHEC with its partners and with the support of UNESCO, is actively reimagining education systems and aiming to raise the status of education. We must ensure the learning powers of individuals and societies, to reshape the present and lead us to a more just, sustainable, resilient, and peaceful future. WHEC’s initiatives encourage schools to be *Health-Promoting* to improve both physical and mental health and to prevent gender and gun violence. WHEC is helping students, teachers and administrators and supporting them in their quest to make their lives better. It helps to improve communities too. That is our mission.

**Healthcare:** E-Health is playing an increasingly essential role in the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The digitalization of health services has increased during the crisis, spurred by the accelerated pace of digital transformation. WHEC’s strategic digitalization initiative is developing, building on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure that new digital tools support a more resilient and sustainable health system.<sup>2</sup>

**Investments in early childhood education and healthcare:** This can contribute significantly to reducing child poverty and breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. Unsafe living, the chronic stress of poverty, and lack of adequate stimulation and learning opportunities during early years can diminish children’s chances of success throughout their lives. Our advocacy projects and programs encourage United Nations Member States to take measures targeted at children. Standard operational child protection procedures have been put in place since 2020 to establish the role and responsibilities of each sector that intervenes in the field of child protection. Overall, as the countries emerge from the crisis, the design of recovery strategies are to introduce opportunities to begin building back better to overcome challenges and achieve full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

**Harnessing the digital revolution for the benefit of public education and common good:** If harnessed properly, the digital revolution can be one of the most powerful tools for ensuring quality education for all, and transform the way teachers teach and learners learn. If not governed properly, it could exacerbate inequalities and undermine learning outcomes, as the pandemic made all too apparent. Countries should take rapid actions to achieve full educational connectivity with their populations. WHEC will continue to support country actions, and strengthen inclusive digital learning platforms and content, worldwide.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.WomensHealthSection.com>

<sup>2</sup> See also: Statement submitted by Women’s Health and Education Center, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Empowering women and communities through education, health and technology: a concept note, 2020 (E/CN.6/2020/NGO/118). Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/official-documents>

Quality education and UHC are the most important investments that any country can make for its future and for its people. Investing in health and education is investing in people and in our collective future. This is a moral, political and economic imperative. WHEC's science-policy brief submitted in the context of the 8<sup>th</sup> Multistakeholder session of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Forum re-confirmed that, upscaling the social protection responses and supporting mutual learning through the exchange of good practices with regard to socio-economic policies, the provision of basic services and social protection measures can help in this endeavor.<sup>3</sup>

Our Recommendations:

1. Policies and programs delivered across government should be pro-poor and improve equity and inclusion. They should be designed, funded and implemented with this in mind.
2. Synergistic links between interventions must be supported. This can lead to positive outcomes (e.g., social protection and health, education and social protection, education and enterprise development, infrastructure and market development for the non-farm rural economy). Investment in education and health should be a priority.
3. Ensuring the inclusion of previously excluded children from education should be the priority. This is because of the cost-effective impact that such investments have in making children 'education ready,' reducing inequality in both education and access and outcomes and delivering measurable benefits in life-long earnings, thereby reducing poverty.
4. Ensuring universal free primary and secondary education (including the removal of petty fees), supported by school feeding programs and cash transfers to support the retention of girls, in particular, from the poorest families.
5. Need for *Health Promoting Schools*.
6. Investing in having reliable access to good quality curative and preventive health services, including maternity and neonatal care.
7. Priorities should be to deliver informed choice in contraception, regular consultations during pregnancy and trained midwife services for all births, with a focus on reaching women in poverty.
8. Launching a national program to promote financial literacy among the general public is essential in developed and developing countries alike.
9. Ending child marriages.<sup>4</sup>
10. Improving Global Partnership for Education and Health.<sup>5</sup>

We recognize that the success of education and health projects requires sound policies and planning as well as efficient implementation arrangements. Our common agenda. Education and Health are human rights.

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<sup>3</sup> See: WHEC, Open Science to Achieve United Nations 2030 Agenda, 2023. Available at: [http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/B41\\_Luthra\\_Science\\_and\\_Technology\\_to\\_Educate\\_Sustainable\\_Development.pdf](http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/B41_Luthra_Science_and_Technology_to_Educate_Sustainable_Development.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See: Statement submitted by Women's Health and Education Center, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, 2019 (E/CN.5/2019/NGO/1). Available at: [http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/E\\_CN.5\\_2019\\_NGO\\_1\\_E.pdf](http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/E_CN.5_2019_NGO_1_E.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> See: WHEC Side Event at 2022 HLPF: Improving Global Partnerships for Education and Health; Available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/2022/programme/improving-global-partnerships-for-education-and-health>