

Quality Education for Girls: Implications for achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Developing countries

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Abstract— The Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) were overtaken by events and were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 15th Sept. 2015. Countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all and part of a new development agenda. Seventeen (17) SDGs were adopted. The concept of SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at Rio de Janeiro in 2012.(Murphy, 2010) Girls' education reduces poverty in all its forms (SDG no. 1) and ends hunger through achieving food security (SDG no.2). Quality education for girls reduces fertility rates hence slows population explosion; lowers infant and maternal mortality rates and improves health and nutrition and well- being of families (SDG No, 3). Educated mothers ensure better prospects of education for their children (SDG no.4). Despite the strides made, 57 million children in the world are still out of school. Gender equality (SDG no. 5) can also be achieved by empowering more women and girls. Increasing access to education for girls is expected to bridge the gap and bring about gender parity at all levels of representation. Today gender disparities still exist. More importantly, women need to be educated to ensure that they all access clean water and get better sanitation for all (SDG no. 6). A total of 663 million people worldwide are still without water. Education is a prime mover of social, cultural and economic development of any nation hence it raises economic productivity (SDG no 12). The education of girls today is widely recognized as the most effective development investment a country can make. Women are the foundation of life due to their multiple and critical roles in the family. Their education therefore acts as a springboard for sustainable development hence the best strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. A cost-benefit analysis has revealed that women's education has enormous social returns(Kizerbo, 1991). Seven of the seventeen SDGs will be addressed in this review.

Keywords— Gender parity, cost-benefit, social returns, mortality rate.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education permeates all other sectors of the society and it affects all socio-economic and political decisions of any country. The education of the girl-child is widely recognized as the most effective development investment a country can make (Gachukia, 2003). Women have had little bargaining power since time immemorial over issues that affect their lives. The low numbers of women representation in decision making positions has affected the passing of bills and laws that could change the lives of many people(Lawson., 2010). A United Nations study revealed that women though half of the world population, did two-thirds of the world's work; earned a tenth of the world's income and earned a hundredth of the world's property (UN, 2000). This is so, because girls have not been treated equally with their male siblings when choices are made in circumstances where resources are scarce. Many parents prefer to take boys to school and leave girls at home to take care of families. This is because African countries are patriarchal in nature and hence men are always the leaders and this socialization has affected many decisions made about women. It is important for grassroots women to understand their role in economic development and their contribution to policies that affect them(Carter, 2012).

The Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) were overtaken by events and were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 15th Sept. 2015. Countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all and part of a new development agenda. Seventeen (17) SDGs were adopted(UNICEF, 2016). It is believed that provision of quality education to girls is a key strategy in attaining five of the SDGs. This education would also pave way towards universal access to

essential services. The SDGs are discussed herein.(Lange, 2015)

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Poverty is the inability to attain minimal standard of living measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required to satisfying those needs (World Bank, 1991). Extreme poverty rates have been reduced by half since 1990. However, one in every five people in developing countries still live on less than 1. 25 dollars a day. The majority live in Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan. Poverty is more than the lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. It is characterized by malnutrition, hunger, low access to education, low incomes, low life expectancy. and sub-standard housing among others. A total of 836 million people still live in extreme poverty (UNDP, 2000).One in seven children under age five in the world has inadequate height for his or her age. Every day in 2014, 42,000 people had to abandon their homes to seek protection due to conflict. Some of the causes of poverty include warfare, natural disasters, corruption, environmental degradation, social inequality among others. There is need to broaden access to education and technology especially among women and girls. When women get educated they are able to earn an income and get engaged in productive activities hence raising the living standards of their families(Rippin, 2015).

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

There are 795 million hungry people in the world and an additional 2 billion are expected by the year 2050. This translates into one out of nine people undernourished (12.9% of the worlds' population). Poor nutrition causes nearly ½ of deaths in children under five. Southern Asia faces the greatest hunger burden, with about 281 million undernourished people. In sub-Saharan Africa, projections for the 2014-2016 period indicate a rate of undernourishment of almost 23 per cent. One in four of the world's children suffer stunted growth. In developing countries the proportion can rise to one in three. A total of 66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world, with 23 million in Africa alone.

Better use of agricultural biodiversity can contribute to more nutritious diets and generate decent incomes. Women are more involved in agricultural productivity and feeding families than men are. If women get access to the right information, then there will be reduced hunger and malnutrition(TFAO, 2015). If women farmers had the right access to resources as men, the number of hungry people in

the world could be reduced by upto 150 million(Nations, 2014).

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages is essential to sustainable development. Significant strides have been made in increasing life expectancy and reducing some of the common killers associated with child and maternal mortality. Major progress has been made on increasing access to clean water and sanitation, reducing malaria, tuberculosis, polio and the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, many more efforts are needed to fully eradicate a wide range of diseases and address many different persistent and emerging health issues(WHO, 2016).

Surveys show that 17,000 fewer children die each day than in 1990, but more than six million children still die before their fifth birthday each year. Despite determined global progress, an increasing proportion of child deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Four out of every five deaths of children under age five occur in these regions. Children of educated mothers—even mothers with only primary schooling—are more likely to survive than children of mothers with no education. It is for this reason that quality education for women is advocated.Maternal mortality has fallen by almost 50 per cent since 1990. In Eastern Asia, Northern Africa and Southern Asia, maternal mortality has declined by around two-thirds. But maternal mortality ratio – the proportion of mothers that do not survive childbirth compared to those who do – in developing regions is still 14 times higher than in the developed regions. Only half of women in developing regions receive the recommended amount of health care they need. Education for women will increase their access to health facilities, improve compliance to safe health and use medication as prescribed by practitioners. The need for family planning is slowly being met for more women, but demand is increasing at a rapid pace(WHO, 2015).

At the end of 2014, there were 13.6 million people accessing antiretroviral therapy. New HIV infections in 2013 were estimated at 2.1 million, which was 38 per cent lower than in 2001.At the end of 2013, there were an estimated 35 million people living with HIV. Globally, adolescent girls and young women face gender-based inequalities, exclusion, discrimination and violence, which put them at increased risk of acquiring HIV. HIV is the leading cause of death for women of reproductive age worldwide(GBD, 2016). There were 250 000 new HIV infections among adolescents in 2013, two thirds of which

were among adolescent girls. In many settings, adolescent girls' right to privacy and bodily autonomy is not respected, as many report that their first sexual experience was forced. With the aforementioned scenario, it is paramount that girls are empowered through education to be in control of their health(WHO, 2007).

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. Major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools particularly for women and girls. Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides for achieving universal education goals. For example, the world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education.

Enrolment in primary education in developing countries has reached 91 per cent but 57 million children remain out of school. More than half of children that have not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 50 per cent of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas. 103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60 per cent of them are women. Educated women will ensure that children with disabilities are not denied access to education. As is the case, illiterate women have been known to lock up children with disabilities due to retrogressive cultural practices(Moreno-Serra, 2012).

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large(UN, 2010).

About two thirds of countries in the developing regions have achieved gender parity in primary education. In Southern Asia, only 74 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 1990. By 2012, the enrolment

ratios were the same for girls as for boys. In sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia, girls still face barriers to entering both primary and secondary school. Women in Northern Africa hold less than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The proportion of women in paid employment outside the agriculture sector has increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015. In 46 countries, women now hold more than 30 per cent of seats in national parliament in at least one chamber. For instance, the Kenyan 11th parliament failed to pass the gender bill that would make it mandatory to have two-thirds of either gender for representation in decision making positions. This is an indication that the affirmative action has not taken route(Kameri-Mbote, 2003). In the Kenyan 11th parliament today, only 59 members are women out of 349. Of these, 47 are elected while 12 are nominated. In addition, there is no elected woman in the Senate as all the 16 members are nominated(Ltd, 2016).

Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all

Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in. There is sufficient fresh water on the planet to achieve this. But due to bad economics or poor infrastructure, every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene. Water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, worsening hunger and malnutrition.

By 2050, at least one in four people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water. In the world today, 2.6 billion people have gained access to improved drinking water sources since 1990, but 663 million people are still without. At least 1.8 billion people globally use a source of drinking water that is fecally contaminated. But water scarcity affects more than 40 per cent of the global population and is projected to rise. Over 1.7 billion people are currently living in river basins where water use exceeds recharge. 2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets or latrines. More than 80 per cent of wastewater resulting from human activities is discharged into rivers or sea without any pollution removal. Each day, nearly 1,000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation-related diarrhoeal diseases. Floods and other water-related disasters account for 70 per cent of all deaths related to natural disasters(Government of Kenya, 2006).

Kenya targets to rehabilitate 600 hydrometric stations and reinforce regulations for water resource monitoring. Other targets include expansion of water supply in major towns and rural areas. The private sector will be explored for collaboration in development. The role of local water vendors will be strengthened. Women use water more frequently than men and hence it is paramount that they embrace the benefits of using safe water and proper sanitation. This again calls for women to be educated to understand the need to observe hygienic practices as homemakers(Standard Digital, 2016).

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Sustainable consumption and production is about promoting resource and energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and providing access to basic services, green and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all. Its implementation helps to achieve overall development plans, reduce future economic, environmental and social costs, strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce poverty. Sustainable consumption and production aims at “doing more and better with less,” increasing net welfare gains from economic activities by reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole lifecycle, while increasing quality of life. It involves different stakeholders, including business, consumers, policy makers, researchers, scientists, retailers, media, and development cooperation agencies, among others(Government of Kenya Report, 2015).

It also requires a systemic approach and cooperation among actors operating in the supply chain, from producer to final consumer. It involves engaging consumers through awareness-raising and education on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, providing consumers with adequate information through standards and labels and engaging in sustainable public procurement, among others. Each year, an estimated one third of all food produced – equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes worth around \$1 trillion – ends up rotting in the bins of consumers and retailers, or spoiling due to poor transportation and harvesting practices. If people worldwide switched to energy efficient light bulbs the world would save US\$120 billion annually(Summit World, 2016).

Less than 3 per cent of the world’s water is fresh (drinkable), of which 2.5 per cent is frozen in the Antarctica, Arctic and glaciers. Humanity must therefore rely on 0.5 per cent for all of man’s ecosystem’s and fresh water needs. Man is polluting water faster than nature can recycle and purify water in rivers and lakes. More than 1 billion people still do not have access to fresh water. While

substantial environmental impacts from food occur in the production phase (agriculture, food processing), households influence these impacts through their dietary choices and habits. This consequently affects the environment through food-related energy consumption and waste generation(John Helliwell, 2012). More importantly, 3 billion tonnes of food is wasted every year while almost 1 billion people go undernourished and another 1 billion hungry. Overconsumption of food is detrimental to our health and the environment and 2 billion people globally are overweight or obese. Land degradation, declining soil fertility, unsustainable water use, and overfishing and marine environment degradation are all lessening the ability of the natural resource base to supply food. The food sector accounts for around 30 per cent of the world’s total energy consumption and accounts for around 22 per cent of total Greenhouse Gas emissions(UN, 2006).

II. CONCLUSION

It is important that all developing countries step up their commitment to give quality education to women as this will speed up the achievement of the selected Sustainable Development Goals.

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