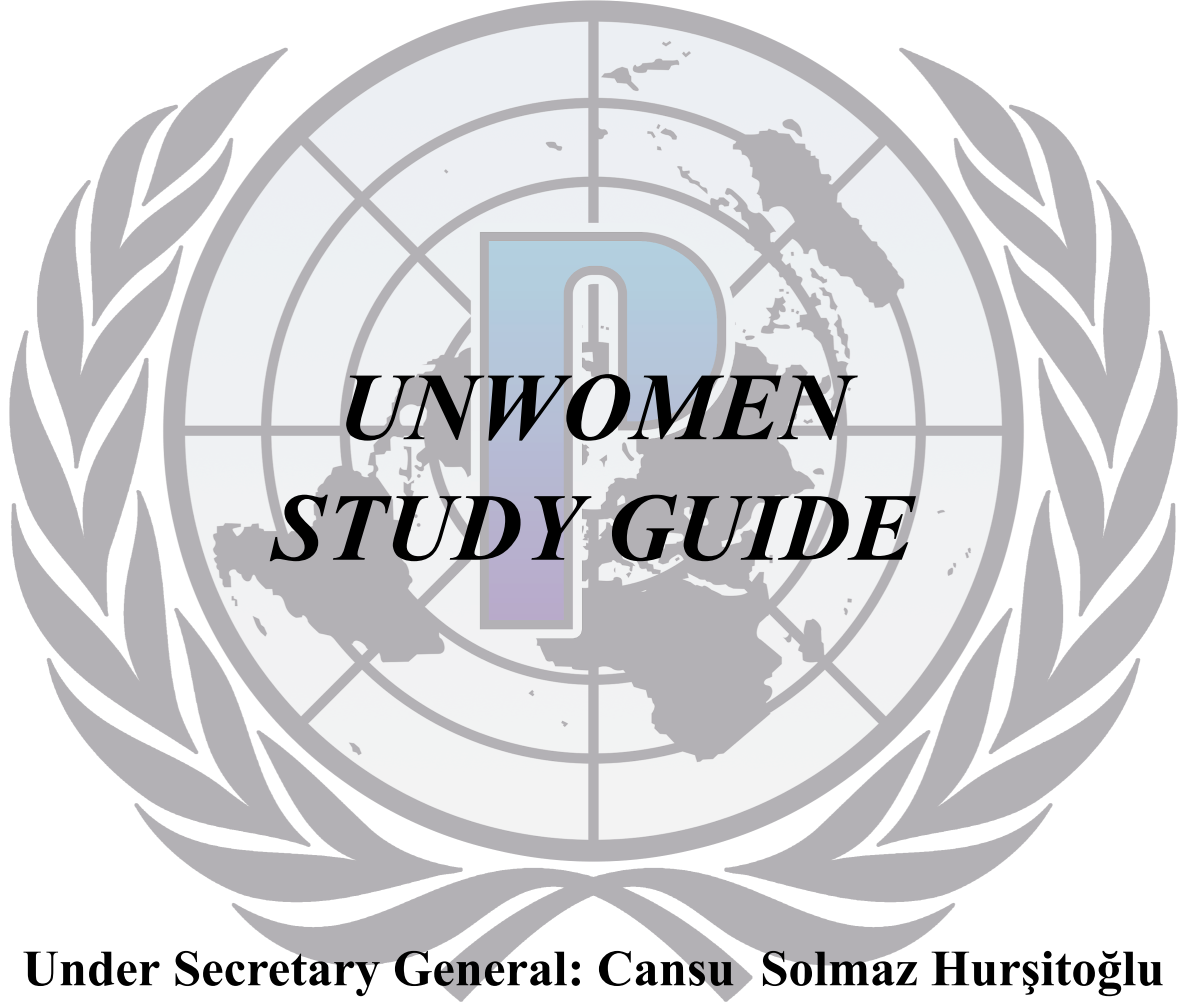


PERTEVMUN'25



***UNWOMEN
STUDY GUIDE***

Under Secretary General: Cansu Solmaz Hurşitoğlu
Academic Assistant: Halil Arda Şen

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1. Letter from Secretaries General

Esteemed Delegates and Distinguished Guests,

First of all we are more than honored to welcome you all to the second annual session of PERTEVMUN, which will take place at our precious home, Pertevniyal Anatolian High School on 18th, 19th and 20th of April 2025.

Since the beginning of high school, as your Co-Secretary Generals, we have been doing literally everything together. We started doing MUNs together, we were Co-Director Generals at PERTEVMUN'24, moreover we are currently and proudly standing here as the club presidents and Co-Secretaries General. We can not thank enough to our school and our advisors, Gülşah Teacher and Yaprak Teacher for providing us the opportunity to organize this conference.

Throughout our committee preparations, we have the chance to meet with excellent MUNers and expand our knowledge. Accordingly, your USG Cansu and Acas Halil Arda were two of these amazing people. We simply do not know how to express our gratitude for them!!

Last but not least we could not forget our excellent organization team and their hard work. Our Co-Director Generals İnci and Yiğit have worked so hard to prepare you for the most unforgettable conference.

We know that the best is soon, see you in rewinded springs.

Yağmur Raife APAYDIN & Beyzanur ÖZSİĞİNAN
Co-Secretaries General of PertevMUN'25

2. Letter From Committee Board

Dear delegates,

Welcome to PERTEVMUN'25 and UNWOMEN Committee!

We are Cansu Solmaz Hurşitoğlu, your Under Secretary General and Halil Arda Şen, your academic assistant. We are having the honor to serve as the board members of this committee.

We are thrilled to have you participate in this great conference and committee. The UNWOMEN Committee focuses on critical issues related to women rights, emphasizing the importance of addressing lack of education in the Middle East. As delegates, you have a unique opportunity to engage in meaningful debate, negotiation, and problem-solving to address these pressing issues. This study guide contains many prominent information about the agenda while giving an open space for you to also do your own research. Remember, regardless of your country's position in the agenda, you are all equal in the committee and you have all the resources in your hands to come up with great solutions and innovative ideas to achieve the goals set by the committee.

Other than the committee itself, during these 3 days, our utmost aim is to make sure that all delegates have a fruitful and entertaining conference. Attaching importance to the previous statement, even one delegate within this committee continues to attend these conferences; we will be proud and joyful to do so. We are more than sure that we, as the academic team of PERTEVMUN, will be doing our best to achieve such an accomplishment. We are aware of the fact that it is going to be a hard challenge for us that will be totally worth the struggle and hard-work.

We recommend you to not limit yourself with the study guide, it's better to research more to achieve more!

Warmest Regards,

Under Secretary General, Cansu Solmaz Hurşitoğlu- cansus.hursitoglu@gmail.com

Academic Assistant, Halil Arda Şen- arda.iel27@gmail.com

3. Introduction to the Committee

History of UN-WOMEN

After merging with UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), UNWOMEN was formed on 2th of July 2010. However, it and all its entities became operational in 2011. The organisation was established in response to the operative clause 49 of the resolution 64/289 adopted by the UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) during the 64th session on 21th of July 2010.



Current Executive Director of the UNWOMEN Ms. Sima Sami Bahous

Purposes of UNWOMEN

UN Women is aiming to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide. The organization is in collaboration with UN Member States to set global standards for achieving gender equality, working with governments and civil society to design and implement the laws, policies, programs, and services that ensure these standards effectively benefit women and girls. By considering the Sustainable Development Goals, the entity supports initiatives that promote women's equal participation in all fields of social life. Its work is centred on ensuring that women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems; that women have income security, decent jobs, and economic autonomy; that all women and girls live lives free from violence; and that women and girls contribute to and have a greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, while also benefiting equally from the prevention of natural disasters, conflicts, and humanitarian action.



4. Introduction to Agenda Item: Social, political, and economic obstacles to girls' education in the Middle East

In today's world, education is a fundamental right to have a development in both society and country. However, girls in the Middle East still face some problems to have adequate education.

Millions of children and young people around the Middle East and North Africa are starting their new school year. But an estimated 9.3 million children between the ages of 15 and 17 – more than one-third of adolescents in this age group - are out of school. Girls account for just over half of all out-of-school 15 to 17-year-olds. In the Middle East, significant progress has been made in gender equality in education. However, gender-based educational inequalities persist in some countries. In Yemen in particular, the illiteracy rate among young women is 54%, compared to 17% among young men.

The price of war is high: if the wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen had not broken out, an estimated 3 million children who are currently not in school would have been enrolled. Since 2014, attacks on at least 2,160 educational institutions have occurred in the area.

UNICEF reported that across the region, children from the poorest families are seven times more likely to be out of school than children from the richest families, while children in rural areas are three times more likely to be out of school than their urban peers. At the lower secondary school level, girls are twice as likely to be out of school than boys.

There are some political, social and economic barriers against girls' education.

4.1 Political Barriers

There are some political barriers which directly affect the girls' education in the zone.

4.1.1 Political Instability

Internal conflicts in the Middle East -especially in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq- severely weaken educational infrastructure. Schools were bombed, destroyed, or occupied by the army to be used as cantonments and rendered inoperative. Hundreds of millions of displaced families have been deprived of access to education, especially girls. Hostile environments discourage families from sending their daughters out. Also, in some countries, ISIS and the Taliban is against female education.

4.1.2 Gender Discriminatory Laws

In some countries there are some gender-based laws that discriminates against women. These policies put a major distance between girls and education. For example, in Iraq, some universities have unofficial restrictions on female enrollment in certain fields, especially in rural areas.

4.2 Social Barriers

4.2.1 Social Pressure

In areas where extremist organizations are active, females who go to school are threatened with physical violence, abduction, or acid attacks. Also, there are some norms and gender-discriminatory beliefs that come from their culture and prevent girls' freedom.

4.3. Economic Barriers

Poverty is one of the significant factors that determines whether girls can go to school or not. Even when tuition is officially free, families face some indirect costs – uniforms, textbooks, and transportation – that poor families often cannot afford. In times when money is scarce, parents often prioritize their sons' education and rely on their daughters to keep expenses down by staying home. Parents are more likely to send boys to schools than girls in cases of conflicts, economic hardships and wars.

Also, Some marry their daughters off at an early age to reduce the financial burden of feeding and clothing them, and see marriage as a coping strategy during difficult times. In rural areas, poverty is exacerbated by distance: schools may be far away, and girls are kept at home because they cannot safely get to classes and do not have money for transportation. Many families do not allow their young daughters to walk for hours to get to school).

Many governments in the Middle East allocate a relatively low percentage of their GDP to education, resulting in underfunded schools, outdated curricula, and a shortage of female teachers, especially in rural areas where cultural norms dictate that girls be educated by women. It can be said that the government does not pay enough attention and funding to education.

To address the economic barriers that hinder girls' education in the Middle East, governments and international organizations should implement targeted policies, including:

- Increasing public investment in education to make schooling more accessible and affordable, especially in rural and marginalized areas.
- Expanding scholarship programs and financial incentives to encourage families to prioritize girls' education.
- Providing alternative income support programs to vulnerable families, while strengthening policies against child labor and early marriage.
- Improving female labor force participation by creating more

employment opportunities for educated women, helping families see the long-term value of investing in girls' education.

- Improving school infrastructure, including transportation options and gender-sensitive facilities, to meet the specific needs of girls.

5. Historical Background

In the past, Middle Eastern countries provided education focused entirely on religion and used madrasahs for this purpose. Since then, girls' education in these countries has been seen as something "unnecessary".

In 9th Islamic doctrines promoted knowledge acquisition by both men and women, and historical accounts demonstrate that women engaged in academic pursuits in cities like Baghdad, Damascus, and Cordoba. Certain females, like Fatima al-Fihri, even established educational establishments; among the oldest universities in the world still in continuous operation is Al-Qarawiyyin University in Morocco. At this point, some people wonder whether current countries are interpreting Islam incorrectly. Because Islam is a religion that attaches great importance to education.

In the 20th century, some countries began to improve themselves in this regard and paved the way for women. For example, Türkiye under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk implemented major reforms in the 1920s and 1930s to secularize and expand education for women. Similarly, in Iran, Reza Shah supported women's education as part of his broader modernization efforts.

In the middle of the 20th century, oil-rich countries such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States made significant investments in education but maintained gender-segregated school systems. While female literacy rates increased, female attendance in higher education and the workforce remained low. Additionally, rural and low-income girls continued to face barriers to accessing education. Until recent reforms, women needed the permission of a male guardian (father, husband or brother) to enroll in higher education, travel abroad for education, or even receive scholarships. In some countries, women were not allowed to study engineering and law.

In the early 21st century, UN bodies such as UNICEF and UNWOMEN encouraged Middle Eastern countries to provide a free space and choice rights to women. Bahrain, Jordan, and Kuwait achieved almost equal enrollment rates for boys and girls with the contribution of this.

Although such developments have occurred, since 2011, due to the conflict in Syria, Syrian women have been living as refugees in other countries and cannot access their right to education

Countries have signed the agreements listed below, but almost none of them fully comply with them:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Education for All (EFA)

6. Major Parties Involved

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

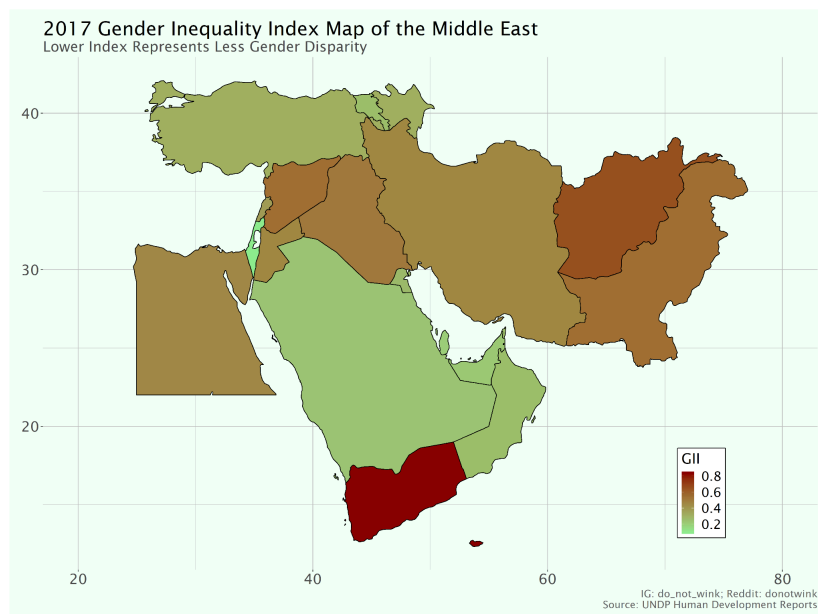
UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It contributes to peace and security by promoting international cooperation in education, sciences, culture, communication and information. UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. One of the most important contributions of UNESCO to the issue of Social, political, and economic obstacles to girls' education in the Middle East is the Convention against Discrimination in Education held in Paris, France in 1960. It is the first legally binding instrument entirely dedicated to the right of education. Since then UNESCO hasn't stopped working on the issue and day still contributes today by promoting gender equality in the world also in the Middle East through the education system including participation in education (access), within education (content, teaching and learning context and practices) and through education (learning outcomes, life and work opportunities).



L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Celebrates the Achievements of Young Arab Female Scientists

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

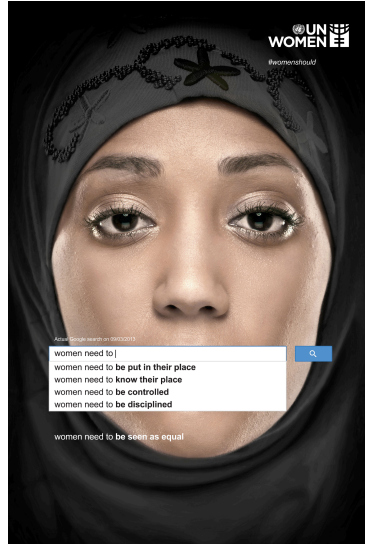
UNDP works in about 170 countries and territories, helping to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and exclusion, and build resilience so countries can sustain progress. As the UN's development agency, UNDP is critical in helping countries achieve Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP also publishes an annual Human Development Report (HDR) that measures the current progress towards the SDGs. The relevant parts of the HDR for the Middle East are the Gender Development Index and the Gender Inequality Index, which include data on the female and male population with at least primary education, as well as expected and mean years of schooling for the female and male population.



2017 Gender Inequality Index Map of the Middle East

UNWOMEN

As it was already explained during the introduction to the committee, UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UNWOMEN has the duty of supporting intergovernmental organizations like the CSW, to help member states implement the standards regarding gender equality and to lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality. UN Women's strategic plan for 2022-2025 currently guides their work. Other international agreements like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) and the SDGs are also some of their guiding documents. Additionally, the UNWOMEN Arab States has called on countries' governments to invest in prevention to eradicate the violence against women and girls



UNWOMEN's campaign for gender equality

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

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.

COMMISSION *on the*
STATUS OF WOMEN



Commission on the Status of Women Logo

Türkiye

Türkiye poses as a great example to show that gender disparity is not solely affected by the state of the country but by other socio-cultural factors as well. Türkiye is in the category of the nations where “Very high human development” is present, however, there still exists a significant amount of gender disparity in the nation. According to the 2023-2024 Human Development Report published by UNDP, only 59,1% of women

have completed at least secondary education compared to 78,1% completion in males. According to a survey that took place in 2015, 62% of respondents say that the reason why girls are not sent to school is because of traditions. Participants think that the causes of inequality in education are discrimination by 30%, insecurity by 30%, and traditions by 32%.



An example classroom for adult women in the country's rural areas

Islamic Republic of Iran

According to Iran's constitution's Chapter 3 Article 21, the government has to secure women's rights with the "Islamic criteria". Additionally, in Article 3 Section 14 of Chapter 1 of the Constitution, all people, all women and men, are equal before the law. Although the constitution favours gender equality, the Iranian society with its cultural norms and the so-called *Islamic* type of government and its bodies are huge obstacles against women in social life. The pressure on women in social life affects naturally the placement of women in the field of education. According to research made by UNWOMEN WOMEN COUNT the country could show high performance with a percentage of 9.8% among 77 SDGs relating to gender equality, while the average for Asian countries was 13.5%. Also, the enforcement of strict dress codes and societal expectations further impact women's participation in higher education and the workforce. Recent protests, such as those following the death of Mahsa Amini, highlight ongoing struggles for women's rights in Iran.



A placard with the slogan 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi' (Women, Life, Freedom) during a protest for Mahsa Hamini in Iran

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia and its region have been a disputed country in perspective of gender equality and its necessities. Despite the reforms of the crown prince and Prime Minister Mohammad Bin Salman, the country could show serious progress in social life with women, the society and economic obstacles are both harming the full integration of women into participation in normal social life and its benefits.[10]. Thanks to countries reformist Prime Minister the hope for women's basic rights and also participation in education still remains, to give an example UNWOMEN Saudi Arabia cooperated with Nokia for an internship programme for women to increase them in tech. There are also movements from the public to mobilise the country's modernist reforms and demand their fulfilment while fighting also against violations of women's basic rights, activists like Manal al-Sharif have been pivotal in advocating for women's rights, notably the right to drive, which was granted in 2018. However, activists such as Salma al-Shehab have faced severe penalties for their advocacy, reflecting the ongoing challenges in the fight for women's rights.



Protesting Women in Saudi Arabia

Afghanistan

As a nation considered a FCV-Country, where conflict is present, women currently face many problems with their right to education. Though the situation may be dire currently, it wasn't like this as the Taliban's assumption of power in 2021 had a tremendous impact on the country's female population's access to education. Before this, Afghanistan showed noticeable progress toward gender parity in education. According to UNESCO, the country saw a tenfold increase in enrolment at all education levels between 2001 and 2018 from around 1 million students in 2001 to around 10 million in 2018. The number of girls in primary school increased from almost zero in 2001 to 2.5 million in 2018. By August 2021, 4 out of 10 students in primary education were girls. Literacy rates for women doubled during the period, from 17% of women able to read and write in 2001 to nearly 30% for all age groups combined. Access the higher education was also on the rise: Women's presence in Afghan higher education increased almost 20 times, from 5,000 female students in 2001 to over 100,000 in 2021. However, after the Taliban came into power millions of women were deprived of their right to get educated. Since September 2021, the return to school for all Afghan girls over the age of 12 has been indefinitely postponed leaving 1.1 million girls and young women without access to formal education. Currently, 80% of school-aged Afghan girls and young women – 2.5 million people are out of school. Nearly 30% of girls in Afghanistan have never entered primary education. In December 2022, university education for women was suspended until further notice, affecting over 100,000 female students attending government and private higher education institutions.



A photo of an Afghani woman in Afghanistan (this photo is now considered illegal due to Talibanese restrictions on women in public places)

Pakistan

Pakistan is one of the countries where women face problems despite the nation's laws and policies for female education. Women's education in Pakistan is a fundamental right of every female citizen, according to article thirty-seven of the Constitution of Pakistan, but gender disparity still exists in the educational sector. There is a significant amount of difference in the education level between the rural and urban parts of Pakistan. In the

year 2021, the literacy rate in urban areas was recorded as 80% while in rural areas it was 55%, and only 42% among rural women. An interesting factor in this context is that female enrollment was recorded highest at the primary level, but it progressively decreased at the secondary, college and tertiary levels. It was estimated that less than 3% of the 17–23 age group of girls have access to higher education. In October 2012, a young woman in Pakistan named Malala Yosafzai was shot by the Taliban in her school bus in an assassination attempt that targeted her for her protests for women's education. "I spoke out publicly and this made me a target.", she says. She remained unconscious for ten days before finally waking up to see that the attempt on her life had sparked an international outpouring of support. After her recovery, she became a prominent activist for the right to education and co-founded the NGO with her name Malala Fund. She later received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. To this day Malala Fund works to empower women in all fields related to education. Malala's story shows the profound impact of education in overcoming gender inequality and fostering lasting change, both in Pakistan and around the world



Malala Yousufzai

7. Possible Solutions

- Requesting more legal reforms from the governmental bodies of the Middle Eastern Countries

Though the constitutions of Middle Eastern nations mostly declare the equality of both genders, the lack of legal precautions to ensure women's participation in social life or other fundamental rights is not guaranteed by law in most Middle Eastern nations. Additionally, the influence of religious governmental structures still affects the region's process in this regard. So delegates need to be cooperative and constructive in discussing

new possible legal regulations to remove these social, political and social obstacles in front of the women while respecting member states' national sovereignty.



Sofana Dahlan a woman lawyer from Saudi Arabia thanks to Crown Prince Salman's reforms

- Promoting more cooperation with local governmental bodies and local UNWOMEN entities

Observing the priorities of the UNWOMEN, it is also really crucial to increase cooperation and communication with local UNWOMEN entities to ensure finding effective and working solutions to problems.

- Promoting more gender equality campaigns from governmental bodies of the countries in the Middle East

As societal norms are one of the biggest obstacles to women's education in the Middle East, it is also essential to promote gender equality campaigns in the region to shape public opinion.



HeForShe Campaign promoting gender equality in Arabic

8. Past Solution Attempts

Islamabad Declaration For Girl's Education :

In January 2025, the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities convened in Islamabad, culminating in the adoption of the Islamabad Declaration for Girls' Education. This landmark document, endorsed by a diverse assembly of Islamic scholars, political figures, and activists—including Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai—affirms that providing education to girls is both a religious obligation and a societal necessity. The declaration condemns the obstruction of girls' education as a misrepresentation of Islamic principles and a perpetuation of societal biases against women. It calls upon Islamic governments, private institutions, and international organizations to prioritize girls' education, combat extremist ideologies, and challenge cultural norms that hinder women's educational access. Practical measures outlined include launching awareness campaigns, forming an Islamic Educational Alliance, and collaborating with international organizations to enhance educational opportunities for girls, particularly in conflict-affected regions. This initiative represents a unified commitment within the Muslim world to empower girls through education, recognizing their pivotal role in fostering stable families and communities, thereby promoting global peace and countering challenges such as extremism and violence.



Malala Yousufzai giving a statement

Middle East Partnership Initiative :

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), established by the U.S. Department of State in 2002, aims to foster partnerships among citizens, civil society, the private sector, and governments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to address local challenges and promote shared interests in areas such as participatory governance and economic reform. A key component of MEPI's mission is to advance women's empowerment through educational and economic initiatives. For instance, the Women in Technology (WIT) program, launched in 2005, has trained over 7,000 women and strengthened more than 60 local women's organizations across the MENA region. Additionally, the Tomorrow's Leaders Gender Scholar Program (TLS) supports undergraduate students in deepening their understanding of gender equality challenges and solutions. These efforts reflect MEPI's commitment to creating inclusive educational opportunities that empower women and contribute to the region's socio-economic development.



9. Questions to be addressed

1. What legal and policy changes should governments implement to ensure equal access to education for girls in the Middle East?
2. What measures can be taken to bridge the gap between public and private education to ensure that girls from low-income families receive the same quality education as girls from wealthier families?
3. What steps should be taken to reduce the rate of girls dropping out of school due to early marriage, economic hardship or cultural barriers?
4. How can governments and international organizations cooperate to provide

safe and inclusive learning environments for girls in both urban and rural areas?

5. How can financial incentives such as scholarships or conditional cash transfers be used effectively to encourage families to keep their girls in school
6. How can NGOs ensure that funding and education programs are sustainable and effectively address long-term barriers to girls' education in the region?
7. What regulations should be implemented to improve women's employment opportunities so that girls' education translates into greater economic participation?
8. How can governments develop frameworks to prevent child labour and identify girls who are being emotionally, physically and labour-relatedly abused?
9. How can countries experiencing armed conflict ensure sustained access to education for girls, especially among refugee and internally displaced populations?
10. How can Middle Eastern countries, which are closely tied to their cultures, be convinced to implement these solutions?

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