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Agenda Item: Education

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1. Letter From the Head of the Academy

Dear Delegates,

I feel very happy to welcome you all to the first edition of our school's Model United Nations conference and the UNESCO committee. As the Head of the Academy, I have no doubt about the extraordinary talent and dedication you will bring with you here. My entire academic team and I are very excited to witness the energy and creativity of each of you. During this conference, we will do our best to find solutions to perhaps the three biggest problems of our century.

Your participation in this committee marks the beginning of an important journey in exploring global issues related to education, science, culture and producing innovative solutions. As guardians of knowledge and agents of positive change, you are embarking on a mission that is in line with UNESCO's commitment to building a more inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable world through education, science, and culture.

The outbreak of new wars in places where peace has reigned for seventy years has reminded many of us how fragile our stability is. I call on you to strengthen security in every aspect, especially in terms of cultural heritage.

The conference will present field studies from various parts of the world that examine the concepts of protection and development. As we delve into the complexities of global challenges, remember that your contributions have the potential to shape international policies and foster collaboration. This is your opportunity to make a lasting impact.

I encourage you to embrace a diversity of perspectives, engage in constructive dialogue, and strive for solutions that align with UNESCO's values. Your commitment to the MUN process is essential to collective solutions to create a better world.

I wish you three days of productive discussions and wonderful social events.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via my email address if you have any questions.

Best Regards,

Defne YAMAN

Head of the Academy

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2. Letter From the Under Secretary General of UNESCO

Dear Delegates,

With great pleasure, I sincerely welcome each of you to participate in the first edition of the Ramazan Yaman Science High School Model United Nations Conference! As the Under Secretary General of the UNESCO committee, it is my privilege to see you all debating passionately about one of the most critical problem globally.

Our agenda 'Gender Equality in Education, Digitalization in Education, Equality in Education Between Countries' addresses an important worldwide challenge. While UNESCO's efforts in promoting quality education worldwide are commendable, there is still much to be done, especially in addressing educational inequalities across countries. As we move towards achieving the United Nations' SDG 4 – Quality Education, I believe stronger international collaboration and innovative solutions are essential.

As delegates, your task is to explore innovative solutions, debate their practicability, and draft resolutions that balance sovereignty with global cooperation. Your wisdom, thoughts and courage is really important while discussing your ideas. I encourage you to research utterly, consider diverse perspectives, and embrace compromise.

We are here to support you, ensure productive discussions, and amplify every delegate's voice. I greatly appreciate being a part of this conference and sharing this guide wtih you. Best of luck with your preparations, we look forward to work together.

Warm regards,

Şevval Özkan

Under Secretary General of UNESCO committee

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3. Introduction to the Committee

a. What is UNESCO?

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It contributes to peace and security by promoting international cooperation in education, science, culture, information and communication. UNESCO aims to increase mutual understanding and develop a deeper understanding of individual lives by encouraging the sharing of knowledge and the free flow of ideas. UNESCO's programs contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in the 2030 Agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

The UNESCO Constitution was adopted in London in 1945 and came into force in 1946.

UNESCO was founded with the vision of building lasting peace in the minds of people after the two World Wars that took place in less than thirty years, on the grounds that economic and political agreements between states were not sufficient. Over the years, UNESCO has launched pioneering programs to achieve this goal.

UNESCO works to ensure that everyone has access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education. As the lead agency for SDG 4, it supports global cooperation, monitors educational progress, develops policy frameworks, and promotes education as a fundamental human right. This committee will explore three pressing issues:

1. Gender Equality in Education
2. Digitalization in Education
3. Equality in Education Between Countries
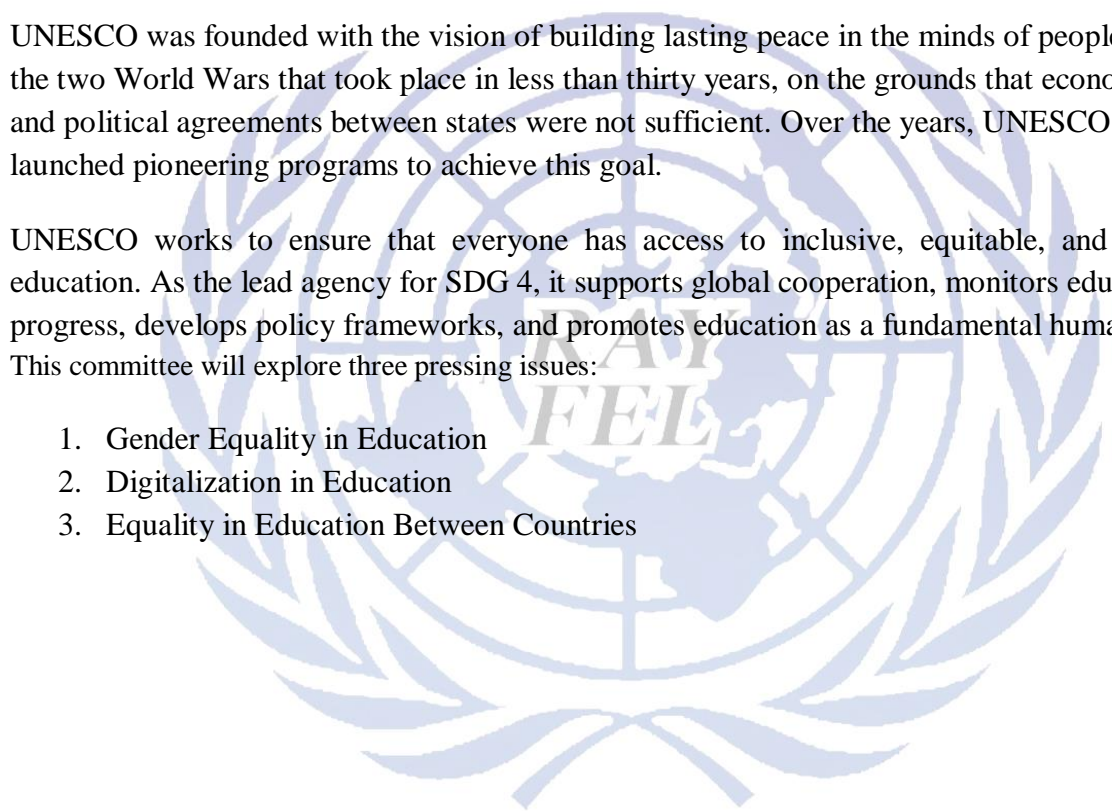
4. Introduction to the Agenda Item
a. Understanding the Agenda: Key Terms and Definitions

- **Quality Education:** Education that provides all learners with the capabilities to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies, and enhance individual well-being.

- **Educational Equity:** Ensuring all individuals have fair access to education regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, location, or disability.

- **Inclusive Education:** Integrating all learners, especially marginalized and disadvantaged groups, into mainstream education systems.

- **Lifelong Learning:** Continuous learning throughout life, including formal, non-formal, and informal education opportunities.

- **Digital Divide:** The gap between individuals, communities, or countries in terms of access to digital technologies and the internet.The digital divide can limit access to quality education, particularly in rural or low-income areas and during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Gender Disparity in Education:** The unequal access to educational opportunities between males and females, often affecting girls and women.Common issues include lower enrollment rates for girls, early marriage, and gender-based violence in educational settings.

- **Learning Outcomes:** The measurable skills and knowledge that learners are expected to acquire through education.

- **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):** Empowering learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society.

- **Global Citizenship Education (GCED):** Teaching respect for human rights, cultural diversity, and social justice, while promoting peace and sustainability.

- **Teacher Quality:** Ensuring that teachers are well-trained, qualified, and supported to deliver high-quality instruction.

- **Curriculum Relevance:** Aligning curricula with learners' needs, real-world applications, and future job markets.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Systems to assess progress in education policies, practices, and student performance (e.g. through data and indicators).

5. **Background of the Issue**

    a. **Major Initiatives on Education**

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable development. However, despite global efforts over the past decades, millions of children and young people around the world are still denied access to quality education.

UNESCO started the **Education for All (EFA)** program in 1990 to help more people get access to learning. In 2015, world leaders created the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. **Goal 4** focuses on giving everyone equal, good-quality education and learning opportunities for life.

Even though progress has been made, many problems remain:

- More than **250 million** children and teens are still out of school.
- **Girls** in some regions still face more barriers than boys.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** closed schools and showed that many students do not have access to the internet or digital devices.
- Groups like **refugees**, **disabled students**, and **minority communities** often have a harder time getting education.

To track how countries are doing, UNESCO publishes the **Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report** every year. This report looks at problems like low funding, inequality, and poor learning conditions.

To reach **SDG 4**, countries need to work together and invest in schools, teachers, and fair education policies.

    i. **What is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

UNESCO plays a key role in the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which was adopted by the United Nations in 2015 and includes 17 global goals (Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs). These goals aim to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all.

UNESCO serves as the lead agency for **Goal 4: Quality Education** (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all). However, its contribution extends beyond education; through its expertise in science, culture, freedom of expression, and gender equality, UNESCO supports the advancement of several other goals, including **Goal 5: Gender Equality, Goal 13: Climate Action, Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.**

ii. What is SDG 4: Quality Education?

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. It recognizes education as a fundamental human right and a powerful driver of personal, social, and economic development.

SDG 4 addresses key challenges such as access to education, gender disparities, quality of teaching, and education in emergency situations. It includes ten specific targets covering early childhood education, primary and secondary education, vocational training, higher education, and global citizenship education.

As the lead UN agency for SDG 4, **UNESCO** supports countries in developing policies, monitoring progress, and fostering international cooperation to achieve inclusive, fair, and quality learning for everyone, everywhere.

iii. What is the GEM Report?

The **Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report)** is an independent annual publication hosted and published by UNESCO. It monitors progress towards the education targets within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, particularly focusing on **SDG 4: Quality Education**. The report serves as a comprehensive, analytical, and authoritative reference for the global follow-up and review of education.

Each edition of the GEM Report addresses a specific theme relevant to global education. For instance, the **2023 GEM Report** focused on the role of technology in education, highlighting the lack of robust evidence on the impact of educational technology and emphasizing the need for careful integration of technology in learning environments.

The **2024/5 GEM Report**, released on October 31, 2024, at the Global Education Meeting in Fortaleza, Brazil, examines the requirements of effective leadership in education and how these vary across countries and over time. It explores the visions and goals driving educational leadership and assesses how leadership practices contribute to improved education outcomes.

The GEM Report is a vital tool for policymakers, researchers, and educators, providing data-driven insights and recommendations to advance inclusive, equitable, and quality education worldwide.

iv. What is EFA (Education For All)?

Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to education." Today however, 57 million children remain out of school. Education is not

only a right, but a passport to human development that opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms.

Education for All (EFA) is a global initiative aimed at ensuring that all children, youth, and adults have access to basic education of good quality. Launched in 1990 under the leadership of UNESCO, the EFA movement focuses on six key goals including early childhood care, universal primary education, youth and adult learning needs, literacy, gender equality, and the quality of education.

EFA emphasizes equity in education and seeks to close the gap in access and learning outcomes across different populations. The initiative supports the development of inclusive policies and promotes international cooperation to overcome educational disparities.

6. Major International Actions

Over the years, various international organizations, especially UNESCO, have taken significant steps to ensure inclusive and equitable education across the world. Below are some of the most impactful initiatives and agreements related to the global education agenda:

- **Education for All (EFA) – 1990**

Launched at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, EFA aimed to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth, and adults. This global movement marked a turning point in placing education at the center of development efforts.

- **Dakar Framework for Action – 2000**

In 2000, 164 countries met in Dakar, Senegal, and reaffirmed their commitment to achieving EFA goals by 2015. The Dakar Framework placed strong emphasis on national education strategies and international cooperation.

- **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) – 2015**

As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." It includes 10 targets covering access, equity, teacher quality, literacy, and vocational skills.

- **Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report**

Published annually by UNESCO, the GEM Report tracks global progress toward SDG 4. It highlights achievements, challenges, and policy recommendations based on evidence from around the world.

- **Global Education Coalition – 2020**

Established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this initiative brought together governments, tech companies, and civil society to support remote learning and minimize learning disruption.

- **UN Transforming Education Summit – 2022**

This high-level meeting called on global leaders to rethink and reshape education systems to address current crises, close digital gaps, and prepare learners for future challenges.

7. Gender Equality in Education

Gender equality in education means that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal access to learning opportunities, resources, and outcomes. While progress has been made in recent decades, many challenges remain.

In several parts of the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, **girls are still less likely to attend school**, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. Factors such as **child marriage**, **poverty**, **gender-based violence**, **lack of menstrual hygiene facilities**, and **social norms** contribute to this inequality.

On the other hand, in some developed regions, **boys are falling behind** in literacy and school completion rates, which also highlights the need for a gender-balanced approach.

International efforts such as **UNESCO's Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education**, **SDG 4 and SDG 5**, and campaigns by **UN Women** aim to close this gap. However, gender stereotypes in textbooks, lack of female teachers in some areas, and policy gaps continue to slow down progress.

Key Issues Include:

- Lower enrollment and completion rates for girls in some regions
- Lack of access to safe schools and proper sanitation
- Gender-based violence and discrimination
- Stereotypes and gender bias in teaching materials
- Limited access to STEM education and leadership roles for girls
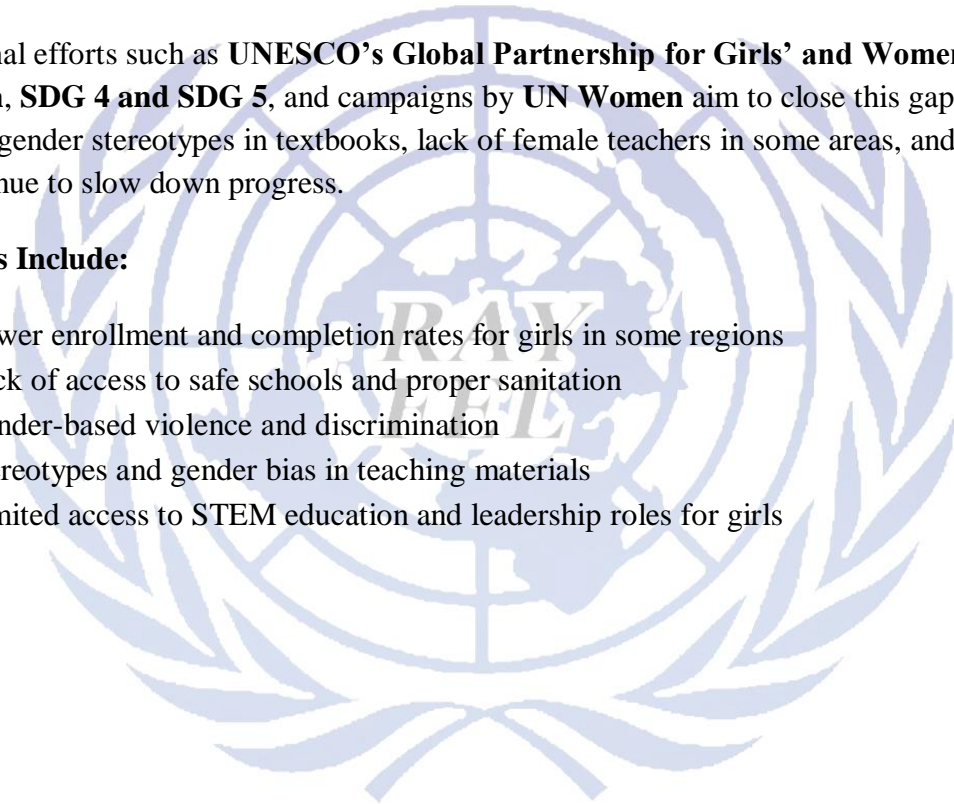
8. Digitalization in Education

Digitalization in education refers to the use of digital tools, platforms, and technologies to support teaching and learning. It includes online learning, smart classrooms, educational apps, and digital resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward digital learning, but it also revealed serious inequalities. While some students had access to laptops, stable internet, and online classes, millions of others—especially in low-income countries and rural areas—were left behind.

Many schools lack the infrastructure, trained teachers, or funds to fully benefit from digital tools. Even in developed countries, students from low-income families may face challenges in accessing quality online education.

Key Issues Include:

- Digital divide between and within countries (access to internet, devices)
- Lack of digital literacy among students and teachers
- Insufficient teacher training on how to use digital tools
- Cybersecurity risks and data privacy concerns
- Over-reliance on technology without ensuring quality learning
- Language barriers in digital content
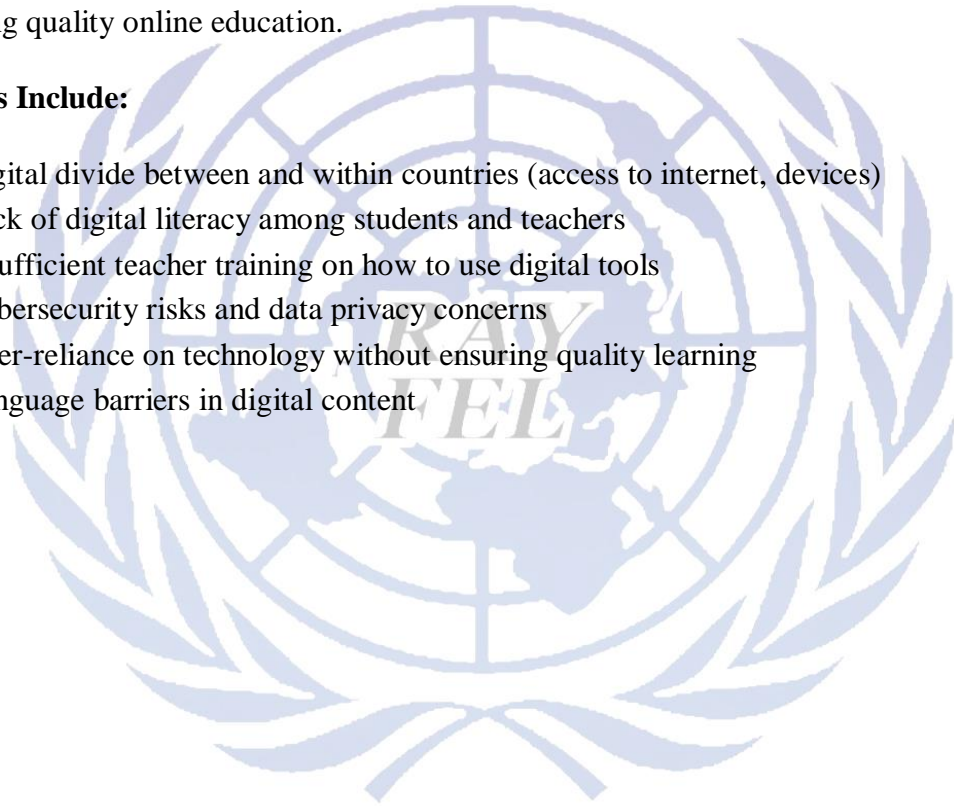
9. **Equality in Education Between Countries**

Equality in education between countries means making sure that all children, no matter where they live, have equal access to education that is of good quality. While some countries offer free and high-quality education for all, other countries struggle with overcrowded schools, undertrained teachers, and lack of proper facilities.

The reasons for these differences often come from economic inequality, wars, political problems, or lack of investment in education. For example, in many African countries, literacy rates are below 70%, while in developed countries, they are over 95%.

Key Issues Include:

- Funding differences between rich and poor countries
- Lack of trained teachers and good school facilities
- Wars and political instability that affect education systems
- Limited access to higher education in some countries
- Dependence on international aid instead of sustainable local solutions
- Brain drain, where skilled teachers leave low-income countries

10. Case Studies

Case Study 1 (Girls' Education in Afghanistan)

After the Taliban returned to power in 2021, girls' access to secondary and higher education in Afghanistan has been heavily restricted. Thousands of girls were forced to drop out of school. Despite international pressure, policies banning girls from attending school beyond grade 6 remain in place. NGOs and international organizations have tried to offer online or underground education, but access is limited.

This case shows how political instability and discriminatory policies can reverse years of progress in gender equality.

Case Study 2 (Rwanda's Progress in Gender-Equal Education)

Rwanda has made major improvements in gender equality in education since the early 2000s. Today, girls slightly outnumber boys in primary and secondary education enrollment. Government policies supporting free education, gender-sensitive training for teachers, and community outreach programs have played key roles in this progress.

This example highlights the importance of policy commitment and gender-sensitive planning in achieving education equality.

Case Study 3 (The Digital Divide in India during Covid-19)

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools in India to close in 2020, education shifted online almost overnight. While students in urban and wealthier regions were able to continue learning through digital platforms, millions of students in rural and low-income areas were left behind.

A survey by the Azim Premji Foundation found that over 60% of students in rural areas had no access to smartphones or internet. In some regions, teachers resorted to delivering printed worksheets to students' homes or teaching through radio programs. Girls were disproportionately affected due to increased domestic responsibilities and limited digital access.
This case highlights how digital inequality can worsen existing educational gaps and demonstrates the need for inclusive digital strategies that ensure every student, regardless of location or income, has the opportunity to learn.

Case Study 4 (Education Challenges in South Sudan)

South Sudan, one of the world's youngest countries, faces significant challenges in providing education to its population. Years of civil war have severely damaged the country's education system, leaving schools in poor condition and many children unable to access basic education.
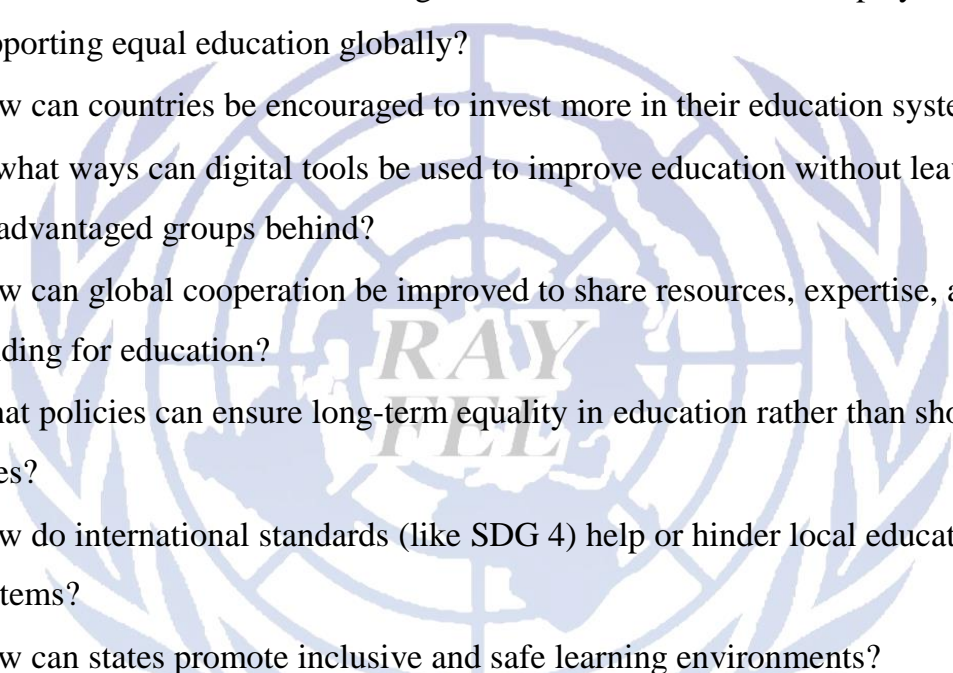
Before the conflict, South Sudan had a literacy rate of only around 27% for women, and this number has decreased further due to the war. Many children are forced to work or stay at home due to safety concerns or a lack of schools in their area. Over 2 million children are currently out of school, and more than half of the country's schools have been destroyed or damaged.

International organizations, including UNESCO and UNICEF, are working with the South Sudanese government to rebuild schools, train teachers, and provide education in refugee camps. However, the country's ongoing conflict and lack of resources continue to make educational progress slow.

This case study highlights how conflict and political instability can set back educational progress for decades, making it difficult to close the education gap between countries.

11. Questions a Resolution Should Address

- How can equal access to quality education be ensured in both developed and developing countries?
- What strategies can be used to reduce the digital divide in education?
- How can gender stereotypes and cultural barriers that prevent girls from receiving education be addressed?
- What role should international organizations, such as UNESCO, play in supporting equal education globally?
- How can countries be encouraged to invest more in their education systems?
- In what ways can digital tools be used to improve education without leaving disadvantaged groups behind?
- How can global cooperation be improved to share resources, expertise, and funding for education?
- What policies can ensure long-term equality in education rather than short-term fixes?
- How do international standards (like SDG 4) help or hinder local education systems?
- How can states promote inclusive and safe learning environments?

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