

GLOBAL GOALS CONFERENCE 2023



BACKGROUND GUIDE Quality Education - Goal #4

What is a position paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Although there are several formats, the most simple one includes the following:

- A. Statement of the problem
- B. Past Actions (or lack of action)
- C. Proposed solutions

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate and his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (Times New Roman) with a 12 point font size, 1.15-1.5 spacing, and 1-inch document margins - It should not include illustrations, diagrams, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Your position paper should not exceed a page (if it must, try not to extend past a page too far)
- Include citations and a bibliography, in APA format, giving credit to the sources used in research (not included within the one page limit)

Due Dates and Submission

Please submit your position paper to your committee director by midnight, **Wednesday, October 18th, 2023** or earlier if you would like to get some feedback from your chairs or director. Send your position paper to kdenny@qms.bc.ca and mcassie@qms.bc.ca.

LETTER TO DELEGATES

Dear Honourable delegates,

My name is Kieran Denny, and I will be your director for the quality education committee this year at the Global Goals Conference. This being my sixth and final year attending Global Goals MUN, I am both delighted and crestfallen to be directing a committee here for the last time. While this may be my final time attending this conference, I imagine for many of you it is the first. If this is the case, I would like to encourage you to speak at least once during the committee. I remember my first time speaking at Model UN, at this very conference, as a nervous Grade 7 representing a tiny island nation and knowing no one in the committee. Since then, I've attended conferences in Vancouver, Victoria, and Montreal, won more awards than anyone would have reasonably expected of me at that age and forged some of the most important connections of my life. I owe all of this to that one moment in which I got past my fears and decided to stand up and deliver that very first speech, inconsequential to the committee but life-changing for myself. I am honoured that in my final year of directing at GGMUN, I have the opportunity to do everything in my power to help you do the same.

Maia Cassie, your co-director, has been passionately participating in MUN since Grade 7. Whether you're a completely new or more experienced delegate, she'll be working hard alongside your chair, Jarvis Lee, to make your experience in this committee as engaging and enjoyable as possible. Maia looks forward to meeting you all for a riveting day of debate on the 24th!

With this in mind, we have put together this background guide to assist you in your research so that you have all the information you need to confidently deliver speeches and write a quality position paper. It will outline the targets on which debate will focus and provide you with some sources and statistics to begin your research. You are encouraged to go beyond this document, as it is designed as a general overview and does not contain information specific to your country. That said, we hope it is useful in orienting you within the gargantuan topic of quality education and helps you get started with your position paper. Happy researching!

Warm regards,

Kieran, Maia, and Jarvis

Topic Overview

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA, n.d.), 56% of schools in the world's least developed countries lack access to clean drinking water. This is one of the many reasons why tackling inequalities in education is such an important issue in the 21st century. In this committee, we will focus on the fourth sustainable development goal, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (DESA, n.d.). Unfortunately, progress towards this goal is stagnating, and has endured massive setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving vulnerable individuals around the world without access to their educational rights (DESA, n.d.).

The issues with education manifest themselves in a multitude of ways around the world. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, n.d.a), 129 million school-age girls are not in regular attendance, a statistic largely caused by poverty, gender-based violence, and child marriage. Additionally manipulated and misleading education data presents a challenge to those looking to improve the quality of education in countries from the United Kingdom to Zambia (Battistin, 2016; UNICEF, n.d.b). Issues like these and more have the greatest impact on developing countries, where many individuals struggle to afford school supplies, have to travel long distances to school, or have to work for their family instead of attending school (UNICEF, n.d.c).

Targets

4.1 FREE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Make education equally accessible to people of all backgrounds. By 2030, the UN aims to ensure that all girls and boys complete free and equitable primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. This is intended to assist in closing gender gaps worldwide and allowing citizens of developing countries to assist in the sustainable development of their nations.

4.9 EXPAND HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Support developing countries through scholarship opportunities for higher education, schools, and vocational training. The UN's goal is to increase the number of scholarships available worldwide, with a focus on least developed countries, small island developing states, and African countries. This is likely to increase access to higher education, vocational training, and technical programs.

4.1 – FREE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

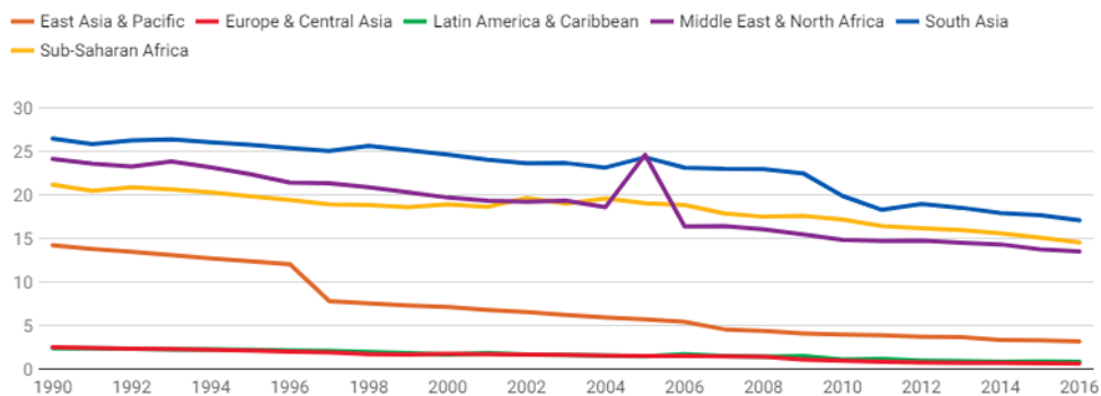
Current Situation

While in much of the developed world, the idea of free public grade school for all is largely taken for granted, there are still significant barriers in place in its developing counterpart. One of the largest of these barriers is discrimination. Discrimination is a fact of life in schools worldwide. While the adult male literacy rate is 79% worldwide, the adult female literacy rate is only 62% (Wadhwa, 2019). Education has been identified as one of the leading ways to achieve upward social mobility (Brown et al, 2013), however high costs of required school materials often prevent low-income families from reaping these benefits (UNICEF, n.d.c). It is important to consider that even when attending school is conceptually free in a country, the price of these materials and uniforms are often such that in practice, education is reserved for citizens above a certain threshold of income, which is obviously contrary to goal 4.



While the difference between male and female literacy rate is declining, some regions are far from closing the gap

Difference between literacy rates of adult males and adult females (percentage points), 1990-2016



Literacy rates mentioned are for adults only (ages 15 and above)

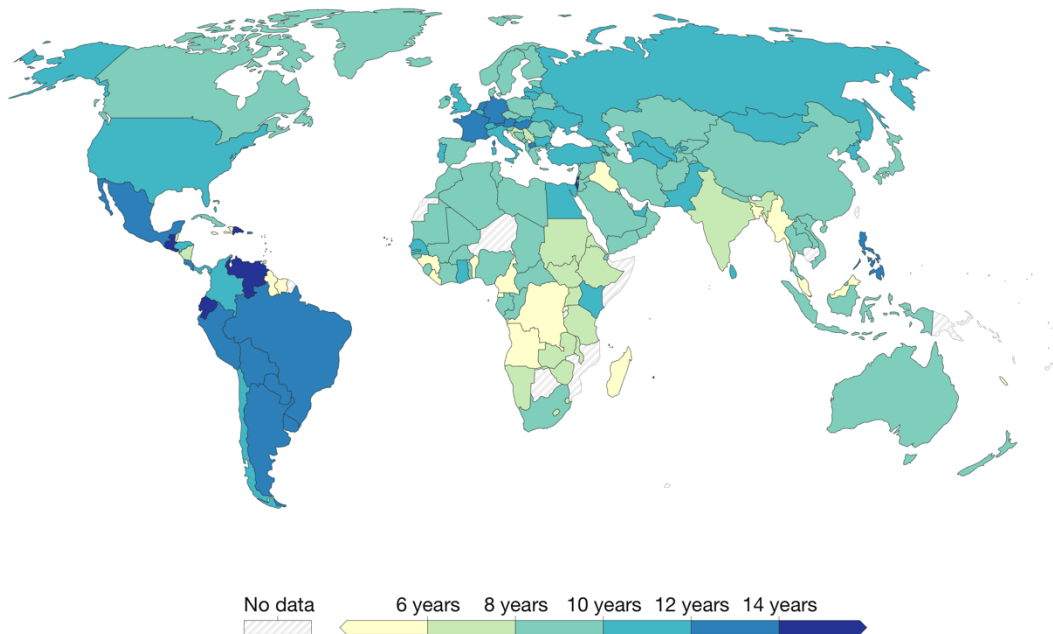
A graph depicting the difference between male and female literacy rates in regions around the world from 1990-2016.

Even when families are able to pay for education, it remains common in the developing world for the length of compulsory education to be much lower than is considered sufficient. While the average country in North America mandates 11 years of childhood education, that average is only 8 years in Sub-Saharan Africa and 7 years when the range is narrowed to Southern and Eastern Africa, equivalent to a Canadian student being allowed to drop out of school in the sixth grade. In the worst cases (those being Myanmar, Madagascar, and Bangladesh), this figure is an appalling five years. (Our World in Data, 2021). The repercussions of this are immense. In the developing world, many

students are pressured to drop out of school at the earliest possible time to work for their families, which, when coupled with the poor quality of education in many low-income countries and the aforementioned costs of attending school, many children are disincentivized from attending school, only worsening existing issues which arise from a poorly educated population (Global Affairs Canada, 2017).

Duration of compulsory education, 2021

The number of years that children are legally obliged to attend school.



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics via World Bank (2023)

OurWorldInData.org/global-education • CC BY

A map detailing the duration of compulsory education around the world, clearly showing disparities between the Global North and Global South, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

4.9 - EXPAND HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

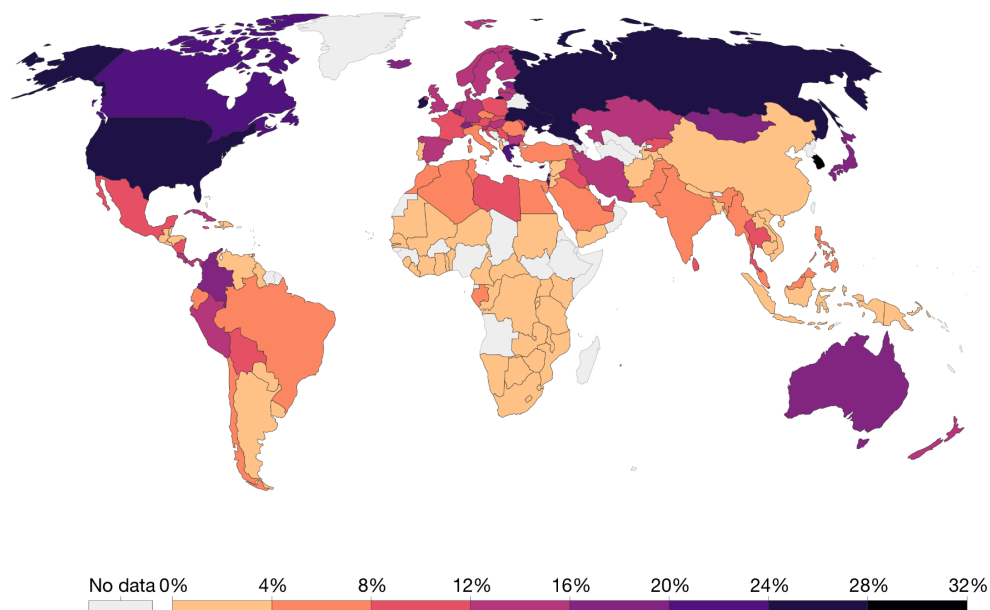
Current Situation

In sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of youth ages 15-17 are not in school (UNESCO, n.d.). In fact, in Burkina Faso, Liberia, Malawi, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Tanzania, the percentage of economically disadvantaged youth who attend university is statistically negligible (Havergal, 2016). This has immense impacts on developing countries in Africa and around the world. As mentioned in the section on target 4.5, higher education is a vital form of upward social mobility, making the aforementioned statistic even more discouraging. These statistics do not impact all parts of the world equally. While 40% of the European Union's citizens aged 25-34 have completed tertiary education (Eurostat, 2020), a 2010 survey by Our World in Data found Gabon to be the only country in sub-Saharan Africa in which more than four percent of the population had attained such an education.



Share of the population with completed tertiary education, 2010

The share refers to the population 15 years and older.



Source: Robert J. Barro and Jong-Wha Lee

OurWorldInData.org/tertiary-education/ • CC BY

A map depicting the percentage of the population with completed tertiary education by country in 2010

One of the most significant obstacles to scholarships in developing countries is funding. For obvious reasons, many developing nations are unable to fund scholarships themselves, relying on foreign aid to do so. Fortunately most developed countries commit to some form of foreign aid (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). While international aid levels broke records in 2019, (Parker, 2020), this statistic masks the downward trend in education-related aid

figures from countries such as the United States and Germany (USAID, 2017; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021), which are the two largest providers of foreign aid in the world (Parker, 2020). A reversal of this trend would likely improve the quality of education in developing countries.

Possible Solutions

The solutions to these issues are complicated, and nations will disagree on what the best way forward is. No one solution is likely to be sufficient to solve this multifaceted issue on its own, and developed and developing countries have drastically different perspectives.

Foreign Aid

Foreign aid is a solution commonly proposed by developed nations in order to assist developing nations with education. Despite this, as mentioned previously, many major donors have decreased their monetary assistance to education in recent years, decreasing the strength of this solution. If this solution is to work effectively, developed countries such as the United States and Germany will need to make long-term commitments to improving the quality of education in developing countries.

Increasing Awareness

One way to remove obstacles to education is to increase awareness about the issue outside of schools. This may be effective in combating cultural biases against women and girls, people with disabilities, and minority groups. In spite of this, increasing awareness has little effect on issues such as poverty, conflict, and rural-urban disparities. Additionally, it does nothing to combat insufficient compulsory education and lack of scholarships.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action has proven to be successful in increasing levels of diversity in higher education institutions, making it an effective way to combat discrimination in education. Despite this it has come under scrutiny by groups not advantaged by it. To be successful, governments would need to implement affirmative action in a way which does not upset any unruly populations within their borders, while still providing a tangible benefit to their minorities.

Increasing the Duration of Compulsory Education

Perhaps the most obvious solution to the issue of compulsory education, this solution would be a major advancement towards quality education in many parts of the world. That said, education being compulsory does not guarantee that all children will be able to attend school, meaning that this solution is not sufficient on its own to solve the issue.

Non-Governmental Organisations

Numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have made significant contributions to the furtherance of education around the world. Numerous NGOs have worked with the UN on countless issues, however NGOs are unlikely to provide a long-term solution for systemic problems in education, as they lack the resources accessible to governments.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the quality of education in your country?
 - a. If the quality is low, what has your country done to improve it?
2. What percentage of your country's population has completed tertiary education?
 - a. What are the factors contributing to this?
3. Is your country considered developing or developed?
 - a. Has your country given or received foreign aid to assist in improving the quality of education?
4. How long is compulsory education in your country?
 - a. If it is high, are families actually complying with this legislation or is it rarely enforced in reality?
 - b. If it is low, what factors contribute to this and is there significant will among the population to increase its duration?

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