

REGIONAL CAMPAIGN ZERO TOLERANCE FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

BRIEF #3

REGIONAL EXPERTS ROUNDTABLE

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH EDUCATION

18th June 2019, Beirut

Although violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a universal problem, the South Neighborhood stands out because of the combination of discriminative legislation, poor legal protection for survivors and deeply rooted cultural gender stereotypes that support a broad social tolerance towards VAWG. Social pattern of male superiority is still dominant. Within the patriarchal structure of power, women and men are given different roles and allowed to enjoy different rights. Traditional mentalities and stereotypes are reproduced by both men and women. Educational systems play a major role in this, as they contribute to sustain culture, tradition and customs that still depict women as inferior and act as sources of violence.

Challenging cultural and social norms in order to eliminate gender stereotypes, particularly through education, is one of the main priority areas of intervention that has been identified in the Gender Regional Platform (2015-2017), in the Civil Society Conference Declaration, (21-22 November 2017 Cairo) and throughout the National Follow-up Dialogues on the Ministerial Declaration from the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on Women's Rights (27 November 2017, Cairo).

The 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration presented an Action Plan towards achieving gender equality in the Euro-Med Region, focusing on four actions.

One of these actions is:

“Challenging cultural and social norms and eliminate gender stereotypes, particularly in and through education and media”.



From left to right: Khadija Chakir and Abdel Jalil Tolaimat - Morocco, Ibrahim Draji - Syria

Education and gender experts, researchers and ministerial representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia gathered on 18th of June in Beirut to discuss a regional approach to challenge gender biases in education, with focus on primary and secondary levels. The round table took place in the frame of the Regional Campaign on Zero Tolerance for Violence against Women and Girls, launched by EuroMed Feminist Initiative and a consortium of women's rights organizations from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. One of the main focus of this campaign is challenging gender stereotypes.

Experts emphasized that schools have enormous potential to effect social change. They offer a unique opportunity to address the root causes of violence and contribute to the development of more gender-equitable societies where VAWG is not tolerated. Through the regional campaign, the consortium members implement education activities in 70 pilot schools, including Training of Trainers for 850 teachers and workshops for 4,500 children.

Education and gender experts highlighted challenges, shared lessons learnt and achievements in each country related to mainstreaming gender equality in national education programs, and the status of national curricula for primary and secondary education. They pointed out that the current cultural and socio-political situation in the region tremendously impacts access to equitable and quality education. Experts also raised a concern



From left to right: Leila Al Ali - Lebanon, Lilian Halls-French - France

that physical violence has been often used as disciplinary tool in some environments. They unanimously agreed on the fact that gender stereotyping is entrenched socially and culturally in the region, and thus any legislative or policy interventions should be accompanied with interventions aiming at changing public opinion and collective mindset. Moreover, difficulties to access education due to armed conflict and occupation were highlighted. It was emphasized that in such environment the quality of education systems and curricular declines.

All experts agreed on the necessity to adopt a comprehensive approach to gender mainstreaming in education, involving key stakeholders: ministries, education institutions, teachers, supervisors, and administrators as well as students, CSOs, academics and gender experts. Accordingly a number of methods were identified to improve in-school teaching and support teachers. On a policy level, experts highlighted the importance of cooperating with local authorities and capitalizing on existing political will.

A roadmap was proposed with concrete measures and actions in three main domains. It was underlined that implementing this roadmap would enable education sector as a whole to perform effectively in promoting and mainstreaming gender equality in the coming years.

Gender-sensitive curriculum, textbooks and activities

- ▶ Adopt gender sensitive language in textbooks and curricula, a language that promotes the principles of universal human rights, tolerance and equality.
- ▶ Identify gender bias within existing manuals and eliminate gender stereotypes in language and images in all textbooks.
- ▶ Introduce educational games and activities on gender equality, citizenship and human rights into the curricula and the learning process at schools.
- ▶ Develop gender sensitive toolkits to teach children on gender equality.
- ▶ Introduce sexual education.

Capacity-building and Gender Sensitive Teaching Methods

- ▶ Develop indicators to measure education in/equality within national contexts, which would be later used to monitor progress, taking in account existing UNESCO indicators.
- ▶ Develop a gender sensitive administrative frameworks within educational institutions.

- ▶ Develop a training methodology based on clear principles, and addressing regional challenges while taking into account national priorities.
- ▶ Develop a toolkit/manual for teachers for mainstreaming gender equality in class rooms and creating gender-responsive learning environment.
- ▶ Promote critical, analytical and interactive learning rather than relying on memorization solely.
- ▶ Adopt modern strategies in teaching based on the development of life skills and leadership.
- ▶ Encourage organization of curricular activities; such as theatre, arts and culture in addition to human rights and citizenship clubs.
- ▶ Develop ABC Gender Sensitive Education (future objective).

State's Role and Coordination

- ▶ Build on existing coordination and achievements with line Ministries.
- ▶ Ensure free and compulsory education for all children, not only citizens but also children of migrant workers and refugees.
- ▶ Adopt effective strategies to prevent and monitor school dropouts.
- ▶ Allocate funds to review national textbooks and curricula.
- ▶ Amend laws allowing parents to forcefully pull out their children from schools.
- ▶ Increase compulsory education age to 18 years, to protect girls from child marriage and all children from child labor.
- ▶ Make schools liable for sexual harassment.
- ▶ Create adequate and safe health and counseling facilities in schools.
- ▶ Introduce compulsory gender training for school administrators, managers and teachers.

Experts agreed that EuroMed Feminist Initiative would take the lead to review and assess existing training materials, toolkits and manuals on integrating a gender sensitive approach in educational programs and curricula, to subsequently develop a structure for a regional training manual with experts from Lebanon, France, Morocco and Tunisia. Moreover, indicators will be developed to efficiently monitor gender inequality in educational programs in project countries. Experts agreed to collectively work together on developing *an ABC for Gender Sensitive Education*. Second regional experts roundtable will take place by end of 2019.



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