Committee: African Union

Topics: Access to education for women and girls, Foreign direct investments in Africa and Promoting integrity and transparency in democratically elected governments

Country: Nigeria

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Granting women and girls access to education is a human right that so many, specifically in developing nations, are currently deprived of. Hence why the UN strives to eliminate socio-economic and cultural barriers preventing millions of girls from getting a proper education. Education is viewed to be a pillar among nations which, when granted to its population, develops its economic status and overall quality of life; exactly why it is so essential to spread this right throughout every corner of Africa. Another important subject in regards to the development of African countries is foreign direct investment, being multilateral donors or country donors which in turn, drive the country's economy, employment and growth, among other things. These sums of money are also often put into foreign aid which, as the name may suggest, aids the welfare of developing countries. This type of investment can improve overall quality of life for all civilians in a country by lessening poverty and/or unemployment rates, promoting sustainability and developing stabilization and basic needs; demonstrating why it is so important for developing countries to have sufficient funds via foreign direct investments. The final topic to discuss which is pertinent to African countries and their civilians is promoting transparency and integrity in governments. This being the avoidance of corruption and bribery and having governments stick to a set of “morals and ethical principles” (the Anti-corruption glossary). When politicians and government workers are able to have honest relationships with civilians, more money is devoted to the wellbeing of the country and its people, fraud, bribery and embezzlement are more likely to be caught and reported and the said government gains trust and cooperation from its people.

The lack of access to education for women and girls is an issue that has been overlooked issue for many decades now. Ban Ki-Moon, former secretary general of the UN stated “Educating girls and giving them the tools to shape their own future has an incredible multiplier effect on economic growth. It leads to increased prosperity not just for individuals but for their communities and their societies. It provides returns for decades”. The United Nations has been striving towards promoting access across developing nations with human rights treaties such as The African Charter On Human and People’s Rights. There are also notable partnerships such as the United Nations Girls Initiative. Where NGO’s are concerned, the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) has been working throughout Africa to combat poverty through education. When it comes to foreign direct investment in Africa, the United Nations has set forth a plan which hopes to achieve a more financially sustainable and independent contenant by 2063. There are several bodies from the UN working towards this goal such as the World Bank and the UNDP. Finally, when it comes to promoting transparency in governments, it is widely recognized that the more transparent a government, the smoother it functions; “a lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity” -Dalai Lama. While there are currently many plans on how to prevent corruption in governments (e.g. establishing international conventions, paying civil servants higher wages, etc) most initiatives end with establishing a new leader.

Despite having one of the most prosperous economies in all of Africa, Nigeria still invests the least in education. On top of the lack of funding, threats such as Boko Haram prevent many parents from sending their children — especially their daughters — to schools. In the south where enrollment rates are higher, classes are over populated. It’s not rare for there to be over 100 children in a classroom with only one teacher. In the north however, many parents opt to send their sons to school while sending their daughters to Qur’anic schools which results in women not having the skills or education to find a job. Nigeria is however encouraging children to achieve a higher education by offering two government colleges in every state with extremely low tuition rates. When it comes to foreign direct investment, Nigeria is one of the top recipients in the continent receiving US$5.3 billion between 2001 and 2011. This is largely thanks to the vast array of natural resources the country has to offer. While Nigeria does attract many investors, it is understood that a corrupt government is a deterrent for investors and by regulating this problem, foreign direct investments in Nigeria would significantly increase. Which leads to the final topic, corruption and lack of transparency in governments. While it is no secret that Nigeria may have been infamous for this in the past, the government is confident that those days are behind them. New president Muhammadu Buhari has openly admitted this and views corrupt governments as a human rights violation. Since his election in 2015, he has cut 24000 “ghost employees” (serving as a front for embezzlement), saving the government $11.53 Million.

Nigeria feels as though it is crucial to create a safe learning environment to encourage parents to send their daughters to school. By eliminating threats, Nigeria is confident that parents will opt for a government regulated school rather than a religious school. In addition, many parents don't send their daughters to school because level of education does not impact a girl’s worth in marriage. By working to eliminate this way of thinking, parents would hopefully see the benefits of sending their daughters to school. When it comes to foreign direct investment in Nigeria, the government sees that its great attractions for investors are its natural resources. The country has become quite dependant on FDI yet these are mostly non-renewable. Therefore, the country must find another means of attracting investors or become more financially independent. Finally, transparency in government. Under its new president, Nigeria sees that it is, in fact, crucial that the country loses its reputation of being corrupt. By paying civil servant higher wages, powering citizens and encouraging the government to have a more open relationship with its people, among other things, Nigeria could easily excel in transparency.