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**African Union Position Paper**

*Topic 1: Access to Education for Women and Girls*

Access to education for women and girls is an extremely prevalent issue around the world. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, there are around 28 million girls who are not being educated, as of 2015.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is common for there to be a lack of facilities, resources, and teachers for any schooling to be available. There is also the problem of money being put toward education, when short term solutions can be found through familial work, in farming for example, or steady revenue, such as arranged marriage, and long term solutions are less attractive in the present. Violence is also present, with the possibility of verbal or physical assault at schools, causing parents to take girls out of schools for their safety. Finally, there is also the prevalence of social and cultural norms, such as sending boys and men to school, rather than women and girls, possibly due to sexism, and the idea that women are supposed to stay in the home and take care of children. As a result of these barriers, women are more likely to be unemployed, less attentive to their health, and lack empowerment. All of these factors influence access to education for women and girls, and make in extremely difficult for progress to be put into place.

This issue is dominating global platforms and gathering attention because it is one of the most important topics worldwide. When women are sent to school, the overall benefits for their local, national, and international communities are astounding. The economic, social, and political changes from the education of one person have the potential to everyone around them. To showcase a few economic advantages include the probability women will reinvest up to 90% of their earning back into their family. Socially, women are more likely to marry later and have smaller, healthier families, as well as a larger likelihood to resist gender-based violence and discrimination. [[2]](#footnote-2) The overall good that can be achieved on a large scale cannot be denied, and proves that giving girls and women an equal opportunity to men in getting an education can improve health status, productivity, and the overall contribution to the world.

In the past, there have been solutions that have been put in place to try to equalize access to education, which have been a success. The implementation of free, compulsory education for all is the cornerstone of equalizing education, and countries that have made education available to all are gaining enormously. Also, the reduction of educational fees and offering financial aid to counteract these disparities also encourages gender equality in education. [[3]](#footnote-3) Most notably policies and laws, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations have helped equalize access to education. UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund) and CAMFED (Campaign for Female Education) are two of the most important organisations pushing the issue, the former with its sustainable development goals, [[4]](#footnote-4) and the latter with their pitch that every girl deserves an education as their universal right. [[5]](#footnote-5) All of these past resolutions have been steps in the right direction, but have not completely resolved the issue, there is still work to be done in resolving the problem.

On a national scale, China has worked toward achieving the goal of equal access to education for women and girls. In recent years, China has pledged to enforce its laws and policies on providing equal access to education, specifically the “Outline for the Development of Chinese Women” (2001-2010) which outline goals in the field of women and education. [[6]](#footnote-6) There have also been stricter enforcement of policies surrounding girls getting a mandatory education of 9 years, as well as the opportunity to get a secondary and higher education. These ideals are put into place by the Education Law, Compulsory Education Law and Vocational Education Law. The government also makes financial aid available for those who need help paying fees. There has also been a drop in the illiteracy rate in urban and rural areas, by more than 5% in each case. Most notably, in 2004, there was an enrollment rate of 98% for girls in school. All this is to show that Chinese policy on equal access to education is solid and continues to improve to include all women girls of the country. [[7]](#footnote-7) China believes that equal access to education is an important issue, because the growth of the country requires it to have an educated population. Due to the ever-expanding economy, the people of China must be educated to continue to grow positively and become a larger presence on the global scale. The Chinese government will continue to enforce policies to ensure that all women and girls have access to education.

While solutions have been implemented, it is important to note that this issue is still prevalent and continues to need to be solved. The gap between men’s education and women’s education continues to need to be closed, specifically with larger offerings of incentives for parents to send their girls to school. More awareness needs to be raised about the benefits of sending women school, ranging from economic to social to political advantages for women getting an education. This would mean making classrooms more child and gender centred to ensure a positive learning experience. Rates of education or women need to raised, and it is easier to enable girls to enter the classroom when learning environments are specifically aimed and geared to accept young female learners, including teachers, classrooms, extra-curricular activities, facilities, and materials. There also needs to be measures put in place to reduce barriers in a culturally sensitive manner, such as social norms, and violence. For example, making providing alternative education, making lessons more flexible or teaching in the native language would ensure respect of cultural norms and raise education rates. For women and children in compromised situations, aid and support needs to be given to ease a transition into education quickly and as effectively as possible. Finally, there needs to be a re-examination of past policies that have failed to see if any of these can be re-used to better extent to improve this situation. Overall, the issue of equal access to education for women and girls is extremely prevalent, and when there is equal access to education for both genders, the economic, political, and social areas of the world will be revolutionized.

*Topic 2: Foreign Direct Investment in Africa*

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is an important aspect of the African Union’s development. FDI is qualified as funds invested in a country to improve development, technological progress, and economic conditions. [[8]](#footnote-8) Specifically in Africa, this money can be used for many purposes, most importantly the integration of the continent into the global economy. The attraction of FDI to Africa is mainly do to the continent’s abundance of natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and diamonds, among others. The main investors in China include Brazil and China in particular from NICs.

The implementation of foreign investors in Africa is especially important because it ensures that the countries of Africa have their economies recognized internationally. This would improve the overall economy of the continent, and help with the development of Africa in sectors of natural resource extraction, technology creation, distribution of energy, and many other topics. However, Africa receives far less FDI compared to many other continents, notably Asia. This is due to the fact that Africa is a very unattractive investment partner, because of a lack of political and economic stability. This means that Africa loses potential business and fails to attract investors for the better of the continent. Also, due to a lack of foreign investment, the continent has become severely dependant on foreign aid, funding any initiative using large amounts of funds that cannot be provided by local governments. This causes governments to fall into debt and make the investment scene even less appealing. The overall lack of appeal to foreign investors means there is a lack of funds entering the country, creating economic difficulties.

In the past, the African Union has implemented goals to attract more FDI to the continent through their Agenda for 2063, a set of goals including some on the topic of investment. [[9]](#footnote-9) There has also been help from international organisations and NGOs such as the United Nations, working to advance African goals, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to provide international aid and pull governments out of debt. While the investment climate is still not perfect, there are efforts in place in improve fund management, improvement of infrastructure, boosting productivity, and the creation of a skilled labour force to solve the current lack of funds. [[10]](#footnote-10)

China is heavily involved in FDI in Africa, and in the nation itself. As a developing economy, China is in desperate need of natural resources to provide power and create products, meaning that it will go to lengths to find these materials. As Africa is a geographically and politically closely aligned partner, China is investing directly into the country to continue to see the development of infrastructure and programs for the extraction of natural resources, which it can then buy and profit from. China is one of the main investors in Africa, taking about 20% of all FDI it receives and relocating to developing countries, specifically over $100 billion in 2008. [[11]](#footnote-11) China has focused on redirecting their FDI internally, creating a stronger economy and therefore being able to invest internationally now that they have a strengthened economic base to fall back on. China continues to invest in Africa as their economy continues to grow, and will continue to do so to ensure the development of natural resource production in the future.

Due to the fact the FDI is not popular in Africa, changes need to be made so that these issues are mitigated. Most importantly, Africa needs to become a more attractive investment site, namely by improving political stability to ensure that money is not being wasted and being properly managed. Also, the continent needs to ensure that they do not fall into debt from foreign aid, by slowly distancing themselves from the crutch that has enabled them build. By starting with political transparency and therefore gaining FDI trust, it will be easier to ease off foreign aid because more investors will start investing. Other strategies to improve FDI interest include partnering with current investors and strengthening these bonds through trustworthy transactions to reach out and encourage other potential FDIs to invest. Also creating open market within the continent would encourage FDI investment, because the open transaction of money and goods will be encouraging for foreigners to start implementing their own funds into the mix. Finally it is important for African states to improve infrastructure and the size of labour force to be able to maintain on the global stage with many other fierce competitors for FDI. By having the same appeal as other countries plus the opportunity of natural resource use, Africa may even gain an advantage with FDIs. To use all of the solutions to a maximum extent, it is important for governments to enforce these policies and maintain responsible, transparent leadership. All of these solutions will have positive implications on local, national, and international communities, making the investment of FDIs a benefit for all.

*Topic 3: Promoting Integrity and Transparency in Democratically Elected Governments*

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2. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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4. @unicefca. "Child Development & Education." *Unicef Canada*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2016. <http://www.unicef.ca/en/discover/education>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid - CAMFED [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. "Gender Equality and Women's Development in China." *Gender Equality and Women's Development in China*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2016. <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/rqrd/jblc/t210715.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Anyanwu, John C. (2010), Determinants of Foreign Direct Investment Inflows to Africa, 1980-2007, Working Paper Series No. 136, *African development Bank*, Tunis, Tunisia [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. "Home." *Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2016. <http://au.int/en/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Li, Yong, Yuan, Li. "Africa Still Poised to Become the Next Great Investment Destination." *World Bank*. World Bank, n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2015/06/30/africa-still-poised-to-become-the-next-great-investment-destination>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. "Foreign Direct Investment – the China Story." *World Bank*. World Bank, n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/07/16/foreign-direct-investment-china-story>. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)