



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals



## CONCEPT NOTE

# UNESCO International Symposium and Policy Forum

## Cracking the Code: Girls' Education in STEM

28-30 August 2017  
Bangkok, Thailand

### Background

More female students are in school today than ever before but they do not always have equal opportunities to complete and benefit from an education of their choice. Numerous overlapping factors affect girls' access to, achievement in, and completion of education. One area of longstanding concern is the low rate of female participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies and consequently STEM careers.

STEM are catalytic for the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They are important drivers for innovation, proposing new approaches and solutions to tackle existing and emerging challenges to sustainable development, inclusive growth and social wellbeing. STEM careers are considered as 'the job' of the future; the European Parliament forecasts around 7 million new STEM jobs by 2025 in Europe alone. To achieve STEM's potential, both boys and girls, men and women need equal access to STEM education and careers.

To ensure inclusive growth and sustainable development for all, girls and women must be provided with equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from STEM. UNESCO is giving special attention to this issue as part of its overall efforts to promote the empowerment of women and girls through education and as a response to UNESCO Member States' decision on UNESCO's role in encouraging girls and women to be leaders in science, technology, engineering, art/design and mathematics. UNESCO is also developing a report in order to map the current status of girls' education in STEM education and identify the underlying factors that systematically keep girls out of these areas of study, with the aim of facilitating policy dialogue and making evidence-based policy recommendations.

## Purpose

The overall purpose of the International Symposium and Policy Forum is to make the case for strengthening girls' education in STEM subjects, and ultimately female representation in STEM careers and decision-making; present latest findings from research and practice; and facilitate policy dialogue, experience sharing and collaboration among participants.

## Expected outcomes

- Increased knowledge on the status of girls' education in STEM worldwide
- Enhanced awareness of policies and practices that are effective in supporting girls' and women's education in STEM
- Strengthened platform for global, regional and country networks, partnerships and cooperation on STEM education for girls and women

## Duration and Format

The International Symposium and Policy Forum will be organized over three days. It will be a platform for debate, hands-on learning, and innovation and will consist of interactive plenary and concurrent sessions, knowledge-sharing workshops, and exhibition sessions.

The Symposium will present research findings from the forthcoming UNESCO report on the status of girls' education in STEM, the underlying factors that hinder their participation and highlight solutions from policy and practice. It will feature:

- plenary sessions, combining high-level and panel discussions, town hall formats, and other technology-based activities to engage participants;
- concurrent sessions, including: a) panel discussions to share research findings, school practices, and lessons learned, and b) workshops for hands-on learning activities, simulations and other opportunities for skills-transfer;
- exhibition booths, providing the opportunity for partners to present their products and approaches, allowing for hands-on demonstrations and interactions with participants.

The Policy Forum will be organized on the first day with the participation of Ministers of Education and other high-level representatives, to examine how governments are prioritizing and promoting STEM education for girls, and how to address challenges through collaboration.

Technology will be integrated in all sessions through the use of mobile apps, web interfaces, and live streaming.

## Participants

Between 200-250 delegates will participate in the event including: Ministry of education and other government officials; education practitioners and educators; researchers and experts; bilateral, multilateral and other development partners; representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations; and private sector representatives.

Participation will be by invitation only. Interested participants are invited to complete online the [expression of interest to participate](#) at their earliest convenience and no later than **17 July 2017**, midnight, Paris time. Selection will be based on: participant profile, gender and geographical representation, to ensure a balanced audience.

## Programme

The programme of the International Symposium and Policy Forum will be based on the overarching theme of girls' education in STEM, with four sub-themes/tracks:

1. Building the foundations: Gender-responsive quality STEM education
2. Changing the equation: Addressing stereotypes and bias hindering girls' participation
3. Gravitating into the field: Reaching out, engaging and empowering girls and women
4. Wiring the network: Partnerships, cross-sector learning and cooperation

The programme will be developed through an abstract-driven process. Interested participants are also invited to submit a proposal to make a **presentation**, organize a **workshop** or reserve an **exhibition booth**. These proposals must be received by **Friday 5 June 2017**, midnight, Paris at the latest. Selected participants will be informed no later than 23 June 2017.

There is no registration fee for participation; however participants are encouraged to self-finance their participation. Financial assistance will be restricted to a limited number of participants, particularly from developing countries.

## Working languages

The working languages of the event will be English and French; supporting documents and interpretation for all plenary sessions will be provided in both languages. Interpretation will also be provided for at least one of the four concurrent sessions that will be organized every day. The conference could accommodate other languages in separate concurrent sessions if there is sufficient demand and funds available.

## Organizers, partners and supporters

The International Symposium and Policy Forum is organized by UNESCO, with financial support from CJ Group through the UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education. Support is also provided by the Government of Japan and All Nippon Airways (ANA).

Other interested partners, including Member States, development partners, the private sector or others can contribute to the conference by: providing financial support to the core conference costs; organising and delivering concurrent sessions; showcasing their products, interventions and materials in the exhibition area; and/or providing the use of technological platforms and products (e.g. mobile apps and web platforms) for use during the conference.

### Contact information

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