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Ban outlines social benefits of ensuring women have access to education



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the launch of the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today underlined the huge benefits societies reap from ensuring that girls and women have access to education, saying the opportunity to acquire knowledge creates a new generation of mothers who in turn raise educated and empowered young women.

“Education sends a message – a message of confidence and hope. It tells that child; you have a future; what you think matters,” Mr. Ban [said](#) at the launch of the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education at the Paris headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

According to UNESCO, there are an estimated 39 million girls of lower secondary school age across the world not enrolled in either primary or secondary school. Two thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate adults are women, and only about a third of countries have achieved gender parity in secondary school enrolment.

“Education is a right, but it is not a reality for too many women and girls. Too often the cause is discrimination. That is why we must fight back against unequal and unfair treatment,” said the Secretary-General.

“The new Global Partnership we are launching today focuses on two key points; secondary education and literacy. Both pay great dividends for individuals and society. Educating women and girls reduces fertility. It improves productivity,” he added.

The partnership, whose theme is “Better Life, Better Future,” focuses on reaching illiterate or semi-literate adolescent girls and scaling up women’s literacy programmes through partnerships with corporate giants such as Nokia, Procter and Gamble, GEMS Education, Microsoft, Apple and the Packard Foundation. Some of the projects have already started in Africa and Asia.

UNESCO also inaugurated a High-Level Panel on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality to step up global advocacy and work as a “global conscience” for gender equality, with a specific focus on education.

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