

Topic Two. Goal Four: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

1. What do you think are the entry points for achieving this goal in your host country?

While school is mandatory for children ages 7-15 in Tanzania, many people across the country cannot fulfil this obligation. The new President of Tanzania, John Magufuli has declared that as of January 2016, school (Standard 1 to Form 4) will be free; there will no longer be a fiscal barrier hindering millions of children from accessing education. The goal, according to the government, is to increase enrollment of basic education from 45 % in January 2016 to 100 per cent in 2020. However, “free” education in the form of uplifted entrance fees does not mean that all children will be able to attend school; other barriers exist which are not addressed in this policy.

While ensuring that this policy is effectively implemented across Tanzania is certainly one entry point to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education, there are many other factors that need to be considered and improved in order to actually achieve this goal.

For example, only entrance fees are being lifted; parents still need to buy books, uniforms, pay fees for security guards and so on. This means that the fiscal barrier hindering children’s access to school is not fully uplifted due to this policy. Moreover, this policy does not address how some children work to support their family, and regardless of whether school is free or not, they may not be able to attend school due to these other familial obligations. An entry point then would be to explore other factors hindering boy and girls participation in school beyond strictly school fees; however, pressuring the government to uphold their policy, and to expand it where possible is a fundamental entry point to improving access and use of Tanzania’s education system.

In one meeting that I participated in at WLAC, the issue of school washrooms came up. In this meeting, it became clear that many schools in Tanzania have inadequate washroom facilities for girls when they are on their menstrual period. This causes many girls across Tanzania to miss out on school during their period. An entry point to improve girls’ accessibility to education in Tanzania is to ensure that the infrastructure of schools are more girl-friendly. This must become a priority (i.e. girls attendance and inclusiveness in school) before this entry point becomes accessible. As a result, a preamble to this point would be to stimulate dialogue and change patriarchal systems currently hindering girls’ access to education.

2. What recommendations would you make for achieving this goal in your host country?

In Canada a way in which inclusive and equitable quality education be can improved is by breaking down the different approaches that teachers take with boys vs. girls in the classroom. From my own experience as well as from academic literature that I have previously explored, it becomes clear that in Canada teachers often take a different approach to teaching boys than girls. Why are so many girls scared of math, or feel that they aren’t good at it? It is surely not because girls are inherently worse at math, but rather, because the ways in which teachers nurture and encourage girls differs from boys; the lack of positive encouragement provided to girls hinders inclusivity and equitable quality education from prospering. Changing these differences in approaches towards educating boys and girls is a major way that this goal can be better achieved in Canada.

3. How do you believe that goal four relates to goal five, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"?

In both Tanzania and Canada, as with everywhere else in the world, access to equitable quality and inclusive education undoubtedly has a gender component. Girls continue to suffer significantly in terms of their exclusion and struggles in education systems globally. Girls are significantly less likely to attend school than are boys, and when girls are uneducated of course this places significant strain on the achievement of gender equality and female empowerment; for how can women feel equal with men if they were never given the opportunities afforded to their male counterparts? You cannot fully succeed at goal number 5 without goal number 4 having been achieved first.

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