

**“Knowledge is Power: Education as the First Step to  
Justice for Women and Girls”**

**Wednesday 11 March 2026, 13:15-14:30 EDT**

**Location: Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations  
885 2nd Ave, Floor 21, New York, NY 10017**



**Buan-Ionad na hÉireann  
chun na Náisiún Aontaithe**  
Permanent Mission of Ireland  
to the United Nations



**PERMANENT MISSION OF  
SIERRA LEONE TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS**



Permanent Mission of Mongolia  
to the United Nations



## Background

Education is one of the most powerful levers for advancing gender equality, human rights and access to justice. Yet, according to UNESCO<sup>1</sup>, at least 129 million girls remain out of school globally. Women and girls who face intersecting forms of discrimination are at heightened risk of exclusion, resulting in compounded injustices that extend far beyond the traditional understanding of legal justice.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) affirms that education is both a right and a means to realise all other rights, including the right to equitable access to justice. Ensuring that education policies are comprehensive and address the unique obstacles that girls face is vital to progressing towards achieving justice for all women and girls. This must include legal literacy and legal empowerment, as part of a holistic approach to education throughout the life course.

This event will explore the powerful connection between education and access to justice and will highlight policy actions, partnerships and evidence-based approaches aligned with the CSW70 priority theme and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDGs 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

## Objectives

This side event aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Highlight the transformative role of lifelong education in advancing gender equality and access to justice:** Present evidence and best practices

<sup>1</sup> 2024/25 Global Education Monitoring report

demonstrating how education – including vocational training, skills-based learning, formal, non-formal and lifelong learning – strengthens legal empowerment and improves justice outcome for women and girls.

2. **Identify barriers and propose policy solutions for equitable access to education:** Examine structural, cultural, economic, digital and legal barriers that prevent women and girls – especially those from marginalised and conflict-affected communities – from accessing education, and promote policy recommendations that are inclusive, gender-responsive and rights-based.
3. **Foster partnerships and commitments to advance quality and lifelong education as a pathway to justice:** Encourage collaboration among governments, civil society, international organisations and private sector in promoting education initiatives that widen opportunities for women and girls in all stages of life.
4. **Generate actionable recommendations for CSW70 and beyond:** Produce clear policy and pragmatic advocacy recommendations that contribute to national, regional and global frameworks advancing access to education and justice.

This high-level, interactive panel discussion will bring together perspectives from across regions and sectors, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, UNICEF, Member States, the private sector, academia, and civil society experts.

#### Speakers

- H.E. Ambassador Fergal Mythen, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations.
- H.E. Emer Higgins, Minister for Disability at the Department of Children, Disability and Equality of Ireland.
- H.E. Dr. Isata Mahoi, Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs for Sierra Leone
- Ms. Pia Britto: Global Director of Education, UNICEF.
- Prof. Patrick Paul Walsh: Vice President of Education, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Director of SDG Academy.
- Mr. Francesco Moccagatta: Deputy Chairperson, Credit Access India.
- Ms. Nabila Aguele: Chief Executive, Nigeria, Malala Fund.
- Ms. Farida Shaheed: UN Special Rapporteur on Education (video message).
- Ms. Renata Trottmann: President, Soroptimist International.
- Graduate Women International: Moderator.

Commented [GP1]: To be confirmed.

#### Written Statements to the 70th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

- Soroptimist International's written statement can be viewed [here](#).
- Graduate Women International's written statement can be viewed [here](#).