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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 June 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Islamic Republic of Iran: Gender discrimination in education

The gender gap in enrollment, at all levels of education in Iran, is narrowing, as can be seen in table 1¹.

<i>Education Level</i>	<i>Number of female students</i>	<i>Female percentage</i>
Kindergarten	284,583	51/5
Primary / Elementary	2,818,290	48/4
Middle / Junior high	1,837,767	46/7
Secondary school	1,805,380	48/8
Pre-university	265,534	69/4
Post-doctoral and teacher training	5,894	43/1

Nevertheless, gender discrimination is a serious issue within the educational system. It can be seen portrayed in textbooks, and implemented through the prohibition of physical education for girls and the banishment of poor girls who were sold into marriage from the school system, not to mention placing a glass ceiling for women in decision making and education administration.

Boosting traditional gender roles

School books often portray men in active roles and open spaces while they depict women in passive roles, closed spaces, and dependent on men². They discourage girls from considering social roles, as exemplified by the following:

A first grade reading book illustrates a map of Iran with 7 boys and only 2 girls³. It depicts various lessons in which Father makes things and provides the necessities of life for the household while Mother is depicted as the caregiver⁴. Sports are categorized based on gender; horseback riding, weightlifting and track are masculine while ping pong and volleyball are feminine. Similarly, certain jobs such as carpentry, painting, masonry, and small businesses are associated with men while women are associated with jobs such as sewing⁵.

A second grade reading book introduces Father as the head of the household in a poem about family⁶.

A third grade reading book contains images of boys crossing the street, playing soccer, in a park, on a bus, etc. while girls are shown weaving a carpet at home⁷. In another lesson, the

¹ Gender Discrimination in the Education system, Information and communications technologies, and the work environment in Iran presented at the 55th session of CSW, 2011.

² Reading Persian 1st grade fig. 8 p.19, Social Science 3rd grade p. 16, 26, Religion and life 3rd grade p. 80, 88, Reading Persian 4th grade p.28, Social Science 6th grade p. 25, Reading Persian 6th grade p.71.

³ Reading Persian textbook p. 48, first grade.

⁴ Reading Persian 1st grade p.19, 36, 39, 42 5th grade p. 171, Social Science 6th grade p.23, 41.

⁵ Reading Persian p. 83.

⁶ Social Science 6th grade p. 41.

principal admires a male student for his good grades as opposed to his appraisal of a female student for covering her hair and body in a display of proper Islamic “hijab”⁸.

The chemistry book for 10th graders has only one image of a female character, a famine victim comparable in status to the dead cow beside her, while there are numerous images of male scientists and boys curious about objects to experimenting in the lab.

The chemistry book for 11th grade has only the image of one female scientist, Marie Curie, sitting faithfully next to her husband.

In Social Sciences, students learn that a woman is financially dependent upon her husband; it is the husband’s legal duty to provide for his wife. In a section, about teaching respect to women, it is thought that a man ought to respect his wife in public and not insult her, but fails to say anything about respecting her in private. Moreover, children are taught to believe that a man should expect his wife to cook his favorite foods or else he might get upset.

Throughout math textbooks, 60-75 % of the examples all use boys’ names. Similarly, the images predominantly depict boys.

The content of English Language textbooks is not much different, illustrating women washing dishes, setting dinner tables and working within the realm of domesticity while men are active in outdoor spaces.

Prohibition of physical education

In all public and private schools, girls are required to wear Islamic hijab as a school uniform, comprising of long pants, long dress, and a long scarf to cover their hair. This burdensome attire, which must be worn in all weather conditions, is a major obstacle to girls’ physical activities. Additionally, it is deemed inappropriate for girls to take part in physical activities in public. In general, physical education is not considered a serious matter in schools. While boys have the freedom to play in parks and outdoor spaces, girls are restricted, and thus deprived of a physical education.

No school for child brides

In Iran, the legal age of marriage for girls is 13 years, and while the average age of marriage for women is over 19, there are still many child brides in rural areas and impoverished villages. The current count of child brides is over 150,000. Unfortunately the educational system bans the presence of married children in fear of it having a negative influence on their peers. Such a ban eliminates the opportunity of continuing education for child brides. Although theoretically they could enroll in evening adult school, being separated from their peers and constrained by inconvenient hours and locations, it becomes practically impossible for them to continue.

⁷ Reading Persian 1st grade fig. 8 p.19, Social Science 3rd grade p. 16, 26, Religion and life 3rd grade p. 80, 88, Reading Persian 4th grade p.28, Social Science 6th grade p. 25, Reading Persian 6th grade p.71.

⁸ Social Science 3rd grade p. 69.

Glass ceiling for women at decision making levels

It is not a surprise that most textbook authors are men. For example, of the authors of first grade reading textbooks, 10 were men and one was a woman, of third grade reading textbooks, 5 were men and 2 were women, of fifth grade reading textbooks, 6 were men and 2 were women, of sixth grade Farsi language, all 5 were men, and of seventh grade Farsi language, four were men and only 1 was a woman.

And while 50.45 of all employees of the Department of Education are female, only 3 of the 38 General Offices are run by women, translating into an incongruous 8%.
