Lycée Départemental de Donsin School Year: 2014-2015

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**Text: The Power of Girls' Education**

All the girls and boys have the right to education. Education fosters dignity and a sense of self-worth. It offers opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills and enhances life prospects. Along with nutrition, health and skills, education is a pillar of human capital. These essential elements together enable people to lead productive lives and to contribute to their countries' economic growth and development. But poverty prevents millions of children, especially girls, from attending school. In the least developed countries, only half of all children complete primary school.

While gender gaps in primary education are closing globally, more girls than boys are still out of school. The gaps are wider still within and among countries: In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, only 69 and 49 per cent of girls, respectively, complete primary school. At the secondary level, even fewer girls are in school with only 30 and 47 per cent of them enrolled in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, respectively. These gender gaps are evident in literacy rates: worldwide 600 million women are illiterate compared to 320 million men.

Secondary, or higher, education for women is particularly strategic. According to the UN Millennium Project, it provides the "greatest payoffs for women's empowerment". Secondary education yields higher returns for women than for men, including increased use of maternal health and family planning services and altered attitudes towards harmful practices. Women with secondary education are also more likely than illiterate women to understand the dangers posed by HIV and how to prevent its spread. In Egypt, women with secondary education were four times more likely to oppose the genital mutilation of their daughters than women who had never completed primary school. Secondary education also plays a more significant role than primary education in reducing violence against women, for example by empowering women to leave abusive relationships.