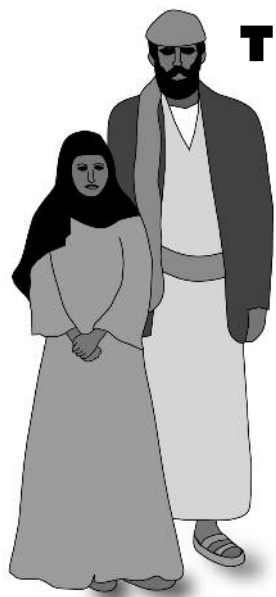


What's Happening

I N T H E W O R L D ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 13, NO 3 NOVEMBER 2012



The World Focuses on Girls' Problems

Girls in much of the world face disadvantages. The United Nations (U.N.) recognizes that, and has decided to focus special attention on girls' problems. To do that it declared October 11, 2012 the first annual International Day of the Girl Child.

Many cultures place little value on girls. Girls who grow up in developing nations remain largely under the control of the men in their families. Rather than go to school, they must stay at home to care for younger siblings or work in the fields. In India and China families take more extreme measures. Every year they abandon hundreds of thousands of girls to orphanages. Many mothers or midwives even kill or refuse to feed a baby daughter within 24 hours of her birth.

Human trafficking is also a problem. There are about 20 million victims of this in the world, even in first-world countries. It is a form of modern slavery. Criminals abduct children or buy them from poor families. Boys often end up as child laborers or soldiers. Girls also become laborers or victims of sex trafficking. They suffer sexual violence that President Obama recently described as "barbaric" and "evil." These girls lose their self-esteem and suffer from depression and emotional problems.

Recently a terrible incident in Pakistan shone a spotlight on the education of girls. It involved a 14-year-old named Malala Yousafzai. Militants in the Taliban control the region. They have imposed a ban on education for girls and closed their schools. At age 11 Malala spoke out against the ban. The Taliban warned her to be quiet and threatened her, so soon she had to flee. She began writing an anonymous blog for the British Broadcasting Corporation. She also received the National Youth Peace Prize from the Pakistani government.

On October 9 Malala and some other girls were in a small school bus on their way home from school. Taliban gunmen stopped the bus and shot her in the head. Although she suffered some brain damage and will need more surgery, she is recovering in England. Millions of Pakistanis support her fight for education. They have demonstrated in the streets, and they have held vigils at mosques and schools to honor her.

Studies show the effects of education on girls as they grow up. Educated girls earn higher incomes as adults, they bear fewer and healthier children, and are healthier themselves. In a world where 75 million girls do not attend school and 250 million girls live in poverty, education would change girls' lives dramatically.

On October 11 the U.N.'s first International Day of the Girl Child took place. The theme for this year's day was "Ending Child Marriage." In rural and poor areas in more than fifty countries, parents sell daughters as brides. This violation of human rights happens to millions of girls who have no say in the matter. The girls are as young as six years old. Sometimes the husbands are teenaged boys. Often the husbands are older men who already have a wife and children.

Numbers from the U.N. tell the enormity of the problem. Every year ten million girls have to become brides before their 18th birthdays. Currently there are 200 million women in developing countries who are ages 20–24. About 70 million of them married before age 18, and 20 million of them had married before they turned 15.

Child marriage has negative effects on girls. Certainly it robs them of their childhoods. It sends them to lives of isolation away from family and friends. It almost always ends their chances to go to school, which assures them a life of poverty. Many of the girls become the victims of violence from their husbands. Child marriage also often results in early and unwanted pregnancies. In developing countries the complications from pregnancy are the leading cause of death for teenaged girls.

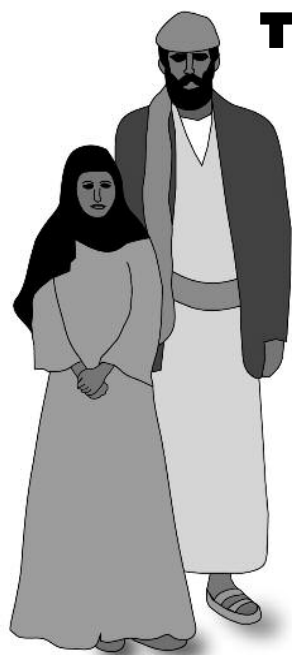
The United Nations is asking the nations of the world to change. They must protect girls from abuse and ensure that girls can get an education. This will help girls to break out of poverty and live the safe, healthy lives that all people deserve.

What's Happening

IN THE WORLD ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

VOL 13, NO 3 NOVEMBER 2012



The World Focuses on Girls' Problems

Girls in much of the world face disadvantages. The United Nations (U.N.) recognizes that and has decided to pay special attention to girls' problems. It declared October 11, 2012 the first International Day of the Girl Child.

Many cultures place little value on girls. In developing nations girls remain largely under the control of men. Rather than go to school, they work in the fields or care for siblings at home. Families in India and China abandon hundreds of thousands of girls to orphanages. Many mothers even kill or refuse to feed a baby daughter soon after her birth.

Human trafficking is also a problem. This form of modern slavery has about 20 million victims, even in first-world countries. Criminals steal children or buy them from poor families. Boys often end up as laborers or soldiers. Girls also become laborers or victims of sex trafficking. They suffer sexual violence that causes depression and emotional problems.

A recent event in Pakistan put girls' education in the news. The militants who control the region have closed many schools for girls. Three years ago an 11-year-old girl named Malala began speaking out against the ban on education. The militants warned her to be quiet and threatened her, so soon she had to flee.

On October 9 Malala was in a small school

bus. Taliban gunmen stopped the bus and shot her in the head. She suffered some brain damage, but she is recovering in England. Millions of Pakistanis support her fight for education. They have demonstrated in the streets. They also have held vigils at mosques and schools to honor her.

Studies show how education helps girls. Educated girls earn higher incomes as adults. They bear fewer and healthier children, and are healthier themselves. About 75 million girls do not attend school and 250 million live in poverty. Education would change girls' lives.

On October 11 the first International Day of the Girl Child took place. The topic this year was "Ending Child Marriage." In poor areas in more than fifty countries, parents sell millions of daughters as brides. This violates their human rights, of course. The girls are as young as six years old. Often the husbands are as old as their fathers.

The U.N. has studied the problem. Every year ten million girls have to become brides before their 18th birthdays. There are 200 million women in developing countries who are ages 20–24. About 70 million of them married before age 18, and 20 million of them had married before they turned 15.

Child marriage hurts girls. Certainly it robs them of their childhoods. It sends them to live away from family and friends. Their chances to go to school disappear, and they live a life of poverty. Many of the girls become the victims of violence from their husbands. Child marriage also often results in early and unwanted pregnancies. In developing countries problems from pregnancy are the leading cause of death for teenaged girls.

The United Nations is asking the nations of the world to change. They must protect girls from abuse and provide an education to girls. This will help girls to break out of poverty and live the safe, healthy lives that all people deserve.

Background Information

The U.N. warns that the number of girl brides could more than double during the coming decade to 142 million.

The U.N. Population Fund released a report about child marriage called “Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage.” Among other things, it asks countries to enact and enforce laws that require boys and girls to be 18 years old before marrying.

The U.N. reports that more than 40 percent of the world’s child marriages happen in India. In eight of India’s states more than half of the girls are married before the age of 18.

The U.N. also says that 46 percent of women in Afghanistan were married before the age of 18, and more than 15 percent before age 15.

By 2015 women will comprise two-thirds of the world’s illiterate.

Some supporters in Pakistan also have been wearing “I am Malala” T-shirts.

The Taliban in Pakistan did not deny its involvement in the attack on Malala Yousafzai. In fact, it accused her of “promoting Western culture,” and promised to try again to kill her if she recovers and returns to the Swat Valley.

About 70,000 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 die each year of complications from pregnancy or childbirth. Girls under 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s. Girls age 15–18 are twice as likely to die. The children of girl brides are 60 percent more likely to die by their first birthday than children with mothers who are at least 20.

Girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to marry as children. Educated girls are more likely to be able to choose when and how many children they have, and earn higher incomes.

In 2000 the U.S. Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. It offers protection to victims of human trafficking, even if they are in the U.S. illegally. Congress reauthorized the law three times, but has failed to do so since 2008.

According to the World Bank, in developed countries women earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn. In developing countries they earn 73 cents.

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of 200 organizations dedicated to stopping the practice of child marriage.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- How old do you think someone should be before he/she gets married? Explain why.

Comprehension:

- What are some problems related to child marriage?

Beyond the Text:

- Try to describe the relationship between education and poverty.
- Use the Internet to read more about Malala Yousafzai.
- Try to describe how children develop a good sense of self-esteem.

Vocabulary (*advanced article only)

Article-specific: developing nation; sibling; orphanage; midwife*; trafficking; to abduct*; self-esteem; militant; anonymous*; vigil; mosque

High-use: to focus*; annual*; to abandon; emotional; to impose*; to demonstrate; poverty; theme*; rural*; to violate/violation; enormity*; complication*; abuse

Sources

Women’s Health Weekly October 25, 2012

The Spectator (Hamilton, Ontario) October 18, 2012

Chicago Tribune October 17, 2012

The Hindu October 12, 2012

Aljazeera October 11, 2012

AllAfrica October 11, 2012

Vancouver Sun October 10, 2012

The Daily Beast September 27, 2012

New York Times September 26, 2012

U.N. Women www.unwomen.org

USAID www.usaid.gov

Int’l. Center for Research on Women www.icrw.org

Common Core Curricular Standards

Reading—Grades 5–12

- Quote accurately from text / Cite textual evidence /
- Draw inferences / Determine central ideas /
- Analyze structure of text / Interpret words and phrases

CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

- Reading Vocabulary Development/Comprehension
- Writing Strategies and Applications
- Listening and Speaking

History-Social Science

- 7.4; 8.6; 8.8; 10.10; 11.10