

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **Education for Women** **in Developing Countries**



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The Malala Fund is asking governments and institutions to choose to invest in girls' education. The current funding shortfall is estimated to be US \$39 billion a year. This may seem like a lot but it is equivalent to just eight days of global military spending.

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Illiteracy Rates

Estimated world illiteracy rates
by region and by gender, 2000

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics

* Not including Japan, Australia and New Zealand

% Male
% Female

Developed
Countries

Latin
America/
Caribbean

East Asia/
Oceania*

Sub Saharan
Africa

Arab States

South Asia

31 million primary-aged girls are still out of school around the world. School enrollment rates for girls have improved over the past decade, but more than 30 million girls of A-school age are still out of school today. Most of them will never enter a classroom.

98 million more girls are missing out on secondary education. Millions more are missing out on the final years of secondary schooling but are not being counted. Girls are often under pressure to drop out of school, even after they complete primary education. Making the transition to secondary education is critical for girls to develop important skills and confidence in order to fulfill their true potential. Even if they do transition to secondary school, the number of girls who complete upper secondary is very low. We can't be sure of the numbers because in many developing countries the number of girls (and boys) in or out of upper secondary is not even counted.

Illiteracy is highest amongst females. In more than 20 developing countries, illiteracy rates amongst women exceed 70%.

In total more than 130 million girls are out of school today. Too many girls are still shut out of school because they have to work, are married early, or have to care for younger siblings, denying them their fundamental right to education. These are some of the most common reasons but there are other plenty of reasons in terms of social and cultural norms that contribute to the above. Girls face violence preventing them from going to school in over 70 countries.

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics

There are many reasons girls do not continue their schooling including poverty or traditions that do not value girls learning. Girls may drop out to marry, because of violence in or around school, or due to cost. Often there are simply no schools for girls to go to, even if they want to continue to learn, they don't have a chance to do so.

What are they missing?

According to EFA Global Monitoring Report, there are 66 million girls out of school globally and 33 million fewer girls than boys in primary school.

Education in underdeveloped countries mostly don't live up to the quality they should. So many a times, even though there is education, there still are many reasons as to why girls remain uneducated. Reasons for this include poor quality content in terms of a lacking or outdated curriculum which comprises of inadequate learning materials.

There is also a certain gender dimension that comes into play with this in terms

of women leaders often invisible in curriculum contents and images. Other than that there is also some very poor quality learning processes because of untrained or poorly trained teachers, lack of a system of good assessments, outdated teaching technologies, poor school management and a inflexible school calender. Because of this, the few number of women that actually get education are unable to live up develop to their full potential.

There are various barriers to girls' education throughout the world, ranging from supply-side constraints to negative social norms. Some include school fees; strong cultural norms favouring boys' education when a family has limited resources. Inadequate sanitation facilities in schools such as lack of private and separate latrines. These are just to name a few in theory. If one were to actually go and see the reality of the situations, things are much more than they might even seem.

More than 60 million girls worldwide are missing out on education. Many of them have to work, care for family members, or marry and have children while they are still children themselves.

Other reasons may include - negative classroom environments, where girls may face violence, exploitation or corporal punishment. Additionally, schools often lack sufficient numbers of female teachers. This might not seem as that big of a deal but in place with strong cultural norms and rules - it counts for quite a bit. One of the biggest factors include adverse cultural practices since girls are more likely to stay at home and become housewives and education for them isn't given the priority it deserves.

How can we build a healthier, more prosperous and peaceful future if half the population is not empowered through education and enabled to make informed choices about their own lives?

Gender Disparity

According to the World Bank, girls currently represent 48 percent of primary school enrollment and boys represent 52 percent. Even though this gender gap has decreased in the last few decades, girls still account for 55 percent of all out of school children—meaning that, on average, for every 100 boys out-of-school, there are 122 girls.

Poverty is a major contributor. If a family has limited funds and has to be selective on whom to send to school, more often than not, it is going to be the boys.

In many developing countries, the disparity is even greater. For example, in Yemen the statistic is 270 girls for every 100 boys (In Yemen, just 36 percent of young women are literate) and in India it is 426 girls for every 100 boys , according to the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

A report found Afghanistan and Pakistan to be the countries with fewer girls in school: 71 girls for every 100 boys in the former and 82 girls for every 100 boys in the latter. Chad and the Central African Republic appears to be flat-lining at under 70 girls per 100 boys. In Afghanistan it is 71 girls for every 100 boys and in Pakistan, 82 girls for every 100 boys.

South and West Asia has the widest gender gap in its out-of-school population: 80 per cent of its out-of-school girls are unlikely to ever start school compared to 16 per cent of its out-of-school boys. Furthermore, many countries still not have reached gender parity.

Young women in Afghanistan are less likely to enrol in secondary education, despite some improvements in the last two decades. In 1999, no girls attended secondary school in Afghanistan, compared to 34 percent in 2011. One million children were out school in the country in 2011, the report said.

On a broader view each of these places aren't villages of small towns, they are big cities or most of them are and they all have resources to provide, just not the knowledge to do so.

Conflict Zones

Girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school if they live in countries affected by conflict and 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than girls living in countries not affected by conflict.

Lack of schools, teachers and fear of violence in and around school all serve to keep girls from education in these situations. The need to flee their homes because of conflict can interrupt girls' education, with little hope of ever setting foot inside a classroom again.

If current trends continue, the poorest part of the young female population in developing countries won't achieve literacy until 2072 (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) said in its annual Education for All Global Monitoring

Report.) The problem is particularly acute in conflict zones, poverty - stricken regions, and countries with legal or cultural barriers to girls' education. Women should have the right to be empowered at home and in the workplace.

This is a very important aspect of attaining world literacy for women everywhere. Getting an education and then choosing to be a housewife is never a bad thing. It is when the choice or alternative is not issued, then it becomes wrong.

Progress

Progress has been achieved especially in terms of girls' access to schooling. Since 2000, the number of out-of-school girls has been nearly cut in half and women and girls are spending more time in school than ever before, an average of 7 years.

But even with the enormous progress that has been achieved, the state of girls' education remains nothing less than a crisis, with millions of the world's most marginalized girls still unable to access and complete a full course of schooling. Young women growing up in underdeveloped countries often leave school at an early age. A large reason why this occurs is due to the lack of resources from their household and poor economic conditions of the country. As a result, young girls are often left with no other choice but to commence working in order to earn money for their family at a young age.

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Education: A Privilege

In many underdeveloped countries, education is not regarded as a guaranteed right but it is a hard earned and often an exclusive privilege to receive an education of any level.

The few women who are able to receive an education in an underdeveloped country, are not likely to receive an education past the elementary school level. UNESCO published in the October 2013 Girls' Education report that over 17 million girls will most likely never have a chance to attend school at all. Sadly, for many young women, receiving even an elementary level of education is virtually impossible. In many of these countries, girls who are lucky enough to attend school as children or teenagers often face financial instability and social stigmatization. These can be difficult challenges to overcome.

The global disparity regarding access to education is a major focus for many organizations, but more needs to be done. A young woman's gender, religion, or country of birth should not determine her ability to pursue learning. By allowing more young women to reach their education potential, it will only strengthen the future of our world.

Education plays a key role in making progress toward gender equality, empowering girls and boys with the skills and competencies needed to stay healthy, take decisions about their lives secure better paid work and play an active part in the development of the community and society. There is more said about this further but overall to even list down all the reasons as to why a girl should be receiving an education seems like a ridiculous intent on its own.

Return Rates

Girls' education brings high returns not just for income and economic growth, but in other crucial areas which include women's survival rates and health, fertility, empowerment, political and social decision making among others.

These include: Improving children's and women's survival rates and health since they would seek medical care for themselves and their family with the right kind of information and understanding.

Protecting children's rights and delaying child marriage. Improving climate change adaptation. They become smarter in terms of fertility - get pregnant later at the right time (Multiple studies show that an extra year of schooling for girls reduces fertility rate by five to 10 percent).

In 2012, UNESCO & Save the Children publication entitled 'Children Battling To Go To School' detailed 3,600 documented attacks on education, specifically targeting female students. Children experienced acts of violence, torture and intimidation on an ongoing basis. In many cases, children were seriously injured or killed during these attacks on education.

UNESCO

Despite recent advances in girls' education, generations of women have been left behind: 493 million adult women are illiterate and account for almost two-thirds of the world's 774 million illiterate adults.



Malala Yousafzai

Malala was born on 12 July 1997 in Mingora, a town in the Swat District of north-west Pakistan. Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai who has always loved learning, ran a school in Swat adjacent to the family's home. He was known as an advocate for education in Pakistan, which has the second highest number of out of school children in the world, and became an outspoken opponent of Taliban efforts to restrict education and stop girls from going to school.

Malala shared her father's passion for learning and loved going to school. In 2009, Malala began writing a blog for the BBC Urdu service under a pseudonym, about fears that her school would be attacked and the increasing military activity in Swat.

Malala and her father received death threats but continued to speak out for the right to education. In 2011, she received Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize and was nominated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu for the International Children's Peace Prize. In response to her rising popularity and national recognition, Taliban leaders voted to kill her.

On 9 October 2012, as Malala and her friends were traveling home from school, a masked gunman entered their school bus

and asked for Malala by name. She was shot with a single bullet which went through her head, neck and shoulder. Two of her friends were also injured in the attack.

Malala survived the initial attack, but was in a critical condition. She was moved to the United Kingdom for treatment at a hospital that specializes in military injuries. She was not discharged until January, 2013 by which time she had been joined by her family in the UK.

The Taliban's attempt to kill Malala received worldwide condemnation and led to protests across Pakistan. In the weeks after the attack, over 2 million people signed a right to education petition, and the National Assembly swiftly ratified Pakistan's first Right To Free and Compulsory Education Bill.

Malala became a global advocate for the millions of girls being denied a formal education because of social, economic, legal and political factors. In 2013, Malala and Ziauddin co-founded the Malala Fund to bring awareness to the social and economic impact of girls' education and to empower girls to raise their voices, to unlock their potential and to demand change.



Malala accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on 10 December, 2014 with Indian children's rights and education advocate Kailash Satyarthi. Malala contributed her entire prize money of more than \$500,000 to financing the creation of a secondary school for girls in Pakistan.

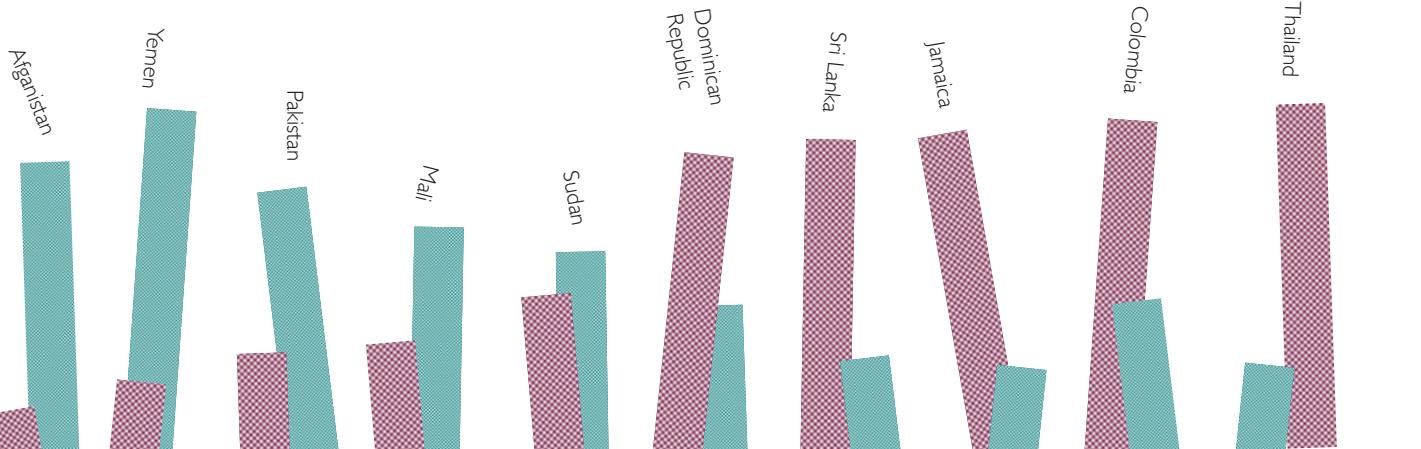
More than anything, Malala has proven to be a beacon of light, an inspiration as person to aspire to as we stand in our generation of millennials. She gained quite a lot of recognition after her shooting and could've gone all sorts of ways with that - she was 15 after all. But she decided to use her influence to make and create a change, Malala continues her ongoing fight with this cause and has garnered more change than one can image with her establishment 'The Malala Fund'.

Other Organizations

The global community is taking action against the disparity of girls' education, with the establishment of the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). UNGEI (United Nations Girls Education Initiative) was launched in 2000 by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Its main goal is to create "a world where all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realize their full potential and contribute to a transforming society where gender equality becomes a reality." In the last 10 years, the girls' education movement has taken on new momentum with

growing global advocacy efforts.

These include: Plan International's 'Because I am a Girl' Campaign (2007). The Nike Foundation's 'Girl Effect' (2008) The Documentary Group's 'Girl Rising' (2013), and above all, in 2015, U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama launched 'Let Girls Learn', an initiative focussed on supporting developing country leadership in girl's education.



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