

Research Report

Special Conference on Peace and Justice 2

Peace and Justice towards minorities

Course of action to increase girls' access to education in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs)



MUNISH



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Forum	Special Conference 2
Issue:	Course of action to increase girls' access to education in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs)
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Introduction

When Malala Yousafzai returned home from school on October 9th 2012, the Taliban targeted her for an attack. She was seriously injured by a bullet in her head and arm but she recovered and was discharged from the hospital February 8th 2013.

Malala Yousafzai was the daughter of a schoolteacher and is known for her blog on the website of the BBC in which she wrote about the takeover of the Swat District by the Taliban. Since 2007 girls in the district are excluded from school and many other human rights are violated. Now the Pakistani Malala is a well-known child activist and she received numerous awards for her actions.

Worldwide, women are responsible for 2/3 of the work done, yet earn only 10% of the total income and own 1% of the property. But it is not just about money and power. Every year, 17 million girls are deprived of a basic education and a staggering 60 million are assaulted on their way to school. So, are we equal? The answer is quite clear, no, not yet. The lack of access for women to education not only leaves its marks on a fundamental human right, but also on the economy. If women were to have better education, this would benefit a country economically and therefore also increase their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Now we see another question arise. Why don't girls have access to education? In Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), there is often a financial constraint when it comes to building schools and if a school is built, girls are often left out. Traditions, either religious or cultural, make it harder for girls to enter education. They assume household tasks or are forced into an arranged marriage before they can finish a proper education. This research report aims to help delegates understand the problem that we are facing and to raise devising solutions.



Definition of Key Terms

Literacy rate

The literacy rate indicates the proportion of a population that can read or write. It is therefore also an indicator of the degree of development of a population group. It defines how far a government has succeeded to educate its population. It is also often used to indicate the difference between men and women.

Gender parity index (GPI)

The Gender parity index (GPI) compares the access to education between male and female. When this GPI is below 1, it indicates that more males than females have access to education and reversely.

General Overview

The 26th article of the UN Declaration of Human Rights starts with the following words: *“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”* However, there are still 57 million children not in school in the world. 30 million of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa.

Millennium Development Goals

These goals were made in the year 2000 and were to be achieved by 2015. They consist of 8 concrete goals that focus on the eradication of global poverty. In total, 189 countries signed the MDGs and thus they have committed themselves to achieving the objectives.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

The second Millennium Development Goal is the goal to achieve universal primary education. It started off well. There are more children than ever going to primary school. By 2008, the number of children out of school dropped from 102 million to only 60 million. But this development has come to a standstill. Today, there are 57 million children out of school.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Equality between men and women has almost been achieved in primary school. However, in only 2 countries, they are equal in all levels of education. Women continue to face discrimination in access to work, economic assets and education. Girls from the poorest households have the smallest chance on getting an education.

Sub-Saharan Africa

This region is the most problematic region regarding inequality between women and men based on their education. Only 93 girls on 100 boys have access to primary education (GPI 0.93), while 82 girls on the 100 boys have that to secondary education (GPI 0.82). In 1999 those 82 girls, were 83, thus no improvement has been made. Looking at tertiary education, we come to an even more shocking conclusion. In 1999, the enrolment of women compared to men in tertiary education was still at a height of 67 compared to 100. In 2010, this number has decreased to 63 (GPI 0.63) which is a very disappointing number, looking at the time and effort that has been put into this.

Constraints

Now that we know how drastic the situation is, we can look into the specific reasons why girls are left out in education. We can split these up in 3 different groups; social and cultural, religious and financial aspects.

Financial aspect

In the countries where the situation is the worst, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is often the lowest. This means that the government lacks the money to pay for schools and teachers. But this problem is often solved with the help of the World Bank and other organizations. But there is another problem; parents also have to contribute financially to the education of their children. Parents have to pay to get their children to school. For every amount of money that the government pays, parents have to pay something as well. In LEDCs parents tend to have to pay much more (Benin: 70 euros per 100 euros spent by the government) than in More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC) (USA: 10 euros per 100 euros spent by the government). But tuition is just a start. Parents have to pay extra money for i.e. transportation, books and school uniforms. Since men have a bigger chance on getting a well earning job,



parents send them to school. They can then later on support the family financially when the parents have aged.

Religious aspect

In many religions, men and women are unequal and women are expected to take care of the households. Therefore, women are forced into an arranged marriage before they can complete their education. In the religion Islam, women can be educated so they can educate their children and they can support their families financially when their husbands pass away. In the Asian religions, it was believed that a woman's virtue lay with her lack of knowledge. Therefore, education for females was never even considered. In Africa, women were only educated about Christianity for the propagation within domestic grounds. Even within the church, almost every position can only be held by a man, making men and women unequal.

Cultural and social aspect

In many countries, women and men are not equal on many grounds. For example, in Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive a car. Even something as ordinary as menstruation causes major social difficulties for girls. If there is only one girl in a class, she can feel very uncomfortable and they tend to miss a lot of days because of the lack of sanitation regarding their menstruation. They find themselves lacking behind and drop out. They are also pushed by their parents. Their parents find it more useful if the girls help out at home or go into child labor. The girls have a lower chance of getting a real good job in the end anyway.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded in 1945 and one of its main aims is to improve education worldwide. It has set up the Education for All (EFA) to help provide quality basic education for all children.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is an organization within the UN dedicated to the welfare of children. UNICEF is headquartered in New York and in 158 countries UNICEF field offices are located. UNICEF mobilizes and



provides research for communities in need. It aims to help governments of countries with a low GPI reducing the number of girls not attending school.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December 10 th , 1948	UN declaration of human rights adopted by the general assembly
1975	International Women's year
1975	First World Conference on Women is held in Mexico City
1975	The Sex Discrimination Act makes it illegal to discriminate against women in work and education
1976-1985	United Nations Decade for Women
1979	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is adopted by the UN General Assembly
1980	Second World Conference on Women is held in Copenhagen
2000	Start Millennium Development Goals
2003-2012	United Nations Literacy Decade
2008	Only 60 million children do not receive education

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The involvement of the UN in the rights of women really began in 1975, with the start of the International Women's year. This was in response to the feminist movement gaining momentum during the 1970s.

Since the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals, the activity of the UN in this issue has increased drastically. The UN has set up various programs to help solve this issue, such as the Education for All from UNESCO. An enormous amount of reports have been written on either the goals itself or this specific issue. A selection of all these documents can be found below:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 18 December 1979



- Consideration within the United Nations of questions concerning the role of women in development, 14 December 1981 **(A/RES/36/127)**
- Integration of women in development, 19 December 1989 **(A/RES/44/171)**
- Women in Development, 10 March 2008 **(A/RES/62/206)**
- Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, 12 February 2008 **(A/RES/62/433)**

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The first step into the right direction was taken in the 1970s, when feminist movement gained momentum. Women found that the way they were being treated was outdated and they felt unequal compared to men. They believed that women had the same right to education and work as men. Many people responded to this new movement, either with joy or disgust. The women managed to get the attention of the UN. The year of 1975 was the International Women's Year and the first Convention on Women was held in that same year. Nowadays, many people share the thought that women and men are equal and in almost every MEDC, women have the same rights as men. In these same MEDCs, women go to school equally as much as men do. However, these ideas can be less easily carried out in the LEDCs. We encounter not only financial problems, but also traditional, social and cultural ones. To bring this to the attention of the rest of the world, the inequality and need for education are both listed in the 8 Millennium Development Goals. Children were increasingly being educated from the year of 2000 until 2008, going from 102 million to 60 million children not attending school worldwide. But this has come to a stop. Now, still 57 children are not being educated despite numerous campaigns and attempts to improve the situation. More than half of these children are girls and 30 million of all the uneducated children live in sub-Saharan Africa. Girls from poor, rural families are most likely to be excluded. In these countries, the easiest thing for a parent to do is to obligate the daughter to stay home, help running the household and even earning a bit of money. Education for girls in these regions won't pay off anyway. That is the problem we are encountering right now. People respond to incentives. They want to make the best of their lives and for them, sending their daughters to school is nowadays unaffordable, impossible and senseless. We know how to get children to go to school, now we have to make it profitable for the girls in traditional, rural areas.





Possible Solutions

It is a clear fact that we cannot change traditions. It is hard to change the way people look at things. To address this issue we must not only make sure that the education is accessible to girls, but we must try to let it pay off in the future. In order to solve a complicated issue, one must look at all the aspects it brings with it.

The first aspect we have to look at is overall education. Children in LEDCs have generally speaking less access to education than the children in MEDCs. A problem clearly arises in sub-Saharan Africa. We must assist the governments in these regions and plead to improve the access and quality of education. For example, we can make primary education free and therefore affordable for the parents.

Secondly, we must increase the accessibility of education for girls. In countries where girls are disadvantaged in education, the UN should cooperate with the authorities to let girls go to school more easily. This can be achieved with extra study materials and separate toilets. Also, it is necessary to ensure that teen mothers can still receive education.

Then, we should inform the parents about the benefits their daughter can receive when going to school. For example, information campaigns can be set up to make communities in rural areas aware of the importance of education. Schools could also be assisted in setting up school committees to involve parents. Parents involved in the education of their children tend to see the importance more easily and will be more committed to let their daughters go to school.

Last but not least, we should ensure equality of men and women in the workplace, so educated girls have a bigger chance on getting a good job. This helps not only the economy, but will also increase the amount of girls going to school in the future.

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Appendix

I <http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/index.html> A summary of the situation of the access of girls to education in each country

