The Third General Assembly

Guaranteeing women's right to education

Research Report

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Fake news

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Introduction

In October of 2012 Malala Yousafzai, a 15 year old girl, was shot in the head on her school bus on her way home simply for going to school and aspiring to recieve an education. This is the reality for millions of girls around the world, who are denied the right to education simply because of their gender. There are 129 million girls without any access to education. Globally, only 3 in 4 girls complete their lower secondary education. This figure drops even more in low income countries, where only 1 in 3 complete their lower secondary education, let alone graduating high school.

Girl's education is the foundation to ensuring women are seen and heard. It is essential to ensuring people are able to participate in their government, and building a career in the workplace. Without girls' education, women's voices are silenced in governmental decisions, and workplaces become male dominated. Through girls' education the ability to make key decisions and societal change is given, empowering women around the world.

Even in the developed world, the right to education for girls is relatively new, with it only being written into law in the United States in 1972. Law still doesn't guarantee equal access to education, for this societal change must be made. There are many societal expectations and beliefs which create gender disparity in education, especially in low income countries. For example: families may prioritise the education of their sons over their daughters due to the standard that women don't belong in the workplace. Girl's are expected to learn to cook and clean in order to get married in the future, rather than being sent to school.

Girls' education is necessary, but achieving gender equality is complex, and requires both legal and societal change worldwide. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations declared education as a human right for all children, regardless of sex, financial, and ethnic background. Since then, they have been working hard at ensuring this is made a reality, however despite their achievements, there is still much change which must be made.

Definition of Key Terms

Girls' Education

The combined topic of primary and secondary schooling for girls (children), typically referred to when discussing gender inequalities in the access to education.

Primary Education

The first stage of formal schooling for children, spanning from preschool to grade 5. This is normally referred to as 'Primary School'.

Lower Secondary Education

The second stage of formal schooling for children, spanning from grade 6 to 9. This can also be referred to as 'Middle School'.

Upper Secondary Education

The third and final stage of formal schooling for children, spanning from grade 10 to 12, after which students receive their official diploma. This can also be referred to as 'High School'.

Gender Equality

The state of equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender identity. Gender equality means that a person's gender identity does not impact their access to education, their achievements in the workplace, the way they are treated by others, etc.

Gender Disparity

The quantified difference between access to resources and opportunities due to gender identity, in other words it means that gender inequality is present, and that there is a great difference between the opportunities of men and women.

Gender Roles

Roles, actions, and behaviours which are deemed acceptable for one gender and not for the other by society.

Child Marriage

The marriage of a person below the age of 18, typically with a girl who is a minor and an adult man. These are most often found in low income countries, often when an 'dowry' or a gift/exchange is involved from the husband's family to the bride's. Despite this, child marriage can still be found in the developed world in countries such as the United States.

General Overview

Traditions

There are various traditions and mentalities which create gender disparity and prevent girls from receiving an education. These are not the sole reason for not sending a child to school, however they account for a large portion of the gender disparity. While some families break free from these discriminatory traditions and mentalitites, others continue to pass them down from generation to generation, creating an endless cycle of girls without opportunity.

Gender Roles

From a young age we are taught to categorise and gender things. Blue is for boys and pink is for girls, working and providing is for men and domestic duties are for women. Families who cling to this mentality often don't see a necessity in sending girls to school as they won't require the education in order to pursue a career, they simply need to learn domestic duties such as cooking and cleaning.

There are also cases where families do wish to send their daughters to school however they lack the finances to do so. They must decide which of their childrens will receive the opportunity of education and which won't. Parents often choose to send their sons rather than daughters as many cultures favour boys over girls. They see their son's education as a necessity; a requirement to secure a job to provide in the future. Meanwhile, their daughter's education is a luxury; beneficial but not necessary.

Child Marriage

Every day 41,000 children are married as minors around the world, mostly underage girls who are married to adult men. Child marriage forces girls out of their schools, and it significantly reduces the potential earnings they make in the future. They are also less likely to be given a voice within their household and community, and they face much higher rates of domestic violence.

Child marriage happens because girls are pressured and/or forced by their family, relatives, and community. They primarily occur for financial reasons as a dowry is typically involved, where the groom will give the girl's family some form of compensation for their daughter.

Teen Pregnancy

60% of teen mothers drop out of school and never complete their secondary education. While teen fathers are able to continue their lives, unaffected by the pregnancy, teen mothers are often left with financial struggles, health complications which come with pregnancy, public shame, and are sometimes even disowned and kicked out of their home by their families. They are given a baby which they must take care of, often leaving them no time for their education. Teen pregnancy carries negative stigma and consequences and is found all over the world, especially in regions where proper sex education is not provided.

Lack of Access

Distance and Capacity

Many low-income countries don't allocate sufficient funds and resources to education. Because of this, many children live too far away from schools to be able to attend. Many schools are also understaffed, meaning that they lack the ability to provide education for all of the children in their area. Distance is particularly a challenge for girls in Sub-Saharan Africa, where a study found that 1 in 4 primary students live more than 2 kilometres away from school, a distance which can often be unachievable for young children who must walk on their own every morning and evening. Because of this World Bicycle Relief, a non-profit organisation, has been partnering with the Ministry of Education in Zambia for the past ten years (along with other countries) in order to provide girls with bicycles, ensuring that they are able to have a means of transportation to attend school and receive the education they deserve.

Political Challenges

Many girls are unable to attend school due to political challenges. For example, in Afghanistan, girls' secondary education is banned by the Taliban. Girls who attempt to go to school are turned away at gunpoint and forced to return home. Girls who attend schools in secret or who advocate against the Taliban's ban on their education are faced with extreme consequences if discovered. This was the case for Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head during the Taliban's partial occupation of Pakistan.

Major Parties Involved

Afghanistan
Afghanistan is the country which is most often mentioned when discussing girl's education. The Taliban, who have been present in the country for over 20 years, have placed total bans on girl's education throughout the country, harming and killing any who go against this rule. After they overthrew the Afghan government in 2021, they had promised that girls would be permitted to continue their education, however this has shown to not be the case, as secondary schools around the country have been shut down and surrounded by armed gunmen.

India
Despite efforts made by the government in recent years, India remains one of the countries with the worst gender disparity in education. In primary education, girls are around 30% less likely to receive a primary education when compared to boys. In the country's poorest regions this figure is even worse, rising to an incredible 42%.

Sub-Saharan Africa
Education in Sub-Saharan Africa has always been lacking, however it has been improving in recent years. While education levels are not ideal for neither boys nor girls, girls have significantly lower chances of going to school. Average literacy rates in the region are as low as 66% (2020), and according to UNESCO no country in the region has reached gender equality in education.

United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)
UNICEF is creating a future where every child's rights are protected. With the goal of

collaborating with others to remove the barriers that poverty, violence, disease, and discrimination place in a child's path, UNICEF was established. Lack of access to education, which is a right for every child, is one example of these barriers. UNICEF places a high priority on education, particularly the issue's impact on girls. Making sure girls complete their primary education at all costs.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
19.07.1848	First Women's rights convention, organised by women, took place in New york where 68 women and 32 men signed the Declaration of Sentiments, which then led to the 19th Amendment.
23.01.1949	Elizabeth Blackwell becomes the first woman to graduate medical school and become a doctor.
10.12.1869	The State of Wyoming passed the first women's suffrage law, guaranteeing women's right to vote and hold office, thus starting the process of the 19th amendment.
18.08.1920	The ratification of the 19th amendment is added to the US constitution, declaring that all US citizens will be allowed access to voting and holding office, regardless of their gender.
23.06.1972	Title IX is signed and put into action. It states that no one, regardless their sex, be excluded from activities or be denied education in the US.
01.09.2008	Malala Yousafzai gave her first speech to the BBC at age 11 when the Taliban had closed down all girls schools.
19.04.2010	Pakistan's first Right to Education Bill was passed in the aftermath of Malala's shooting. The bill makes it mandatory for all children

ages 5-16 to receive free education from the government.

Past Attempts To Resolve The Issue

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, also known as UNESCO, is a United Nations establishment which works towards the improvement in education, science and culture in our world. Their recent achievement, along with UN Women and UN AIDS, is improving comprehensive sexuality education for girls in particular.

In 1972, during the civil rights movement, Title IX was signed. Title IX is a common name for the federal civil rights law in the US. After signed, the law prohibited sex-based discrimination in the US for any education funded by the federal government. This was a big step towards ensuring equal rights for all genders going forward and there has been big improvement since then.

Malala Yousafzai, a Nobel prize winner for education rights for women, started fighting for girls' education from the age of 11. Since then, she made several TV appearance advertising When shot in the head at 15 by the Taliban, many supporters around the world started protests and her cause was widely spread to everyone. A petition was introduced to have all children in school by 2015, and this petition elicited the Pakistan government to pass their first Right to Education Bill, making it mandatory for all children to be allowed free education with all fasciitis being provided funding from the government.

Possible Solutions

There are many possible ways in which we can ensure education for all girls around the world, providing them with a voice and a place in the workplace. Many of these have already been attempted; some have been successful, and others haven't. Some are also more realistic or more extreme than others.

Firstly, we must work on dismantling sexist and unequal traditions and mindsets in countries where they are prevalent. Child marriage must be made illegal and punishments should be heavily enforced by local governments and police forces. Families must be convinced that education for girls is just as valuable and important for girls as it is for boys. They should be shown that women are able to succeed and play valuable roles in the workplace.

Governments should also implement proper sex education in their schools. This is because sex education programs have been proven to reduce rates of teen pregnancy, unlike abstention teachings, as it teaches teenagers how to be safe and protected, as well as how to avoid pregnancy.

Governments also need to reallocate funding, and prioritise ensuring that schools have the needed resources, and that all children are a reasonable distance from schools. This can be done through a reassessment of their spendings, as well as by working on ensuring that they receive loans and financial support from other countries and organisations for this purpose.

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