

CHALLENGES TO FEMALE EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD AND
INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THOSE CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Females around the world face many challenges to obtaining an education. While there are many studies that document the benefit to female education as well as a few challenges that females face, there is not yet a study that summarizes major challenges to female education, particularly in modernizing countries, and the recent steps of various international organizations and businesses that address these challenges. This thesis helps to fill that void. It uses specific countries in the developing world, namely Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Nepal, China, Yemen, Uganda, and South Africa, to represent a good cross section of developing countries, which, in turn, highlight a few major problems that females encounter in pursuit of an education. It finds that the challenges to education, while not true of each country, include poverty, religious custom, menstruation, child marriage, war conflicts, patriarchal traditions, and antagonism towards Western education. It then examines the major international responses that address these obstacles to female education. In particular, it looks at the work of the United Nations with subsidiaries like UNICEF and UNESCO, the World Bank, USAID, the Girl-effect organization, Malala Fund, and other grass root efforts. It concludes that the solutions to the challenges that females face in getting an education are beginning to show some progress, but that more has to be done, particularly in influencing old cultures through the use of education itself to create new cultures of equality between males and females.

Introduction

Education is essential to functioning and advancing in the modern world. It is also fundamental to self-awareness, self-identity, and self-development. Without it, mankind is reduced to instinct and the realm of animals. With it, males and females can improve their lives and learn about one another and the world. More specifically, education for females is important because it helps them unlock and develop their potential.¹ Educating females in the developing world has substantial returns and in most cases exceeds the returns on males. According to research by Chaaban and Cunningham, an educated female is a great benefit not just to herself, but to her community.² In addition, recent work from general surveys and sector-specific research reveals that educating females bring about various benefits, including improvement to family health, lower infant mortality rates, greater family wage-earning power, and the intellectual development of the family and, thus the community.³ However, there are challenges to obtaining an education. Some of the challenges that females face in obtaining an education are the same for males, but, in the case of females, the challenges are more onerous and more difficult because of esoteric custom and patriarchal bias.

While such studies by expert organizations, patrons, and policymakers have shown that education for females in the developing world is important and has many benefits associated with education, they have, however, failed to show the many challenges that females in the developing world face in the process of attaining a formal education. While this paper takes it as a given that education is valuable and worth

¹, Mariam Erkin. "Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women through Education" (Masters thesis,, Texas State University, 2015), 2

² Ibid. 2

³ Mariam Erkin, "Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women through Education," 2

pursing and having, its purpose is to study the challenges that females face in obtaining an education in developing countries and to investigate the international efforts to address those challenges. Because of space and time constraints, this paper cannot cover every challenge to female education in developing countries. Instead, it tries to elicit the major challenges by studying problems in a select group of state that are representative of developing nations, a sort of cross-section of modernizing states. It specifically looks at Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Nepal, China, Yemen, Uganda, and South Africa.

Section Two –Poverty

The first major challenge that females in developing countries confront in regards to attaining an education is poverty. Females are a majority of the world population; and surveys show that in 2011, there were 774 million illiterate people in the world, ranging from age fifteen to twenty-four; and that two thirds of these illiterate souls (493 million) are females.⁴ Even though the size of the global illiterate population is shrinking, the female proportion has remained virtually steady at six-three percent to sixty-four percent with a majority of them in developing nations.⁵

It is difficult for students (male and female) to obtain an education when they do not have the essential resources, such as pencils, pens, books, desk, computers, electricity, and trained teachers. However, poverty poses a greater threat to females in the developing world in regards to attaining an education. This is because, although females, like males, are born into poverty, females are regulated to a secondary position in the home and the community in developing, countries which are organized as patriarchal

⁴ See full report at. Friedrich Huebler; Weixin Lu. “Adult and Youth Literacy, National, regional and global trends, 1985-2015. “*UNESCO*, UIS Information paper. (June 2013):9, accessed November 17, 2015.

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/Intl-literacy-day/literacy-infographic-2013-en.pdf>

⁵ UNESCO. “Adult and Youth Literacy: UIS Fact Sheet 26 (September, 2013), 1, accessed November 17, 2015. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/fs26-2013-literacy-en.pdf>

societies and dominated by gender biases.⁶ This condition inhibits their participation in many areas of education, which are available even to persons born into poverty. This condition holds true inspite of the fact that studies show the education of females is a way to increase economic development in developing nations.⁷

Poverty, according to the World Bank, is living under \$1.25 a day.⁸ When translated into communities, the patriarchal cultures benefit males over females, so that, in effect, poverty, while a shared challenge for both sexes, is worse for females. This is because males, according to traditional culture, receive an education before females because males are viewed as the breadwinners and are supposed to provide for their families, which includes the females in the persons of wives, daughters, sisters, mothers and aunts.

Direct fees associated with schooling, such as tuition and books, can consume from about five up to ten percent of the income of a middle-class family household and from twenty up to thirty percent of the income of a poor household. The expense is often seen as an unnecessary expense for females when other basic needs are yet to be met.⁹ In addition, indirect fees, such as supplementary parent-teacher fees or bursar fees, add up to a considerable amount and put a strain on the income of a poor household. Then there is the indirect cost of transportation, clothing, food, as well as the opportunity cost of

⁶ See UNICEF. "Girls Education Movement South Africa." 2006, p.1
http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_gembrief.pdf (Accessed October 17, 2015).

⁷ See Paul T. Schultz "Why Governments Should Invest More to Educate Girls," *World Development*, 30, no 2, (2002): 215-217.

⁸ That is the threshold of the poverty line. See statistics of The World Bank at "Statistics used in girl rising." Pearson Foundation. 2008a.
http://girlrising.pearsonfoundation.org/downloads/GR_Curriculum_Resources_STATISTICS.pdf?pdf=GR_Curriculum_Resources_STATISTICS (Accessed October 18, 2015).

⁹ Barbara Hertz. "What Hinders Girl's Education." *EJournal USA*. U.S State Department/Bureau of International Programs. 15, no.2 (June, 2011), 8

sending a female child to school instead of her working to earn money that might support the family.¹⁰

At the end of the day when all of these fees and costs are levied on a poor household with maybe five children, many times the females are left at home, while their brothers attend school, and thus miss a fundamental part of life's development, namely learning in a formal educational setting. Ironically, studies show that educating females is the way to eradicate poverty. In addition, the promotion of educational equality between males and females in all age groups may improve the condition of families and communities. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD) females are more likely than males to invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities.¹¹ According to another study, they invest ten to twenty times more income back into the family and community than a man does.¹²

Equal education also boosts economic growth for females. Education not only helps females to escape poverty by developing the skills they need to improve their livelihoods, but it also generates productivity gains that boost economic growth substantially. According to Chaaban and Cunningham, a female with an extra year of education can earn twenty percent more income as an adult and if all females were given an additional year of education, they will add more than twenty-five percent to the GDP

¹⁰ See Pauline Rose and Ramya Subrahmanian. "Evaluation of DFID Development Assistance: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Phase II Thematic Evaluation: Education." *Department of International Development*. (March, 2005): 8. http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/dfid_wp11.pdf (Accessed October 18, 2015).

¹¹ See OCED, "Investing in women and girls- the breakthrough strategy for achieving all the MDGs," 5.

¹² International Financial Cooperation, "Job Study- Assessing private sector contribution to job creation and poverty reduction. Findings on gender." *IFC*. (January, 2013):1. Accessed November 18, 2015. <http://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/ff6a2e004edd7e8eae13ef3eac88a2f8/full-study-gender.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

of a country.¹³ When females are sent to school, they improve their job opportunities, which further enhances their chance of escaping poverty. Educated females are more likely not just to be employed, but also to hold jobs that are secure and provide good working conditions and decent pay. Educated females lift households out of poverty permanently, and education guards against them falling – or falling back – into poverty. In a household where the father dies unexpectedly, an educated mother can find work and maintain the family. Even if a wife decides not to work and is economically sufficient, education would be helpful to her in order to survive or invest wisely.

The advantage of educating females can be illustrated in the story a girl named Dai Manju. She is featured in the Book called *Half the Sky* by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn.¹⁴ Dai is from China where she lived with her family which consisted of her father and mother, her two brothers, and a great-aunt. Her family was very poor to the point that it could not afford to buy meat for the Chinese New Year. In addition to that, her parents were elementary school dropouts who did not see the point of sending a girl to school and they believed that she would spend her days tilling farmlands and darning socks. The school tuition, which was thirteen dollars a year for elementary school, almost seemed like a bad investment to a family that had other fundamental needs. Therefore, in the sixth grade, she was ordered to drop out of school.

The above story is reality for millions of girls worldwide. Statistics show that girls have a one in four chance of being born in poverty worldwide.¹⁵ However, Dai Manju's

¹³ Chaaban and Cunningham, "Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend," 8, 20-21

¹⁴ Nicholas D. Kristoff, and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the sky, turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 169 (2009, pg.167)

¹⁵ See full article, The World Bank. "New Data Show 1.4 Billion Live On Less Than US\$1.25 A Day, But Progress Against Poverty Remains Strong." 2008, p.1. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press->

story had a happy ending. With the financial help of Kristof and WuDunn, she was plucked from poverty and obtained an education. She, just like many other females who were given an education, became a force for change in her society. After Dai Manju received an education, she worked as an accountant for local factories, sent money home for the construction of a concrete, six-room h

ouse, and paid for the upkeep of her family, which included paying for school fees for her younger siblings. Additionally, she and many others females who were able to obtain an education, were able to secure, among other benefits jobs for friends and families.¹⁶

However, what often happens with a few exceptions in developing countries is that children from poor households, especially females, are subjected to child labor, which is one of the reactions to the symptoms of poverty.¹⁷ Needless to say, when females in developing countries are made to work, they cannot be enrolled in school. They are engaged in a variety of tough jobs both in the rural and urban areas, including baby sitters, sales persons, and sex workers. The females are also funneled into informal sectors where “labor laws are neither monitored nor enforced.”¹⁸ In addition, many of the females from rural to urban areas are trafficked and exploited. One example of this abuse is seen in Nigeria where street hawking is the largest form of child labor and accounts for more than fifty percent of all urban child labor.¹⁹ This demand for female labor is prevalent in societies like Nigeria because females are perceived as “more obedient,

[release/2008/09/16/new-data-show-14-billion-live-less-us125-day-progress-against-poverty-remains-strong/](http://www.pewresearch.org/2008/09/16/new-data-show-14-billion-live-less-us125-day-progress-against-poverty-remains-strong/). (Accessed January 30, 2015).

¹⁶ Kristoff, and WuDunn, “*Half the sky, turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide*,” 169

¹⁷ See UNICEF. “Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, Nigeria Country Study.” UNICEF:(March 2012), 41

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

hardworking, submissive and trustworthy” than males.²⁰ This situation contributes to females being held back from attaining an education and, when they do go to school, it interrupts school attendance or any scholastic achievement that would have been possible.²¹ But poverty is just one limitation to education for females in the developing world. There are other challenges, which even females who come from privileged backgrounds encounter.

Section Three- Religious Custom

Another major challenge to female education is cultural discrimination disguised as religion. Despite the many benefits of educating females as listed above, many females are blocked from school and suffer inequalities due to interpretation, often misinterpretation, of religious tenets or the perceptions of such tenets by parents.²² Using Pakistan as a case study, this section outlines how religious interpretation affects the education of females in developing countries.²³

In Pakistan, which is a Muslim majority country, Sharia law is the law of the land. Sharia law, which is derived from the Quran and the Hadith, is the legal system that guides public and, in some cases, private life. It is not based on natural law and generally opposes secular law, which is predominant in many Christian and secular societies

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ahmad Kainuwa; Najeemah B. M Yusuf. “Cultural Traditions and Practices of the Parents are Barriers to Girl-Child Education in Zamfara State Nigeria.” *International Journal of Science and Research Publication*, 3, Issue 1: (November 2013), 1.

²³ This includes the education of “girl child” which is most prevalent in Muslim societies, including Northern Nigeria and Pakistan. In the definition a term used by Badamasuiy (2012) Girl-Child according to the UNICEF, is a young female person still under the guardianship of a parent or guardian, and subsequently under the age of 18 (134). For more information see: Juwayriya, Badamasuiy, “Girl-child education under the sharia: its relevance to the Muslim community in the Northern Nigeria.” *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development* 2, no. 6 (June 2012.):132-138

around the world.²⁴ It is important to note that in many Christian societies where natural law exists, there is a clear separation of church and state; however, in Islamic communities, both secular and religious entities are subject to Sharia law and it is through that lens that many Muslims view education as a whole as well as education for females.

Today, thirty-five countries have adopted Sharia law into their civil law including Pakistan, which has created many interpretations and applications of the law that affect society and people.²⁵ This state of affairs has greatly affected the education of female in Pakistan, particularly in the rural area.

Kristof and WuDunn wrote that religion is not to be blamed for many of the discriminations and oppressions that females face, especially in Muslim societies, but, rather, that culture should be blamed.²⁶ However, it is difficult to separate religion and culture and to distinguish between mosques and the state when religion and politics are viewed as one. In the development of Islam, the teaching of the Prophet (SWA) and verses of the Qur'an help improve the state of females.²⁷ Females were given rights to own property, obtain an education, and to choose their marriage mates. The Prophet is said to have written numerous chapters that helped shape civilization and one of those verses dealt with education, including this verse: "the pursuit of knowledge is a duty of

²⁴ See Javaid Rehman. "The sharia, Islamic family laws and international human rights law: Examining the theory and practice of polygamy and talaq." *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 21(1): 2007, p.109-113.

The term sharia comes from the Arabic language term sharia, which means a body of moral and religious law derived from religious prophecy, as opposed to human legislation;" see more with link:

http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sharia-COM_1040

²⁵ Sarah Glazer. CQ Global Researcher Sharia Controversy v.6-1, (2012), 1. Accessed November 18, 2015 <http://www.cqpress.com/product/CQ-Global-Researcher-Sharia-Controversy.html>

²⁶ Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 150

²⁷ SWA means Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam). This is a name used to describe Muhammad. See more at <http://www.bakkah.net/articles/SAWS.htm>

every Muslim, man and woman.”²⁸ Those religious words instructed Muslims as a religious duty to pursue knowledge and education and that gender, race, or culture should not prevent people, including females, from attaining an education.

Nonetheless, many of the teachings and laws of the Prophet (SWA) have been misinterpreted through the cultures of some societies and peoples to fit their own goals. And this was true, too, of Christianity societies, where in the United States, for example Jim Crow laws and slavery were justified. In the case of some Muslim societies, the words of the Prophet (SWA), “Tell believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that will make for greater purity for them and say to the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty and they should not display their beauty and ornament,” were altered and interpreted to mean that females had to wear veils and cover themselves up while the males were free to wear what they wanted²⁹

In 2013, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation noted that many Islamic member nations restrict education opportunities for females based on local and tribal traditions, often disguised as religious teachings. It condemned these actions, including the interpretation on the veils, and such scourges as honor killings, child marriages, and female genital mutilation.³⁰ In the case of Pakistan, which has in its constitution that education is a fundamental right to every citizen, there is a huge gender gap in education and it relates in part to misinterpretation of Muslim tenets.

²⁸ Badamasuiy, “Girl-child education under the sharia: its relevance to the Muslim community in the Northern Nigeria,” 133

²⁹ (Quran, XXIV:30, 31)

³⁰ Except from Speech by Ambassador Ufuk Gokcen, “Hope and despair for women in Islamic states.” *Organization of Islamic Cooperation*, January 9, 201, accessed November 18, 2015 <http://www.oicun.org/71/20130508035638010.html>.

The case of Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan is illustrative. She is the co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize, who in 2012 was attacked by members of the Taliban for speaking up for education of females. She lived in a part Pakistan under the control of the Taliban, who misinterpreted Sharia law to mean that females were mainly to attend religious schools and not attend schools that taught business, health, etc. In Pakistan, it is a huge risk for many females to go to school. When females go to school, they face many barriers, one of which is being attacked and killed on account of asserting their rights to education, work, and generally choosing to have a say in key decisions in their lives. This was the fate of a group of female university students whose bus was bombed in June 2013 by militants in Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province.³¹ The reality is that the lack of an educated female population is a major reason why Pakistan is mired in poverty. The lack of emphasis on female education is one of the principal features of gender inequality and low economic development in Pakistan.³² Many groups are using religion as a front to block females in developing countries from attaining an education.

Another example of misguided religious interpretation is found in Northern Nigeria. Nigeria is a country with two main religions, Christianity in the South and Islam in the North with other smaller religions in between. Western education took root in the South because there Christian missionaries set up schools. It did not have roots in the

³¹ Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center and the Carnegie-Knight Initiative, "Women, girls and Malala: Research on gender and education in Pakistan, and beyond," *Journalist Resources*. (October 10, 2014), accessed November 18, 2015, <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/international/human-rights/pakistan-women-equality-education-economic-development-research-roundup#>

³² Imran S. Chaudhry and Saeed ur Rahman. "The Impact of Gender Inequality in Education on Rural Poverty in Pakistan: An Empirical Analysis," *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, Issue 15, 2009.

It is important to note here that this does not happen in all of Pakistan but predominantly in rural areas.

Islamic North and had to make its way to the North. Over time, enrollment in schools in the South was higher compared to enrollment in schools in the North.³³ Muslim elites in the North viewed education as a “radical force” in the South that would prove unruly in the North, so they resisted it. This fear is still true even today. At the heart of the fear is the belief that a lot of people will be converted to Christianity because of its attractiveness, particularly in the realm of education. Muslim parents viewed the Christian mission schools as having the primary goal of converting people. This, in some part, was true, as the mission schools wanted to teach people bible knowledge, but they also taught some arithmetic and sciences, which were aimed at making a better Christian.³⁴

Muslims of the North encouraged mainly religious learning. This education was seen as essential by Muslims, which was reported by Sonia F. Graham, the author of *Government and Mission Education in Northern Nigeria, 1900–1919*. Religious education, however, does not equip people with the skills needed to fight diseases, to create better and faster ways to communicate, or to help them make decisions that will lead to a better economic outcomes for their sustenance.³⁵ This is what the Western education offers. Today, the same attitudes from the past that prevented Muslim parents from sending their children to school, especially the females, still persist.

Muslim parents in Northern Nigeria are reluctant to send females to school and those who go are often withdrawn before completion of their studies. This happens for a number of reasons, including parents’ fear that their children will be corrupted and that

³³ It is important to note here that unless stated as “religious schools,” any mention of school refers to formal education as it pertains to primary, secondary, college, and university education.

³⁴ Babs A. Fafunwa. 1974. *History of Education in Nigeria*, London George Allen, and Unwin Ltd. p. 71.

³⁵ Sonia F. Graham. 1966. *Government and mission education in Northern Nigeria, 1900–1919*, with special reference to the work of Hanns Vischer xxviii, 192pp., 8 plates. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 29

Western education will “disrupt the Islamic way of life and lead to the preference of the Hausa language.”³⁶ According to Kainuwa and Yusuf, these socio-cultural beliefs further contribute to females having inaccessibility to an adequate education.³⁷ In addition, many of these parents have the idea that Western education is occupation driven, and, therefore, not appropriate for their daughters, who, instead, had to attend Qur'anic schools because they believed that their daughters were going to get married and would not need a job that a Western education would provide. The conclusion is that religion itself does not limit education for females in developing nations. Rather, it is a perversion of religions tenets by culture and people coupled with certain misinterpretation and false religious perception that restrict female education.

Section Four- Child Marriage Customs

The third challenge to female education in developing nations is child marriage. Child marriages occur in many developing societies around the world and prevent females from obtaining an education. According to United Nations Population Fund article “Marrying Too Young end Child Marriage,” one in three females become married before their eighteenth birthday in developing countries, excluding China. In addition, one out of nine will be married before they are fifteen.³⁸ It is also probable that, although child marriages are on the decline among females under age of fifteen, “fifty million

³⁶ Ibid. p.312

³⁷ Kainuwa and Yusuf, “Cultural Traditions and Practices of the Parents as Barriers to Girl-Child Education in Zamfara State, Nigeria,” 4

³⁸ See article UNFPA. “Marrying Too Young End Child Marriage.” *The United Nations Population Fund UNFPA*, New York, 2012, p.6 <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf> (Accessed October 21, 2015).

females could still be at risk of being married before their fifteenth birthday in this decade.”³⁹



Too Young to Wed-Photograph by Stephanie Sinclair

The custom of child marriage is present in numerous societies, but it is most predominant in Muslim societies. In places, such as in Yemen, the education of females is greatly hindered because of child marriage. Females are subject to marriage especially to men who are twice or three times their age. The story of Tahani in Yemen, pictured above at age six who was married to Majad, who at the time was twenty-five, illustrates this situation. Many females are put into this condition which can cause psychological distress. In the case of Tahani, she recalled, “whenever I saw him [my husband], I hid. I hated to see him.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid. p.60

⁴⁰ See Rena Silverman, “Millions of Young Girls Forced Into Marriage,” *National Geographic News* article on March 15, 2013 <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/13/130313-child-brides-marriage-women-sinclair-photography/>

There are many females in Northern Nigeria with the same story as Tahini. In Hausa land in Northern Nigeria, child marriage is the rule. In towns, girls and boys marry at the age of twelve, and often at younger ages in the villages. Subsequently, due to a tradition called “*purdah*,” which is a seclusion of wives indoors, in order to protect her from meeting other men, many of the females are ordered to stay home, leaving them uneducated.⁴¹ Child marriage is a big barrier to the education of females in developing nations because even if they attend school initially, many of the females drop out to get married at such young ages, and “they never go back to school, learn a trade, or master vocational skills that would economically empower and make them self-reliant.”⁴² Such is the case of the two young females pictured below.⁴³

Sometimes, when females are engaged at an older age, they are immediately pulled out of school.⁴⁴ In some countries, parents sell their daughters to be married in exchange for money due to poverty. They fail to recognize that that marriage is not a matter of one or two days, but a matter of life. They give their daughters to men who these females do not know; and these females then have to spend all of their life with these men.⁴⁵ This is reality for many unfortunate females in several developing countries throughout the world, again with exception to China.

⁴¹ See A. SALIM, *Women's education in Kano*, unpublished thesis, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University, 1977.

⁴² See AHI (Action Health Incorporated). “Insights into Early Marriage and Girls’ Education in Northern Nigeria.” Action Health Incorporated. Lagos, Nigeria, 2011.

⁴³ To see full article follow the link: See Rena Silverman, “Millions of Young Girls Forced Into Marriage,” *National Geographic News* article on March 15, 2013
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/13/130313-child-brides-marriage-women-sinclair-photography/>

⁴⁴ UNFPA. “Marrying Too Young End Child Marriage,” p 32-33, chapter 4, cover the picture description.

⁴⁵ See WFW “Engaging Men to Make a Difference: Ghulam Rabi.” Women for Women International. 2015. . <http://www.womenforwomen.org/blog/engaging-men-make-difference-ghulam-rabi> (Accessed October 22, 2015).

In addition, females are held back from school because their parents fear that when they acquire an education, they will no longer respect them or their husbands when they get married. These parents see Western education as a threat to the institution of marriage and family. They suffer from the false perception that an educated female would not want to get married after attaining an education. Studies show, though, that while an educated female is more likely to marry late, she will marry and, when she does, she will have the tools necessary to be a good wife, mother, and community woman.⁴⁶ Parents, however, disregard the voices and interests of their daughters. The parents or guardians go as far as engaging a baby girl at birth to the boy whom they select for her to marry when she becomes older, which, they say, custom demands.

In some developing countries, parents or guardians do send their daughters to school, but they then pull them out because they are afraid they will be raped, which brings down their value when the time for marriage comes because in many developing societies females are still treated as property. To prevent the possibility of rape, females are kept at home where it is perceived they will be safe, thus missing their chance to attain an education.

⁴⁶ Badamasuiy, *Girl-child education under the sharia: it's relevance to the Muslim community in the Northern Nigeria*, 136



Photograph by Stephanie Sinclair

Additionally, parents keep their female-children at home because of the fear of kidnapping, which was seen recently in the kidnapping of 276 females at school by the terrorist organization Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria.⁴⁷ Others practices that hurt female education opportunities include the practice in Northern Nigeria of putting the female child to work so she can earn money to pay her dowry. A good example of this is the story of Husaina, a woman also in Northern Nigeria, who did not have a chance to get an education because she was busy street hawking in order to pay her dowry as was done traditionally.⁴⁸ She, too, mentions that she got married early at the age of twelve, and as stated in her words, “I was grown by then. One of my breasts was out and the other was not. But since it was the olden days I was not worried. My husband did not have sex with me as soon as I reached his house. He allowed me to stay for some time before he

⁴⁷ See Charlotte Alter. “‘I Abducted Your Girls,’ Nigerian Extremist Leader Admits.” *Time Inc Network*, May 5, 2014. <http://time.com/87658/boko-haram-nigeria-kidnapped-girls/>. (Accessed February 6th, 2015).

⁴⁸ Mack Scheub, et al. 1996. *Life histories of African women*. London, Atlantic Highlands: The Ashfield Press. p.82-86

started.”⁴⁹ It is customary for a husband to pay a ‘bride-price’ as a way to compensate families for their loss of their females.⁵⁰

The challenge of child marriage is tied to myopic economic gains. It proscribes female education, which can enhance family income. It endangers the lives of females because the risk of dying at childbirth due to complications, which, as a matter of fact, is the number leading cause of death among fifteen to nineteen year-old females in developing nations. It also exposes females to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.⁵¹ Needless to say, females have rights and one of those rights is the right to choose whomever they want to marry. Child marriage is an abuse to that human right.⁵² Child marriage blocks females from making a life for themselves based on their own choices.⁵³ Many parents and guardians think they are doing what is best for these females, but, in fact, they are stealing their voices and stunting the growth and the potential these females possess as agents for change for themselves, their families, and their communities. Although international laws have abolished child marriage, child marriage persists today, so the task now is to enforce those laws, particularly in nations that signed agreements prohibiting child marriage.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p, 87

⁵⁰ See Toril Brekke et.al *Women, a world report. “A new International book with essays*, (Oxford University Press: New York, 1985), 74.

⁵¹ UNFPA. “Marrying Too Young End Child Marriage,” 4-5

⁵² See Schöpp-Schilling, Beate. Hanna. “The Role of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Monitoring Procedures for Achieving Gender Equality in Political Representation.” *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)/CEE Network for Gender Issues Conference*, 2004, http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Cedawbudapest04BSS.pdf (Accessed May 1, 2015).

⁵³ See UNFPA. “Marrying Too Young End Child Marriage,” 55

Section Five- Menstruation

The fourth challenge to female education in developing nations is the issue of menstruation. Monthly, females worldwide, experience their menstruation cycles. With their monthly period comes some added stress on their wellbeing mentally and physically, including pains associated with migraines, cramps, or PMS.⁵⁴ Females in developing countries face an even bigger challenge during their menstrual period than females in developed countries due to a lack of access to sanitation products, washrooms with toilets, and privacy. They also sometimes confront bullying and embarrassment from ignorant persons.⁵⁵

Studies have found that the provision of sanitary products is linked to female attendance in school and have proven to be important to the education of females.⁵⁶ They further discovered that in places like Uganda, females miss because of menstruation one to three days of primary school per month, which, when added up, is eight to twenty-four days of not attending school per year.⁵⁷ This translates into missing eleven percent of study days out of the 220 study school days in a year due to menstrual periods.⁵⁸ Emily Oster and Rebecca Thornton in their study called *Menstruation and Education in Nepal*

⁵⁴ See article Emily Oster, and Rebecca Thornton. "Menstruation and education in Nepal." *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Working Paper, 2009: p.2. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14853> (Accessed October 19, 2015).

⁵⁵ See Dorah Egunyu. "A bleeding shame: why is menstruation still holding girls back?" *The Guardian* article on May 28, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/may/28/menstruation-girls-education-uganda-sanitation> (Accessed October 19, 2015).

⁵⁶ During menstruation, being able to maintain a good menstrual hygiene not only is important to women because it is essential to their to the dignity and wellbeing it plays an important role in maintaining a good reproductive health services to which every woman and girl has a right. For additional info, see article SNV (The Netherlands Development Organization) Uganda & IRC (International Water and Sanitation Centre). "Menstrual Management Report." *SNV Uganda Water, Sanitation & Hygiene sector*. 2013. <http://www.snvworld.org/node/8227> (Accessed October 19, 2015).

⁵⁷ This happens partly because of the stigma women and girls face due to menstruation, especially those in rural settings. The struggle due to a lack of services and facilities to help them cope with the physical and psychological pains they undergo during their menstrual periods.

⁵⁸ SNV and IRC, "Menstrual Management Report," p.4.

found that menstruation periods pose an even greater threat to education of females in places where there exist “menstrual taboos or restrictions,” which limits the mobility of females.⁵⁹

Although outlawed in 2005, the tradition called *chhaupadi* is still very alive in many rural areas of Nepal. This tradition involves the isolation of women and girls during their menstruation period into dark rooms away from everyone and everything else because they are regarded as unclean. K. C. Reeti reported that such practices as *chhaupadi* are mainly found in poor and illiterate communities where centuries old myths and superstitions limit the activities of menstruating women and girls because their choosing to be active or to learn will anger a Hindu goddess. The belief according to Reeti, “is that if a menstruating girl touches any books, Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of education, will be angry.”⁶⁰

The problem is illustrated by testimony from Shrestha, a girl who lives in Nakhipot, Lalitpur, a municipality near Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. When she had her period, she said, “I was not allowed to look at the sun, touch any male family member nor even hear their voice.”⁶¹ She also said, “I could not even go to the bathroom and had to make a pot my latrine for seven days.” Like many girls, she not only missed school for a week, but also had to deal with the psychological pressure of hiding and thinking that she was unclean.⁶²

⁵⁹ Oster and Thornton, “Menstruation and education in Nepal,” p.2.

⁶⁰ See K.C. Reeti. “Part: 8- In Nepal, Menstruation Can Mean Days in Isolation.” Women’s enews.org article on March 5, 2015. <http://womensenews.org/story/health/150304/in-nepal-menstruation-can-mean-days-in-isolation#.VW35YFzBzGc> (Accessed October 19, 2015). Many superstition are common especially in uneducated, poor and rural areas.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Because menstruation is seen as an unclean thing, these girls are so scared to even talk about it as it is a shameful thing associated with the female body. It is even seen in India as a curse. See Quartz India article

An additional complication of the isolating or hiding females during menstruation in some developing societies is that females are sent to live in sheds away from the main house. In those sheds they are exposed to many diseases because they are told not to shower during their period; this exposure can lead to life-threatening ailments which can lead to them dropping out completely from school.⁶³ Furthermore, Shrestha explains that she was not allowed to enter the kitchen or touch any holy objects and was not fit to be part of society because according to the Hindu religion, she was unclean.⁶⁴

Dikshya Karki, who lives in Kathmandu valley, Nepal, had the same story, but with an added complication. She stated that since she was not allowed to touch anything in the kitchen, if allowed to go to school, she had to go early in the morning before anyone was awake. When a person is hungry, he or she cannot focus on studying, and, thus, females are again challenged in their ability to obtain an education.

Section Six- War Conflict and Patriarchal Traditions

Finally, there is a welter of political issues that inhibit females from obtaining an education including war, and patriarchal traditions, and low parental literacy rates. On the subject of low parental literacy rates, it is clear from many studies that it is difficult for a female to get support from illiterate parents who do not see the value of an education. Their lack of education creates a barrier to the education of many females, especially in developing nations.

for more information: <http://qz.com/252419/the-full-extent-of-what-urban-india-believes-about-menstruation-is-extraordinary/>

⁶³ See Eleanor Goldberg. "All The Inconceivable Ways Women Deal With Their Periods Worldwide, And How To Help." *Huffington Post* article on July 14, 2015.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/14/menstruation-myths_n_7495568.html?ncid=fbklnkushpimg00000054&ir=Impact (Accessed October 19, 2015).

⁶⁴ K.C Reeti. "Part: 8- In Nepal, Menstruation Can Mean Days in Isolation." 2015.

On the issue of war, it is clear that civil wars, coups, terroristic attacks, and revolutions make female education suffer. In a comment posted to the *Quora blog*, on March 29, 2014, Rebecca Metz, creator of VaginaNewsNetwork.com, made a key statement, in which she quoted UN Military Advisor Patrick Cammaert who in 2008 said, "it has probably become more dangerous to be female than to be a soldier in modern conflict."⁶⁵ The finding of this paper agrees with that statement because the attainment of an education is not what females think about when their lives are in danger. Females are often subject to mass rape and forced impregnation that are staples of modern war, and a majority of people in the world are ignorant to the fact that females make up eighty percent of refugees and a majority of civilian lives claimed as casualties in wars. Furthermore, in places where landmines and explosives are still present, mobility of females is limited; also, when school infrastructures are destroyed, either because of war or governments' inability to recover order because of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, females do not have a place to go to school.⁶⁶ And females live with the long lasting legacies of these disorders because many females never recover psychologically from such traumas, which, in turn, destroy the hopes and potential of many generations to come. These political issues pose a massive threat to female education in developing nations.

Then there is the existence of patriarchal societies. They pose another challenge to the education of females in developing nations. In the case of South Africa, females are

⁶⁵ See Rebecca Metz. "What are some of the ways women are discriminated against that men are often unaware of?" *Quora Blog*. Comment on March 29, 2014. To view blog follow the link <https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-of-the-ways-women-are-discriminated-against-that-men-are-often-unaware-of> (Accessed October 19, 2015).

⁶⁶ See full article, UNESCO. "The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education." Education for All Global Monitoring Report, (March 2011), 131, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001907/190743e.pdf>

largely discriminated against and conferred lower status in society.⁶⁷ Females are restricted to those courses that are stereotypically feminine like cooking classes, home economics, art, and social studies, while males study mathematics, physics and similar related courses. When it comes time to specialize or take entrance exams, the females cannot compete with the males who are more knowledgeable and comfortable with courses that deal with higher critical thinking such as the sciences and technology. This situation contributes to females lagging behind and dropping out of school, which puts on females inescapably on the path to factory and other menial jobs.⁶⁸

Alternatively, little education is better than no education. Although, such poor education as described above lead females to having poor paying jobs, at least it can help them navigate this complex world on their own. When parents send their daughters to school and for however long, these females learn how to count and how to read. These simple abilities give females the basis of understanding and reaching for higher goals if they wish to do so. It is best said by Paulo Friere, the Brazilian revolutionary educator, “I can read. Therefore I can control the world.”⁶⁹ There is much powerful evidence that points to why females should be educated. As one authority wrote, “education is one of the most potent ingredients, in a mix of advantages, for changing the lives of females in the developing world.”⁷⁰ As the above sections document, there are many challenges to female education. However, there are some efforts to address those challenges, and we now turn to describe them.

⁶⁷ See article. UNICEF. “Girls Education Movement South Africa.” 2006. Accessed October 17, 2015. http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_gembrief.pdf

⁶⁸ See Toril Brekke, et.al, *Women, a world report*. “A new International book with essays, 75.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.76

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Section Seven- International Efforts Addressing Challenges

This section sheds light on the efforts of governmental organizations, NGO's and individuals that are addressing the challenges females face in obtaining an education in developing nations. It mentions the work of governmental organizations, such as the United Nations with its subsidiary units, which includes UNICEF, UNGEI and UNESCO as well as work by the World Bank. It also examines the work of NGOs, such as the Girl Effect organization and the Malala Foundation. Finally, it examines work and hope of individuals like myself.

Many effort s in the world are being carried out to address the many inequalities that females as well as others in the world experience on a daily basis. The most concrete step in this direction came in 1948 when the United Nations created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provided the first international recognition to the right to education when it stated, "everyone has the right to education."⁷¹ A second step came in 1960 with the creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education. This is the oldest global treaty that warranties the right to free and compulsory education. The parties to this Convention agreed to eliminate discriminatory educational practices.⁷²

UNESCO then and today is an organization that coordinates regional conferences that are

⁷¹ In relevant part, the Declaration states:

1. 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.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

⁷² Burch, "Rhetoric or Right," 7

meant to encourage countries to implement particular laws, and they continue to monitor violations to education access through a complex process and urge member states to adopt some of these laws into their national constitution.⁷³

Many nations have agreed to the laws and are working, to protect the right of education for females, especially those in the developing nations. One of UNESCO's main priorities is gender equality and education. To that end, it is working, today to combat the illiteracy rate in the world. As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that females in the developing nations account for two thirds of the world's illiterate persons.⁷⁴ UNESCO is involved with increasing female literacy rate all over the world, particularly in developing nations. It is doing this because it believes that literacy empowers females and because of its "multiplier effect," that is, the belief that, literacy is a tool to help eradicate poverty, reduce child mortality, curb population growth, achieve gender equality, and ensure sustainable development, peace and democracy. In order to increase the worldwide literacy rate, UNESCO is investing in quality teachers. When females in developing nations have teachers who care about their well-being, and about what they are learning, and who are role models, females are very likely to stay in school. This is the goal of UNESCO's Global Partnership for Girls and Women's Education program called "Better Life, Better Future." In addition, UNESCO seeks to keep expanding opportunities where females can learn both informally and formally using Information, Communication and Technology (ICT). Its support for and development of gender-sensitive curricula and textbooks free from discrimination is key to ending

⁷³ Ibid. 8

⁷⁴ See full report at. Friedrich Huebler and Weixin Lu. "Adult and Youth Literacy, National, regional and global trends, 1985-2015. "UNESCO, UIS Information paper. (June 2013):9, accessed November 17, 2015. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/Intl-literacy-day/literacy-infographic-2013-en.pdf>

gender-based violence in educational settings, which are some of the hurdles that females must jump over during the course of learning.⁷⁵

Another key organization of the United Nations that addresses the challenges to female education in developing nations is UNICEF. The United Nations in 1946 established The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).⁷⁶ This organization was originally formed to aid children affected by war, drought and famine and was later expanded to provide the "availability of educational and vocational training."⁷⁷ Since its founding, UNICEF has partnered with many other entities, one of which was the Canadian Development Agency (CIDA). In 1994, CIDA agreed to contribute ten million dollars to support goals of guaranteeing that females in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and North Africa obtain equal access to quality primary education.⁷⁸ UNICEF and its partners undertake such projects in order to promote equal participation in various communities and societies and to implement its long-term strategic plan for advancing females' education, through its Global Girls' Education Program.⁷⁹

Other key efforts on behalf of female education is the work of the World Bank, the United Nations Food and Population Agency (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). All of these organizations have recognized the need for

⁷⁵ See more at <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/>

⁷⁶ UNITED NATIONS, UNITED NATIONS ACTION IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS 209 (1980). See more at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/34/105

⁷⁷ Burch, *Rhetoric or Right*, 19

⁷⁸ UNESCO, Thematic Studies: Girls Education 14 (2001).

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001233/123332e.pdf>

⁷⁹ UNICEF, Final Consolidated Report to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to government of Canada on CIDA phase I support to the UNICEF Girls' Education Programme in Africa (1999)

educating females as a prerequisite to sustainable development. They are working to improve basic levels of education for females in developing nations. To that end, USAID and the World Bank, for example, are providing the financial support needed to cover the opportunity and as well as the fiscal cost associated with the education of females.⁸⁰ USAID and the World Bank, as well as many other organizations, have recognized the need to promote education for females as a way reduce gender disparity.⁸¹

Another organization that is addressing the challenge to female education is the International Labor Organization (ILO). It works to protect children by (1) defining a child as a person up to age eighteen, (2) reasserting states' responsibilities to guarantee access to free primary school education, and (3) authorizing vocational training for children taken from the labor force.⁸² However, the ILO also recognizes that certain children need to work to survive.⁸³ Accordingly, it endeavors to adjust to the educational needs of these children through "learn and earn" programs.⁸⁴

The United Nations and various other agencies have also done something else to promote female education. They have passed resolutions to promote female education, including the so-called millennium development goals (MDG). Goal two and three, in particular, aim to achieve universal primary education and promote gender equality and

⁸⁰ UNESCO, Thematic Studies: Girls Education 14 (2001).
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001233/123332e.pdf>

⁸¹ Ibid. 15

⁸² Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, June 17, 1999, accessed November 19, 2015,
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/ratification/convention/text.htm>

⁸³ Ibid. Burch, *Rhetoric or Right*, 34, ILO Convention No. 10 prohibited education that prejudiced school attendance for children under fourteen-years-old. ILO Convention No. 138 raised the minimum age for employment to fifteen-years-old. *Ibid*

⁸⁴ Ibid. 34 ILO-IPEC, Action against Child Labor: The Role of Education 10 (1999). The ILO functions as a specialized agency of the United Nations and was created to help improve labor conditions.

empower females.⁸⁵ And there have been some successes as a result of this effort. The most recent report of 2015 showed that in terms of goal two, the literacy rate among youth aged fifteen to twenty-four has increased globally from eighty-three percent to ninety-one percent between 1990 and 2015; and for goal three, many more females are now in school compared to 15 years ago, thus, reducing the gap between males and female.

There is also evidence that the importance of educating females is gaining momentum in many developing nations. The World Bank's 2012 World Development Report, Gender Equality and Development, found that in primary education, the gender gap has closed in almost all countries, and it is shrinking quickly in secondary education. The data showed that there are more young females than males in universities in two-thirds of the countries for which the data available. On the down side, it reported that more than thirty—five million females do not attend school in developing countries.⁸⁶ In addition, gender disparities still persist and millions of females live in poverty and lack basic need for an education.⁸⁷

It is such persisting disparities that have moved non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) to act, two of which are the Girl Effect and the Malala Fund. The Girl Effect organization is an NGO that works to use education of females in developing nations as a way to eradicate poverty worldwide. This organization was initially founded as a movement by the NIKE Foundation in 2008 in partnership with the Novo Foundation and the United Nations Foundation at the World Economic Forum. It later developed into an

⁸⁵ See United Nations. "Millennium Development Goal Report 2015." United Nations, New York, 2015, 4

⁸⁶ Source: Ana, Revenga, and Sudhir, Shetty, "Empowering Women Is Smart Economics," 2

⁸⁷ Ibid. 4, 7

NGO.⁸⁸ Its efforts are based on the belief that when females are given opportunities, such as an education, they will be adequately prepared and have better chances of getting themselves and their families out of poverty. Furthermore, they will be a “multiplier effect,” that is, these females in developing nations will go on to influence and positively develop their villages, cities, and nations.⁸⁹

Since its founding, the Girl Effect organization has partnered with numerous other organizations. One of these organizations is the Unreasonable Group, which together with the Nike Foundation launched an accelerator program, which is a series of start-ups that address social issues.⁹⁰ These start-ups are committed to addressing the challenges that females face in developing nations in regards to achieving an education. An example of one of these organizations is ZanaAfrica, an organization set up by United States expat Megan White Mukuria. It creates low cost sanitary pads for girls in Africa in order to help solve the menstruation challenge to female education in developing nations. According to Mukuria, many girls cannot afford sanitary pads and, in effect, miss school or are not properly engaged when they do attend, and thus fall behind in their studies.⁹¹

Another organization that has taken up the cause of female education in the developing world is the Malala Fund. Malala Yousafzai, the founder of this organization is the same girl that was shot in 2012 by the Taliban. Since her recovery, her name is synonymous with courage, passion, and hope, the courage to speak up about injustice, the

⁸⁸ Launched as a non-profit in September of 2015. See about of the Girl Effect Organization at <http://www.girleffect.org/about-us/#tab-0>

⁸⁹ UNICEF. “The State of the World's Children 2004, Girls, education and development.” The multiplier effect of educating girls: The United Nations Children’s Fund 2004. 45, 54. <http://www.unicef.org/sowc04/files/Chapter4.pdf>

⁹⁰ This program launched in in November of 2014

⁹¹ See Nastaran Tavakoli-Far. “The entrepreneurs helping girls in the developing world.” *BBC News*, January 29, 2015. (Assessed October 10, 2015). <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-31002226>

passion to plead for education of females worldwide, and the hope that gender equality will happen in the future. She is the youngest recipient of the Nobel peace prize and is a human rights activist known mainly for human rights advocacy for education and for females in her native Swat Valley in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of northwest Pakistan, a place where the local Taliban had sometimes banned females from attending school.⁹² With her book, *I am Malala*, and her recent released documentary, *He named me Malala*, which is both about her life and her journey, she is raising support for her NGO, the Malala fund.⁹³ This organization works to enable young females complete 12 years of safe, quality education so that they can achieve their potential and be positive change-makers in their families and communities.⁹⁴ In addition, it partners with others all over the world to help empower females by amplifying their voices; investing in the local education leaders and programs; and lastly, advocating for more resources for education and safe schools for every child.

In addition, numerous organizations such as Lean In, the Clinton Foundation, LetGirlsLean, GirlUp, and others recognize the importance of educating females in developing nations and are working to provide school uniforms for students, free meals, and books that go to offset the direct and indirect cost of female students in poverty. These organizations also work to build schools that are girl friendly; they advocate for those who are trapped in child marriage, raped or unjustly imprisoned. In addition, they create awareness against sexually transmitted diseases and provide care for those females

⁹² The Associate Press. "Malala Yousafzai Becomes Youngest-Ever Nobel Prize Winner". *The People Magazine*. October 10, 2014. Accessed November 19, 2015, <http://www.people.com/article/malala-yousafzai-wins-nobel-prize>

⁹³ Marie Arana. Book review: "I Am Malala" by Malala Yousafzai." *The Washington Post*, October 11, 2013. Accessed on November 19, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/book-review-i-am-malala-by-malala-yousafzai/2013/10/11/530ba90a-329a-11e3-9c68-1cf643210300_story.html

⁹⁴ About, Malala.org, see more at <https://www.malala.org/about>

who fall victim of unwanted pregnancies. Lastly, they work with social workers in the communities, attempt to get school authorities to involve poor parents in their children's education; and create adult literacy campaigns.

Besides the organized group efforts to push female education, there is the work of individuals like Sunitha Krisnan. She has set shelter and her entrepreneurship campaigns in India, which are a help to females trying escape sex trafficking.⁹⁵ Then there is Mukhar Mai with the Mukhar School for girls in Pakistan, which is doing great work in providing educational opportunities for females in that area.⁹⁶ Finally, there is the undertakings of individuals like Ann Cotton, with her schools in Zambia that educate underprivileged females, and Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, who both continue to speak up against injustices against females.⁹⁷

I wrote this paper, because I, too, want to be part of the change that I want to see in the world. It is my aim that this thesis is a beginning towards the larger goal of developing an NGO that aims to provide educational opportunities for both males and females in developing nations. It is important to note that while males in developing nations seem to be obtaining an education, they are often influenced by the same cultures and preconceived notions of those societies. I want to work to establish relationships and partnerships that will help to address some, if not all, of the challenges to the education of females in developing nations as listed above as well as to change the perception of males in those communities towards female education. The length of this paper does not permit me to go into further detail. However, I know that for there to be gender parity and

⁹⁵ Kristoff and Wudunn, *Half the Sky*, 56

⁹⁶ Ibid. 70-79

⁹⁷ Ibid. 179-188

equality, laws and policies should not just be made with the hope that things will change. Instead, people need to influence and change cultures. Changing attitudes and cultures are key ways of combating gender stereotypes, sexism, and other forms of discrimination against females through the use of gender-neutral policies, media, sports, and education.

If males and females are to see each other equally, it begins with changing the established stereotypes from long ago. It involves influencing the younger generation of males and females who are the future leaders, fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. If they are convinced that female education is critical, they will fight to get their children or siblings educated, at least, recognize the importance of educating females as well as males. Society benefits when its entire population is educated, as numerous studies have shown. If a society fails to invest in females, it is only limiting itself because, in the words of a Chinese proverb “women hold up half the sky.”

Section Eight- Conclusion

The necessity and importance of investing in the education of females in developing nations cannot be overlooked. Education is essential to functioning and advancing in the modern world. It is also fundamental to self-awareness, self-identity, and self-development. Studies show that an educated female has the power to influence change in her life, family and community. And an additional year of education gives a female ten-twenty percent chance of earning more in her lifetime. It reduces mother and infant mortality rates; it increases the welfare of the economy with an increase in GDP. With education, females become a key component to ending poverty worldwide.

One of the major challenges to female education is poverty tied to gender biases. Another challenge is the issue of religious interpretation or misinterpretation, which are a

problem in predominately Muslim societies. Other challenges are child marriage and menstruation complications. Child marriage poses a threat to female education in developing nations because when females are married off at a young age, it often means withdrawal from school and no more learning. Menstruation, of course, is a natural and biological function, but it poses a challenge to female education in some developing nation because some nations, such as Nepal, seclude females and regard them as unclean, a tradition called *chhaupadi*. Then there are many political challenges to female education from war to patriarchal traditions.

However, all hope is not lost because many international governmental, organizations such as the United Nations and USAID are working to combat those challenge that limit females in regards to education in developing nations. These entities have created laws and treaties that establish the human right of everyone, including females, to have the right to an education. Others agencies, such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank, work to provide access to better teachers and funding for projects that work to empower females. In similar ways numerous NGOs, two of which are the Girl Effect organization and the Malala Fund among others, advocate for education of females worldwide, especially for those in developing nations by providing books, uniforms, and educating females on issues they themselves face. There needs to be an increased awareness about these issues and challenges.

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