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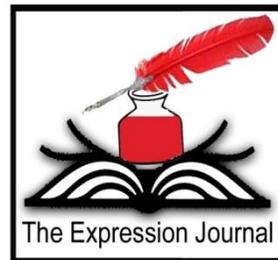
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GENDER DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

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The current wave of globalization has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide, particularly the lives of those women in the developing world. Nevertheless, women remain disadvantaged in many areas of life, including education, employment, health, and civil rights. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank, 57 percent of the 72 million primary school aged children who do not attend school are females.

Additionally, girls are four percent less likely than boys to complete primary school (Gender Statistics, 2010). To help remedy worldwide gender disparities, the UN's Millennium Development Goals prioritize gender equality and empowerment of women. In particular, Millennium Development Goal Three purports to "promote gender inequality and empower women." As part of the Millennium Goals, the international community, especially the UN, will monitor several indicators of gender equality including the levels of female enrolment at school, participation in the workplace, and representation in decision-making positions and political institutions. Progress on these goals has been uneven, especially for women and girls. As part of its "Decade for Women," the UN published the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1985 with the purpose of creating a blueprint for global action to achieve women's equality by the year 2000. Ten years later, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, issued the Beijing Platform for Action, which was designed to update and invigorate the world community's commitment to gender equality. These international conferences and documents have served to crystallize the understanding of the unique problems women face worldwide and to promote efforts to address them. More recently, means to monitor the progress of both the understanding of and the struggle to remedy women's problems have been implemented. Other documents deal with specific challenges to women's rights. For example, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women vows to guarantee women equal rights with men in all spheres of life, including education, employment, health care, suffrage, nationality, and marriage. In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly voted to create a new UN entity for gender equality and empowerment of women entitled UN Women. Its role is to support intergovernmental bodies in policy formation, help member states implement new standards and regulations, and hold the UN system accountable for gender equality. This Issue in Depth will examine the effects of

globalization on the women of worldwide, namely on their participation in the economy, representation in the political process, education, health, and sexual slavery. It also will discuss the possibility of globalization's ability to greatly benefit women in the internationalization of the movement for gender equality, and the legal structure that supports this goal and recognizes women's rights as basic human rights.

While many gains have been made, and more children than ever are now attending Primary School, there is still not world-wide gender parity in education. In every income bracket, there are more female children than male children who are not attending school. Girls in the poorest 20 percent of household have the lowest chance of getting an education. Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Asia still face many challenges reaching gender parity for primary education, while sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia, and Southern Asia face the biggest challenges for secondary education. On the other hand, Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern Asia, and South-Eastern Asia have more girls than boys signed up for secondary school (Jensen, 2010). Girls' gross enrolment has increased the fastest in South Asia, especially on the primary level, where gains have been measured at 30 percent. Enrolment gains at the secondary and tertiary level have risen just as fast (King, 2013). There has been improvements in educating girls at the tertiary level in the developing world, reaching 97 girls per 100 boys. In the CIS countries, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa, and South-Eastern Asia there are more girls than boys enrolled at the tertiary level, but the numbers have not reach parity in other regions (Jensen, 2010). This inequality does not change in adulthood. Of the 774 million illiterate adults worldwide, 64 percent are women – a statistic virtually unchanged from the early 1990s (Gender Statistics, 2010). The UN Millennium Development Goal to promote gender equality and empower women uses education as its target and the measure of gender disparity in education as its indicator of progress. Through the efforts of the international community, the UN hopes to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Education is crucial because, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), inequality in education is directly correlated to poverty, and its elimination would help alleviate poverty in general. UNESCO also states that female education has spill over effects for society; these effects include improved fertility rates, household and child health, and educational opportunities for the rest of the household. In addition, increased skill levels allow women to participate more in the economy, and increase the economic prosperity of the family. Educated women tend to be healthier, have fewer children, and secure health care and education for their own children, which are all benefits that translate to the community at large. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010 finds that in places of extreme poverty or extremely rural areas, females are less likely to complete any type of schooling. Poverty remains the most important factor in education inequality. According to a Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) study of 24 low income countries, only 34 percent of girls in the poorest-quintile households complete primary school, compared to 72 percent of girls in the richest-quintile households. To address the failure to provide basic education for all, which is defined as a basic human right in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the World Education Forum produced the "Education For All" targets, which include ending inequality between males and females in education. The Forum recommended that governments and organizations implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education that recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values, and practices. Several of the world's poorest countries, located in Sub Saharan Africa, West Asia, and the Arab states, will fail to reach "Education For All" targets, especially gender equality, by the agreed date of 2015. UNESCO's monitoring team found that norms and values hold females back as much or more than policy. The education of girls is not valued in many societies because they are expected to contribute more at home, while boys should gain skills to work outside the home. There are region-specific hazards for girls, as

well. For example, in South America, the further a school is from a household, the less likely girls are to attend, because travel introduces an increased risk of assault and rape. In parts of the Middle East and North Africa, the public life of a female is so limited that to anything outside the home seems unnecessary. A World Bank study found that incentive-based exposure enrolment programs can overcome even deeply imbedded cultural resistance.

For example, when girls in Bangladesh were offered a small salary for attending and passing school, community protests subsided, or parents affected change, on issues such as female students taught by men and constructing separate latrines for males and females. Malala Yousafzai, the Noble Laureate of 2014 for Peace, is an example of a courageous young woman fighting for girls' education in Pakistan. In January 2009, a Taliban edict banned girls' education in Pakistan's Swat Valley. Malala first rose to prominence as a blogger advocating for girls' education. In October 2012, Yousafzai was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman while boarding her school bus, and was transported to the UK for medical care. After being discharged from the hospital in January 2013, she continued her activism, and gave an affecting speech at the United Nations in July 2013, stating that

Today, I am focusing on women's rights and girls' education because they are suffering the most. There was a time when women activists asked men to stand up for their rights. But this time we will do it by ourselves. I am not telling men to step away from speaking for women's rights, but I am focusing on women to be independent and fight for themselves. So dear sisters and brothers, now it's time to speak up. So today, we call upon the world leaders to change their strategic policies in favour of peace and prosperity. We call upon the world leaders that all of these deals must protect women and children's rights. A deal that goes against the rights of women is unacceptable.

Economists see reducing sexual inequality in education as a vital part of promoting development. The failure to educate girls limits economic growth in the developing world by wasting human capital. As a result, the UN set itself the target of eliminating gender disparity in education at all levels by 2015, as one of its Millennium Development Goals. Although places like China, Bangladesh, India and Indonesia look likely to achieve the target. Africa, in particular, will not. For every 100 boys in secondary school on the continent in 2010, there were only 82 girls. The most common response is to channel more money to girls' education. UN schemes finance school places for girls in 15 sub-Saharan countries. NGOs have got involved too. Camfed, a charity, now pays for almost 100,000 girls to be educated in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Looking at recently-published UN statistics on gender inequality in education, one observes that the overall picture has improved dramatically over the last decade, but progress has not been even. Although the developing world on average looks likely to hit the UN's gender-inequality target, many parts of Africa are lagging behind. While progress is being made in sub-Saharan Africa in primary education, gender inequality is in fact widening among older children. The ratio of girls enrolled in primary school rose from 85 to 93 per 100 boys between 1999 and 2010, whereas it fell from 83 to 82 and from 67 to 63 at the secondary and tertiary levels.

In some places there has been little or no progress whatsoever. For instance, the enrolment ratio in Chad and the Central African Republic appears to be flat-lining at fewer than 70 girls per 100 boys. These two

countries look soon to be overtaken by Afghanistan, up to now the worst performing country in the world on this metric. There is also great variation within countries. The situation appears to be much worse in rural areas in Africa, where getting to school takes longer and may be more dangerous. For instance, in rural areas of Niger, UN estimates puts the number of girls per 100 boys at school as low as 41.

This is in contrast to dramatic improvements in gender equality in schooling seen in the rest of the world. South Asia, which lagged behind sub-Saharan Africa in 1999 at the primary school level, hit the UN's 2015 target in 2010. Even the Middle East, where traditional religious prejudices often prevent girls going to school, has made substantial progress. Only Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen now have less than 90 girls per 100 boys at school, in contrast to over 14 sub-Saharan African countries.

Yet it is important to note that gender inequality is not the only problem in Africa. In many places there are not enough school places to go around for the boys alone. In Niger just 15% of both boys and girls were enrolled in secondary school last year. In the very poorest of African countries, simply funding more school places for boys or girls may end up boosting equality as girls may stop having to compete with boys for the few available spaces.

But other problems prevent girls going to school too. Some are kept away by the religious qualms of their families. Others are needed as child labour to prop up household incomes when times are tough, due to the lack of developed insurance or saving systems in these countries. Either way, gender inequality in Africa is a complex problem—and one which will need several different policy responses if the UN's goals are ever to be reached.

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