The Benefits of Educating Girls in Developing Countries with a Case Study in Livingstone, Zambia

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Abstract

The percent return in the form of eventual wages for women who have obtained a secondary education is four percent higher than that for their male counterparts.¹ Yet 60 percent of the world’s 100 million out-of-school youth are girls.² The goal of this paper is to present the benefits of educating girls in developing countries. In my research I have used qualitative as well as quantitative data. The investigation reveals the considerable potential for accelerated national growth that girls hold in developing countries and how education for girls is key in empowering women and in achieving sustainable development. In addition to showing the positive impacts educating a girl in Zambia has I hope to present the importance of including girls into international and domestic development programs in general.

I. Introduction

Background

The percent return in the form of eventual wages for women who have obtained a secondary education is four percent higher than that for their male counterparts. Yet 60 percent of the world’s 100 million out-of-school youth are girls. In many developing countries girls and women are at a disadvantage as it relates to education. The limited accessibility to education for women in developing countries is not only a failure to ultimately include women in the economy and society in a more meaningful way but also a failure to utilize the resources of a country to their full potential.

Research Questions

What is the current situation in developing countries in general and in Zambia as it relates to education for girls?

What are the benefits of educating girls in developing countries and in Zambia?

Aim

The aim of this research is to determine the benefits of educating girls in developing countries and in Zambia.

Method

In the research qualitative as well as quantitative resources were used. Quantitative resources have been utilized in the form of books, reports, and articles published on the topic of education, girls’ education, and sustainable development. Qualitative resources used include interviews with girls in Zambia and in other developing countries as well as with people involved in the field of gender equality, education, and sustainable development. I have utilized qualitative resources because I find that they give a degree of evidence different to that obtained from quantitative resources.


To ensure objectivity, I conducted interviews all my interviews in the natural environment of the respective interviewees. Furthermore I strove not to guide the conservation too much as to not inhibit a free flow of information.

A limitation to this study might be the fact that I personally lack hands on experience of the situation for girls in developing countries.

**Source Criticism**

The selection of sources utilized in the research is perceived to be reliable. All of the resources were published within the past twelve years. Both primary and secondary sources were used. The primary data utilized includes interviews with people of varying ages in developing countries, or with people with knowledge of the situation for women in developing countries. The majority of the secondary data and knowledge was collected from works written by experts in the field or non-profit organizations.

The websites utilized in my research were perceived to be reliable. They were recently updated and clearly referenced any sources used.

**II. Theory**

**The Current Situation for Girls in Developing Countries as it Relates to Education**

More than 100 million children of primary school age are not attending school. The proportion of girls in this group has decreased from 57 percent to 53 percent between 1999 and 2008.\(^5\) Despite the increase in the percentage of girls enrolled in school globally, the distribution of out-of-school girls varies greatly by region. The widest gender gap exists in Western and Central Africa where more than 40 percent of young adolescent girls are out of school.\(^6\) In Senegal, fewer than one in five girls are able to go to secondary school and there are only 6 literate adult women for every 10 literate men.\(^7\) A recent United Nations (UN) report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) predicts that only 18 of the 113 countries that failed to reach the MDG on gender equity in education by 2005 will achieve it by 2015.\(^8\)

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A range of factors, including poverty, school quality, distance to schools, and gender-based violence, influences gender differential access to school.

**Causes that Contribute to the Gender Gap in Education**

**Poverty**

A study done in Afghanistan identified poverty as the main obstacle to girls’ access to education. 42 percent of the interviewees named poverty as the main barrier to female education. The same finding was made in Somalia and Eritrea where economic reasons were repeatedly cited as the main barrier to female education. The sensitivity of girls’ enrollment to household income is also evident in the findings of a study in India and Malaysia respectively. In India a 1 percent increase in per capita household income raises the probability of girls enrollment by 4 percentage points whereas the same raise only results in an increase by 1 percentage point for boys. Similarly a 1 percent increase in household income in Malaysia boosts a girl’s probability of attending school by 18-20 percentage points in contrast to 5-6 percentage points for boys. Sending a girl to school is seen as a financial burden because it means a loss in labor (girls are responsible for the majority of household tasks) and an introduction of both direct (school fees) and indirect (uniforms, supplies, transportation) costs.

**Pregnancy and Marriage**

A lack of interest in educating girls among parents is often due to the fact that it is customary for girls to leave their parental home upon marriage. Female education is consequently viewed as an empty investment. In general there is a belief that the education of girls is irrelevant. As stated in a report by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) “in the context where girls are ‘born to marry’, parents see little economic value in educating girls”. The principle of the Nuri-Islam Primary and Junior High School in the Karaga District of the Northern Region in Ghana, Madam Sandah Illuminatu Fatima, explains that many parents refuse to educate their female children because it is seen as “irrelevant”. In spite of the Capitation Grant, supply of free school uniforms and exercise books and School Feeding by the government, only 200 students of the total population of 700 pupils are girls. The headmistress claims that the main reason for the gender

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gap is the belief "that a woman [will] eventually end up in a man’s house as a wife, no matter the success she achieves in education”. The economics of early marriage is also obvious in Herat, Afghanistan where a high school principle explains that more than a basic ability to “read and write is unnecessary for girls” since "girls are forced to get married when they are young”. The reality is that ”people are poor and dowries are very high”. Marriage is also an obstacle to education for girls in Afghanistan where a report published earlier this year by 16 NGOs shows that early/forced marriage is the second most common obstacle to education after poverty.13

While marriage is a leading reason for why parents choose to invest in their sons’ education rather than their daughters’, marriage is not the leading cause for dropout among adolescent girls. More often, marriage and pregnancy are consequence of leaving school early.14

Domestic Work

Girls’ work, though often overlooked, is integral to the overall economy of households in the developing world. Girls spend 33–85 percent more time per day working at home and in unpaid market work than do boys of the same age.15 In one province in Zambia specifically, it was found that “the average girl spends four times more time than boys on directly productive work” and “more time on productive work than any group of adult men”. The study concluded that boys spend time in school during the time that girls spend working.16 A recent report on girls’ education in Somalia found that the requirement of girls to do housework in combination with the prioritization of male education had the main impact in deciding whether or not to send girls to school.17

In 2008 only 49 percent of the population in developing countries had access to piped drinking water on premises. Children are responsible for collecting water in 12 percent of the households. Girls are twice as likely as boys to be responsible for the task. Fetching water is an extremely time consuming task. Recent data has shown one water collection trip takes more than 30 minutes to complete in over one quarter of the households in 14 out of 30 Sub-Saharan countries. This creates economic and social costs as it consumes time which could be spent at school or doing homework.18

Social Exclusion

“The extent to which girls are socially isolated in some settings is striking” state the authors of the 2009 Girls Count report on adolescent girls. In many developing countries there exists a parental resistance to adolescent girls pursuing activities outside of the home. While adolescence means entrance into the public sphere for a boy, it often means withdrawal from public life for a girl.19 According to a report published by the Center for Global Development, “adolescence for young women often generates a sense of shame, restraint, caution, confinement, and duty”.20 In Nepal, for example, 20 percent of girls in urban areas spend no social time with their peers at all. Furthermore, in Ghana and many parts of rural Africa, “women are not supposed to be seen in public, they're supposed to be in the kitchen”.21 A lack of opportunities for social interaction for female adolescents and confinement to the perimeters of the home increase the difficulty of reaching girls with education programs. Isolation also often leads to girls being uninformed and unable to advocate for their rights and on behalf of the resources they need to protect and care for themselves.22

The lack of curricula with the needs of adolescent girls in mind in education programs is a second factor that contributes to an increase in the gender gap in education.23 Gender stereotyping is typical in textbooks and there is often a lack of female teachers.24 Due to the fact that most youth-centers are aimed at a male audience and enforce traditionally male activities, an experience of discomfort with male dominated atmospheres is common among adolescent girls.25 The absence of female role models often leads to further isolation and a lack of motivation. Indeed this seems to be the case in Muhuru Bay in Kenya where a 2010 report by the Nyanza Education Women's Initiative, found that one of the reasons girls in the province had fared badly compared with boys in national examinations in recent years was due a lack of motivation and the absence of role models.26

21 The Ghanaian Journal. Educate the Girl, Empower the Woman. 2.3.2011.
**Unequal Labor Market**

Discrimination in the labor market influences families to invest in their sons’ rather than their daughters’ education. The fact that women earn less than men even if they have the same education and experience contributes to parents’ view of male education as a better investment. The disparity between the economic outcome of female and male education is intensified due to the fact that women often have less access to financial capital and less secure claims to financial capital than men.\(^{27}\)

The fact that the labor sector favors men over women is evident to Dorcas Oyugi, the principle of a NGO-sponsored girls-only secondary school in Muhuru Bay in Kenya. She tells the students at the school “whatever women do, they must do it twice as [hard as] a man to be thought they are half as good, they must work hard”.\(^{28}\)

General attitudes to female education are gradually changing however. Kwuke Ngua, one of the kings, highly respected elders who preside over villages and maintain their traditions, of a rural community in eastern Ghana, tells “we used to think women were not destined for education, but now we believe it does them well. They have more skills, which they can bring to the community. All girls should go to school. One of the Queens, Mannye Narteki agrees and says “Girls can no longer fit into working society unless they are educated”. A similar view is clearly communicated in a couple posters in the village. One of which commands the citizens to “send the girl child to school” and the other which has pictures of a female judge, engineer, and nurse and reads “Stay in school and you could be one of these”.

Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi, executive director of the Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) and board member of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), identifies a similar trend. While “traditional and patriarchal practices” remain strong in many African nations, “over the years this has been proved […] not effective because both girls and boys need to be educated for us to have meaningful development”.\(^{29}\)

**Menstruation**

Menstruation results in 10-20 percent absenteeism each academic year by girls. There appears to be two main reasons for this; limited access to sanitary products and facilities and socio-cultural

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\(^{27}\) Bryan E. Bloom and Mark Weston. *Girls' Education in Developing Countries: Mind the Gap*. 2003.


ideas. In many developing countries, menstruation and menstrual practices are considered taboo and represent restrictions for adolescent girls. Eileen Ingulfsson, born and raised in Zambia, explains that there is a common idea of menstruation as “unclean” in many African countries.

**Distance to School**

Distance to school is a serious obstacle to participation in school. Studies in China, the Philippines, India, Ghana, Malaysia, Niger, Pakistan and Peru show that decision-making about girls’ education is particularly sensitive to distance to school. A study of community-based primary schools in Ghor in Afghanistan found that girls’ enrollment in school was particularly vulnerable to distance to school. While enrollment dropped by 16% for every 1.6 kilometers that children have to travel to get to school for all children, it dropped by 19 percent for girls. One reason behind this decline in enrollment involves safety. There is often a concern of female assault.

**Socio-Cultural Views**

A girl’s parents’ attitude about female education greatly influence whether she enrolls in school or not. In many traditional places parents abstain from sending their daughters to school because of a desire to protect them from harmful influences. A qualitative study done on the situation for girls in Somalia identified a view of education as inducing bad behavior in girls. A female respondent, Yirowe, says “people believe that girls can learn bad habits in schools”. A loss of traditionally female values as a cause of education is feared as it viewed to reduce her likelihood to become married and marriage is, in many places, seen as a girl’s “livelihood”. Socio-cultural views don’t only play against the enrollment of girls however. While some respondents believed

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that education was foreign to and capable of undermining Somali culture others identified positive impacts of educating girls on society and on culture.37

Cultural values and socialization processes that paint a picture of girls as future subservient wives and mothers and negatively affect girls’ self image and performance in school represent another barrier that many girls face.38

The Benefits of Educating Girls in Developing Countries

"[O]nce all the benefits are recognized, investment in the education of girls may be the highest-return investment available in the developing world” writes Larry Summers, former chief economist of the World Bank. Moreover, a Global Economics Paper by Goldman Sachs shows that “girls’ education yields some of the highest returns of all development investments” and both private and social benefits.39 Failing to adopt policies and actions that address gender inequality in school represents a loss of critical development opportunities in a wide range of sectors.40

Similarly to how a range of factors decide whether or not a girl receives an education, educating a girl affects a myriad of aspects of society. Many of the benefits of female education can be classified as intergenerational effects. Key in the current discussion on the benefits of female education is the idea of a ripple effect. A finding that greatly supports the intergenerational benefits of educating girls is that that women reinvest 90 percent of their income into their family whereas men only reinvest 30 percent.41

Health

Educating girls’ positively affects the health of future generations. Irina Bokova, director-general of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization says that a child born to a literate mother is 50 percent more likely to survive past age five than a child born to a mother who cannot read.42 Furthermore, In Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa it has been shown that children whose mothers have received secondary schooling are twice as likely to be immunized against

42 Irina Bokova. Education Must Reach the Marginalized. IPS. 25.2.2011.
major disease than those whose mothers have not. Educated women are also more likely to be more knowledgeable about their children’s nutritional requirements, adopt effective sanitation practices, and seek medical care. It is estimated that 1.8 million children’s lives could have been saved in 2008 if their mothers had completed secondary school.43

Female education also reduces the spread of HIV/AIDS. Educating a girl protects both herself against getting infected and her children. Studies tell us that women with post-primary education are five times more likely than illiterate women to be knowledgeable about how to prevent HIV/AIDS.44 In Zambia specifically, AIDS spreads twice as fast among uneducated girls.45

**Reproductive**

Educated women have fewer children. It is estimated that just one year of female schooling reduces fertility by 10 percent.46 In Brazil, for example, women with a secondary education have 2.5 children on average whereas illiterate women have as many as 6.5 children on average. In India a similar trend is found. Here when female literacy increases with 10 percent the total fertility rate decreases by half.47 A lower fertility rate means that families are able to invest more time in the health of each child. Falling fertility is also economically favorable in developing countries because it brings about a demographic transition. Demographic transition in this case signifies a growth in the working-age share of the population. A report by Goldman Sachs tells us that such a demographic change can translate into great economic growth in Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan and Philippines, much of Sub-Saharan Africa, and other countries that are in the early stages of this demographic transition.

**Economic**

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44 Irina Bokova. *Education Must Reach the Marginalized*. IPS. 25.2.2011.
46 *Girls’ Education: A World Bank Priority.*
“The returns to investment in girls’ education are, on average, higher than for boys,” states a 2009 report published by The Center for Global Development.\(^{48}\) In a research report Goldman Sachs emphasizes the degree to which developing countries could improve their economic performance by educating girls and concludes “[g]ender inequality hurts economic growth”. Educating women is economically beneficial as it increases women’s rate of participation in the labor force. An increase in female participation in the labor force is beneficial as it boosts GDP growth and per capita income and, by increasing competition and thereby the overall quality of the workforce, leads to a rise in productivity levels.\(^{49}\) Studies have shown that a 1 percent increase in female education raises the average level of GDP by 0.37 percentage points.\(^{50}\) Furthermore, a 100-country study by the World Bank shows that an equal increase in the share of women with a secondary education boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points.\(^{51}\)

On an individual level education for women is further beneficial because it increases their earnings in the work force. Each additional year in primary school increases a girl’s eventual wages by 10 to 20 percent in contrast to a boy’s that increases by 5 to 10 percent. An extra year in secondary school boosts her eventual wages by 25 percent.\(^{52}\)

In agriculture the returns of educating women is also high. A 63-country study shows that increase in female education accounted for 43 percent of the decline in malnutrition between 1970 and 1995. Furthermore, if female Kenyan farmers had the same education as their male counterparts, there would be in an increase of 22 percent in crop yield.\(^{53}\)

**Education**

There is a close relationship between a woman’s school attainment and her children’s. In general, an educated woman is more likely to send her children to school than an uneducated woman. A study of 14 countries suggests that an additional year of mothers’ education raises the likelihood of children’s enrollment by 1-6 percentage points.\(^{54}\) Furthermore, women’s education was found by a cross-country study from India to have more impact than men’s education on children’s

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schooling. An Indian study found a similar relationship; children of educated women study two more hours per day than those of uneducated women.\textsuperscript{55}

Generally there are three main reasons behind the positive influence mothers have on their children in terms of education. Firstly, the child of an educated mother is likely to gain an education because an empowered and informed woman through education most likely either has the long-term earning capacity needed to pay the school fees or the ability to bargain for resources within the family. Secondly, mothers with schooling are often much better at supporting their children’s learning. Educated mothers can aid and encourage their children with homework. Thirdly, educated mothers can serve as role models and voices of the value of school.

\textit{Security}

Another benefit of educating girls is the fact that greater female involvement in society and in the economy has proven to reduce extremism and terrorism. Some scholars claim that low levels of female education and participation in the labor force rather than Islamic teachings about violence stand to blame for the fact that Muslim countries have been afflicted by terrorism. Greg Mortenson, humanitarian and author of the book \textit{Three Cups of Tea}, argues that improving access to education for girls can deter extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Women’s vulnerability to domestic violence also decreases since educated women are more likely to participate in household decisions and take a stand for themselves.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Personal}

Personal benefits that result from gaining an education include a raised social status and an increased sense of self worth and confidence. Author and telecom educator, Ann-Catrin Malmlöf, underscores the value of being able to read, write, and make basic mathematical calculations on a day-to-day basis for women in developing countries. She notes the importance of such skills in being able to, for example, take micro loans. Furthermore, education, through broadening girls’ perception, serves as a source of stimulation.\textsuperscript{57}

\section*{Recommendations on Achieving Education for Girls}

Similar to how the barriers to female education are many and varied and the benefits of educating girls are wide-ranging, I find that there is no one solution to making school more accessible to girls. The decision-making process that decides whether or not a girl goes to school is extremely complex and multi-faceted. In narrowing the gender gap in education many factors must be taken into consideration. Fundamental however seems to be to make the school environment more inclusive and adopt different methods to raise girls’ self image in the classroom. Furthermore, many studies have found that succeeding in increasing enrollment and attendance rates for girls is largely dependent on realizing the full economic costs to families and communities, considering cultural costs to communities, and addressing country-specific designs in the formation of a program geared to narrowing gender gaps in school.  

**Make School More Female Friendly**

According to the Department of Education in Nepal “dearth of girl friendly toilets in school premises is one of the reasons for girl students dropping out of school”. Moreover, sources say that the dropout rate of girls at schools without toilets is greater than at those with either latrines or toilets. To enroll more girls in school the government of the country will construct 5500 girl-friendly toilets in community schools. The Deputy Director of the Department of Education and chief of the Gender Equity Section at the Department, Ganesh Prasad Poudel, maintains that the construction will allow female students to change their sanitary pads during their menstruation period and maintain personal hygiene. Eileen Ingulfsson states that constructing private toilets facilities for girls results in a decline in dropout rates and absenteeism because of the empowering effect that they have on girls. Another facility that proved to raise girls self esteem was the construction of a shower in Angola earlier this year.  

Eileen Ingulfsson also emphasizes the empowering effect that constructing boarding houses has on girls. Living on school grounds eliminates the need to walk long distances and thereby the exposure to sexual violence. Boarding houses for girls is further beneficial to girls’ attendance and enrolment in school because it grants them more time to devote to their studies. Lastly, I believe that the boarding house environment would contribute to increased social interaction for adolescent girls and serve as a place away from community and social pressures for girls to develop and raise their voices.  

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A third investment that can be made in order to drive up female enrollment in school is that in meal programs. Studies in Kenya have shown that providing food to children in school results in a rise in female attendance rates by 10 percent.\(^60\)

Schools can also be made more accessible to girls by improving the security of schools. A safe learning environment is essential to keeping girls in school.\(^61\) A report on girls’ education in Afghanistan states that “schools must be treated as de-militarized safe zones” especially in conflict zones.

**Increase the Number of Female Teachers**

Female teachers serve as role models to girls. Multi-country studies have found that increasing the number of female teachers promotes gender equality and encourages girls to enroll in school.\(^62\) Recruiting women teachers has been proven successful in attracting girls to primary school in both Bangladesh and Balochistan. Data shows that villages in Balochistan with female teachers had higher participation rates for girls than villages that didn’t. A consistently positive relationship was found further found in Botswana between schools with a higher percentage of female teachers and improvements in girls’ performance and attendance. This improvement was achieved without any type of disadvantage to boys.\(^63\)

Setting national goals for hiring women in teaching positions is a method that has proven successful for attracting women to the teaching force in South Asia and in Africa.\(^64\)

**Reduce School Costs**

Great short-term increases in girls’ enrollment have been achieved through lowering household costs of school attendance. Cost reductions that have been made and proved effective include eliminating/reducing fees, provision of scholarships, assistance with transportation costs and school supplies. Moreover, the introduction of the Female Secondary Stipends Program in

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Bangladesh and a secondary school voucher program in Colombia have proved especially successful in increasing the number of years completed in school for girls.  

*Decrease Distance to School*

Decreasing the distance to school has a positive effect on girls’ attendance and enrollment. In Egypt, for example, the construction of new schools in rural areas during the 1980s boosted girls’ enrollments by 60 percent while rural boys’ enrollments increased by 19 percent. A study from 2001 showed that girls’ school attendance in Malaysia decreased by 17 percent in the absence of a secondary school in the community. Boys’ attendance, meanwhile, decreased by 13 percent.

*Improve the Quality of Education*

The quality of education has shown to be specifically important to keeping girls in school. Studies conducted in Kenya, Bangladesh, and Swaziland, have shown that quality and teacher training increases the demand for education for girls more than for boys. In Peru, girls’ enrollment in school was boosted by 30 percent with the provision of free textbooks. Boys’ enrollment at the same school was not affected.

Making the curriculum content less gender stereotypical can also make education more accessible to girls. In addition, relevancy of school curricula is important. It has been shown that female enrollment increases when the content of the classes equip children for the twenty-first century.

In today’s increasingly interconnected world, information technology is one of the fastest expanding sectors offering employment opportunities to young women. Linda Raftree, Social Media and New Technology Advisor of the aid organization Plan, claims that access to the skills and education necessary to take advantage of these opportunities is key. Mathematics, science, and vocational education, she argues is crucial to empower girls and bring them into the economy upon school completion. Offering subjects in the sciences has also proved successful in

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attracting girls to gain an education in for example Kenya where parents are more willing to send their daughters to school if an opportunity to study science is offered.\(^69\)

**Involve the Community and Parents**

The attitude of the surrounding community has a big impact on girls’ enrollment and performance in school. An all girls’ secondary school in Kenya experienced an increase in the mean examination score from 218 in 2008 to 252 in 2010 as a result of “sensitization and encouragement from the community”\(^70\). A report published earlier this year on girls’ education in Afghanistan stresses the importance of addressing local dynamics through involving communities in initiatives to bring education closer to girls.\(^71\) Furthermore, a study in Pakistan found that rural community-based schools increase girls’ enrollment to more than four times the provincial average.\(^72\) Community participation can include assistance with construction and maintenance of school facilities, involvement in management and school curriculum development. Involvement of the community in decision-making and implementation has proved successful in improving curriculum content and relevance of education to employment and community life. Community involvement in school has accomplished changes in school calendars and schedules, community-supervised protection for girls, and adjustments in fee payment schedules. Furthermore, public-awareness programs in Senegal and Niger has been shown to boost girls’ enrollment in primary school significantly.

Families, and especially mothers as we have seen, play a decisive role in whether or not girls gain an education. Therefore it is important to establish a strong link between schools and parents. Furthermore, maintaining a close relationship with a girl’s family will allow the school to better understand the factors that influence enrollment. This knowledge will allow the schools to adjust accordingly and help motivate more girls to enroll.

To increase the likelihood of parents sending their daughters to school efforts should also be made to increase the transparency of schools. Involving families and the local community in monitoring school mechanisms also reduces corruption and saves money.

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In my opinion the objective of this research paper has been achieved.

In my research I have found that the situation for girls in developing countries is extensively limited as it relates to education. The main barriers to girls gaining an education seem to be economically or socio-cultural rooted.

I have found the benefits to making education more accessible to girls in developing countries to be many and wide-ranging. Educating girls appears to not only break an evil spiral in terms of individual development for women but also strengthen the economy and society of the country as a whole. Moreover, due to the unique intergenerational effects of female education and the fact that women’s wellbeing touches upon many aspects of development, empowering girls through education is essential in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.73

In my opinion measures that have been proven successful are those that most accurately consider and incorporate girls’ needs and aspirations. It is critical to stress the importance of not overlooking any regional specifics related to the situation of girls and women and of working with the distinct features and conditions of the area in question. Furthermore, I have discovered that the most community inclusive programs to ensuring increased female enrollment are usually the most effective and sustainable. In any attempt to promote long-term gender equality in education I recommend a bottom up approach. While governments can and should enforce the necessary laws to protect, for example, women’s rights to an education and equal opportunities in the work force, it is also necessary to take steps towards promoting participation and engagement in decision-making and implementation at lower levels to ensure beneficial results.

When developing programs intended to narrow gender disparities in education I further believe that communication between developing countries may provide schools with the opportunity to learn from the successes and failures of neighboring villages, cities, and countries. Increased communication will allow for more effective and rich decision-making and implementation. Moreover, creating a dialogue with western nations can have positive impacts on development in education. International cooperation creates an opportunity for the exchange of ideas. Ann-Catrin Malmlöf illustrated an example of the importance of communication when she explained the outcome of a mail exchange program between Uganda and Sweden. Establishing relationships between individual in distant and different cultural setting expands and enriches the lives of all participants.74 Due to the degree of social isolation girls often experience in developing

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regions, I believe that such interactions are especially beneficial for girls. They give girls the opportunity to express their opinions, amplify their voices, and cultivate their beliefs.

While increasing my knowledge of the situation for girls in developing countries, I have realized the importance of having girls participate in the design and development of policies. Indeed I find that including the dynamics of her life is crucial in reaching any type of sustainable and informed economic, social, or political growth. A 2009 report by the International Center for Research on Women found that “girls’ insights in development increase impact and effectiveness”.

Furthermore, by studying the impact on the broader community, I have identified a positive correlation between the degree of gender equality in a country and the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of that country. The education of young woman plays a central role in the development of a society and in increasing the economic prospects and opportunities of an individual.

While studying the situation for girls and learning more about the measures of increasing female access to education that have proven successful, I have found that the solutions to the problem are not distant nor the needs other-worldly. Instead they are basic and similar to those in developed countries. I myself, as a secondary student in Stockholm, Sweden, can, although on another level, relate to the needs of young girls in developing countries and identify my own aspirations in theirs’.

IV. Case Study in Livingstone, Zambia

This case study focuses on the situation for girls as it relates to education in Livingstone, Zambia. The study was carried out in the city of Livingstone in Zambia where I spent one week interacting with students and faculty at primarily Hillcrest National Technical High School. Hillcrest is both a boarding and day school and offers classes in technical subjects. The ratio of girls to boys at the school is one to three.

The data was obtained through a series of interviews with local people and the results are based solely on qualitative data. The objective of the interviews was three fold; to learn more about the situation for girls in Zambia, the perceived benefits of female education among youths, and the measures that can be taken in order to decrease gender disparities in schools in the country. My main goal was to interview adolescent girls to tell their stories. However I also

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carried out a number of interviews with boys. My reason for including the boys was to gain a
comprehensive understanding of the girl's complete educational environment and the issues that
they face. A second motivation behind interviewing boys was that to encourage an inter-gender
dialogue on the subject among students. A number of the interviews that I carried out were
structured in the form of group discussions where students could comment on and listen to what
their classmates had to say. Personally, I find that fostering a dialogue between men and women
is key in achieving gender equality in schools and in society in general. Only when aspirations for
women’s rights are shared among the individuals of society as a whole and there is an awareness
of the linkage between empowering girls and empowering communities, can lasting change be
established.

One limitation in my research on location at Hillcrest Technical High School in Livingstone,
Zambia, was the fact that the female students were more timid and withdrawn than their male
counterparts. This characteristic was heightened in the presence of boys in for example the
classroom. This prevented me to interview as many girls as I would have liked. I did however
manage to engage girls as well as boys in classroom discussions. Furthermore, I conducted a
number of private interviews with girls as well as female only group interviews.

Please note that all of the names of the students interviewed in this case study have been changed to preserve
anonymity.

The Current Situation for Girls in Livingstone, Zambia, as it
Relates to Education

The main obstacles to girls gaining an education in Zambia were found to be traditional beliefs
and practices that impinge on female education and early pregnancies. Despite the overwhelming
number of factors speaking against girls’ education many of the interviewees, including one with
representative of the Young Women’s Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.) of Zambia, testified to
an increased awareness about women’s rights and the likelihood of girls gaining access to
education. There appears to be a steady change in mind set as it relates to girls and a woman’s
role, rights, and opportunities in society. A female twelfth grade student explains that, “nowadays
it has really improved. I think it is better than before”.

Socio-Cultural Views

All of the students that I interviewed claimed the traditional view of girls in Zambia to be one in which the female's main responsibilities lie in childcare and housework. A twelfth grade student named Andrew explains that there is “idea that school and education is for boys”.\(^{77}\) Many of the students whom I interviewed at Hillcrest explained that one of the chief consequences of this mindset is the lowering of girls’ self-esteem and a feeling of incapability in the classroom. Gift, a seventeen-year-old border student, firmly states that one reason behind the gender disparity in schools is the fact that “boys look down on girls and find it a bit abnormal to be having them [in school]”. She explains that, “They really don’t accept that girls can be better than boys”.\(^{78}\) Furthermore, Cindy, a twenty-one-year old university student of forestry, explains that there is a feeling of inferiority to male students among female students and a view in society of girls being “slow learners”. This leads parents to invest in their son’s rather than their daughter’s education she says.\(^{79}\) Instead, a male student explains, girls are given house chores. Sandra, an eighteen-year-old student, explains, “Mostly parents believe that girls are supposed to be in the kitchen and supposed to be good wives”. Housework is seen as sufficient education. The traditional notion of girls being incapable of advancing intellectually is furthermore combined with an idea that “educated girls become disrespectful”.\(^{80}\)

A lack of motivation among female students was found to be reinforced by a lack of communication between male teachers and female students and a low number of female teachers. Gift explains that, “male teachers look down on girls” and that it is “hard for a girl to go to a male teacher because sometimes male teachers can’t understand what a girl needs”. As a result, “[girls] will keep it to themselves and pretend everything is fine”.\(^{81}\) Furthermore, a number of girls that I interviewed at the high school explained that they often felt uncomfortable asking their male teachers questions. Other students also complained about sexual abuse of female students by teachers. This not only lowers girls’ self-esteem but may also lead to pregnancies and consequently dropouts a boy explained.\(^{82}\) Low self-confidence among girls in the classroom was further evident during classes where I observed the overall engagement of girls to be lower than that of boys. In one-twelfth grade class where there were only three girls, all of the questions asked by the teachers were answered by male students. Not until the end of the class when the teacher declared that it was time for a girl to answer was a girl’s voice heard.

\(^{77}\) Andrew. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 25.3.2011.
Another source of discouragement was explained to be the fact that the number of points required for girls to pass a course is lower than the number of points required for boys. A gender disparity in what is required from the students lowers girls’ expectations of themselves and thus the motivation to attend school. Discomfort and discouragement of academic studies for girls is also evident in the fact that out of the 56 students at Hillcrest studying at the Advanced Level General Certificate of Education, only four are girls.\footnote{Maria. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 24.3.2011.}

In addition, there exists a widespread myth that “math is for boys”, as one student put it, and a general conception that girls are incapable of studying the hard sciences. This notion is reinforced by the fact that there is a minority of girls that take subjects in the natural sciences. Out of the four classes of technicians at Hillcrest, only two technicians are girls. An uneven gender distribution in subjects is also evident in the fact that in the Food and Nutrition class, the majority of the students are girls.\footnote{Gift. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 25.3.2011.}

While the majority of the students I interviewed were positive towards the idea of decreasing gender disparities in school and increasing the accessibility of education to girls, there were exceptions. John, a male student in grade 12, explained that he believes that men and women are not equal as it relates to the type of labor they can perform and the type of positions they can hold. Furthermore, women, he explained, are not trustworthy in many high positions. He supported his claim by referring to scientifically proven biological differences that make women and men more apt for certain occupations. According to John, giving women the choice to enter certain fields would expose them to dangers.\footnote{John. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 23.3.2011.} A resistance and hostility towards the empowerment of women was also noted during the dinner party hosted by the school to welcome myself and the rest of the Swedish exchange group visiting Hillcrest. Here the M.C. stated, “women’s rights is a hot topic. Now you can’t even point a finger at a woman”. He followed this statement by welcoming the female teachers to occupy the dance floor. His remarks seemed to emanate discomfort among the women who first remained seated and then reluctantly entered the floor. In my opinion, the observed behavior may serve as an anecdote of the situation for women in Zambia in general. I perceive there to be an increase in the awareness of women’s rights and the importance of gender equality. However, the opposition that I sensed coming from the M.C. suggests that the movement is in its infancy.

Despite a discouraging learning environment for girls, Maria, a twelfth grade student and the top female student leader at Hillcrest National Technical High School, opines that the girls at the
school are excelling to a greater extent than before. According to her, there has been an increase in motivation among female students.\textsuperscript{86} An increase in girls' drive to exceed is also evident through Tamanda, an eighteen year old Zambian girl's aspirations for the future. She passionately explains that she doesn’t want to be economically dependent and that she plans to "stand on [her] own two legs" and not let a man leave her with her children.

As the majority of the students at the school are boys, there are many classes that consist of only male students and some in which there are only one or two female students. A twelfth grade student who is the only girl in her class explains that she "was shy and felt uncomfortable in the beginning but she adapted after a couple of months".\textsuperscript{87}

**Early Pregnancies**

In almost all of the conversations I had with students about the main obstacles to girls' education, early pregnancies came up. Sandra, a girl in the twelfth grade, describes the engagement in sexual relationships with boys as an obstacle to obtaining an education. Adolescence is an especially risky time for girls because with the introduction of boyfriends and sex, the probability of being infected by HIV/AIDS and becoming pregnant increases. Early pregnancies are also a result of sexual abuse from the girl’s uncles/male teachers.\textsuperscript{88}

Pregnancy is a barrier to gaining an education because it leads to drop outs. Although returning to school is now allowed in government schools such as Hillcrest, it can often be difficult for girls because it can mean having to repeat a grade or bring insecurity to have to return and attend class with classmates that are younger. Sandra describes the difficulties the house girl (house leader) at her school faces having to balance taking care of her three children and schoolwork. Pregnancy is a major disruption and makes it hard to concentrate at school.\textsuperscript{89}

Early pregnancies also create pressures and place limitations upon girls. At Monze Boarding High School in rural Zambia, for example, girls are required to turn the lights off in their dormitories and lock their doors two hours earlier than the male students. This rule hinders and discourages girls from excelling in school since the early curfew gives them less time to dedicate to their studies.

**Early Marriages**

\textsuperscript{86} Maria. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 24.3.2011.
\textsuperscript{87} Female. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 24.3.2011.
\textsuperscript{88} Sandra. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 25.3.2011.
\textsuperscript{89} Sandra. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 25.3.2011.
A number of the teenage girls that I interviewed described the existence of a pressure to marry. Cindy explains that marriage is one of the main causes for girls not enrolling in university or college. The majority of her former female classmates got married directly after completing high school. Marriage is furthermore a source of drop out from secondary school among girls.90

One limiting aspect of early marriages to girls gaining an education according to Cindy is the fact that marriage commonly minimizes girls’ involvement in society and access to information. Early marriages especially hinder girls from excelling academically in rural areas where there is an already minimal access to news and media in general.91

A main factor behind early marriages, especially in rural areas, is poverty. Financial limitations often influence a family’s decision not to invest in their daughters’ education. Lobola, the process in which two families agree on a price that the groom has to pay in order to marry the bride, is often seen as a better return. Indeed, a twelfth grade student explains that because of the financial return of teenage marriages in the process of lobola, “having a girl child is considered to be very beneficial for the parents in village set ups”.92 This view of early marriages is reinforced in an article published by the Integrated Regional Information Networks where Pascal Salimu, an UNFPA gender officer in Luapula Province, northern Zambia, explains that poverty and traditional customs are behind child marriages. “Marrying off young girls is a tradition here... People [in rural areas] perceive a girl child as a source of wealth, and would rather give the girl into marriage to raise funds for educating the boy child”.93

According to a female twelfth grade student, simply the mind set and expectation that girls will marry functions as an obstacle and source of discouragement to girls gaining an education. “Even if you are smart and everything,” she explains, “there is always a mindset of ‘a girl will get married in the future’ and that it is not really necessary for you to be that intelligent because in the end you just end up getting married”. She describes a mindset in which there is belief that “the outcome is you get married, so why do you want to learn all this? Why don’t you take something light like a cooking subject or something like that and not really focus on sciences”.94

**HIV/AIDS and Orphans**

Children whose parents die of HIV/AIDS or other diseases become orphans. This is an obstacle for girls gaining an education as it often means falling under the care of foster parents whom might not dedicate much time to the girls’ academic future. Or in a male student’s words, “if a girl child does not have parents because the parents died from HIV/AIDS or related diseases, she ends up being taken to foster parents or relatives who might not care or have enough money to send the girl to school and instead take the girl child just as a worker”.  

**Miscellaneous**

Other obstacles preventing girls from gaining an education that were mentioned in my interviews included social exclusion, poverty, lack of good schools, child abuse, distance to school, and a labor market lacking in gender equality. For example, one student explains that generally people prefer to employ males rather than females.

**The Benefits of Educating Girls in Livingstone, Zambia**

The majority of the students and people that I interviewed in Zambia were positive towards the idea of girls gaining an education and convinced about the importance of educating more girls in achieving development. Furthermore, the female students all expressed an eagerness and motivation to continue with their studies. A group of students that I interviewed expressed a change in the general mindset of the country as a whole. “There is a philosophy on the rise that educating girls is educating the nation”, explains one student. And the group concurs that “it would be very good to educate girls”. Cindy shares a similar view of the impact of female education and argues, “When a girl is educated, she would really get that knowledge of education” and “really contribute to development”.  

Furthermore, many of the interviewees underlined both the intergenerational effects of female education and the ripple effect educating one girl has on other girls. Cindy, when asked to elaborate on the benefits of educating girls, directly maintained that, “If a girl gets educated I am sure that that person would want others to also get educated”. The notion of a ripple effect following the education of girl was commonly brought up in discussions on the impact of female education. A male student explains, “even if only one girl is educated she will motivate others to

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get educated”. These responses demonstrate knowledge of the effectiveness and power of promoting the education of the female population.

Despite the wide spread positive attitude towards female education among the students, I perceive there to be a lack of acute knowledge about the concrete benefits that educating girls brings to the society. While students were able to list the benefits to the greater community of educating girls, only about forty-percent of the interviewees articulated a complete description of the girl effect. In my opinion the fact that the majority was less articulate about the impact of educating girls for the development of the nation shows that the value of female education hasn’t been fully comprehended or rather internalized at this level. Reviewing my interviews, I have also found that a vast majority of the students that expressed a greater comprehension of and insight into the impact of educating girls were females themselves. A number of the female students that I interviewed furthermore passionately outlined the means with which female education brings lasting change.

**Improved Health and Family Planning**

Students argued that educated women make informed decisions related to the health and nutrition of their children. Consequently, since females are the ones that carry the main or sole responsibility of childcare, they can improve the health standards of the next generation and reduce infant mortality. In Gift’s words, “When women are educated, they will know what to do and their children will be healthy, the diseases in the country will be reduced, and the hygiene standards will be maintained”. The importance of female education for the health of the nation was furthermore reinforced in an article published in the end of 2010 where Elicho Bwalya, the provincial medical officer of Luapula Province, claims that restricted access to education for girls is detrimental to the health of the nation as it often leads to early pregnancies. “This situation of having children carrying their fellow children [in pregnancies] is”, “by affecting the education of girl children and exposing them to HIV and AIDS at a tender age” and “exposing young girls to complications when giving birth, resulting in increased maternal and infant mortality”, “making our healthcare programs very difficult to implement”. And as a result, he explains, “We end up with a lot of diseases in the community, affecting mothers, affecting children, and this will consequently translate to more poverty at national level”.

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Another positive result of educating women that was emphasized was family planning. Andrew explains that family planning would, by lowering population growth, help Zambia develop. Furthermore, educating girls would mean that women could determine a more “proper home budget” and distribute the household’s expenses more effectively.\textsuperscript{103}

A third intergenerational effect of educating girls highlighted by Cindy was that “if a mother is educated, she sees the importance of education and she will really want her children to get educated”.\textsuperscript{104} Furthermore, “[educated] females will encourage their children to do well in their studies,” Gift says. Gift continued by stating, “that this will really help the country” and concluded that, “I think educating just one female will mean educating the whole nation”.\textsuperscript{105} Others shared this view and expressed the unique role women play in deciding whether or not their children go to school.

\textit{Individual Empowerment for Girls}

A number of the girls that I interviewed highlighted the sense of empowerment and self-esteem that education gives them. Lacking an education they believed led to a state of dependency. Caren, a sixteen-year-old day student (non-bording) who attends grade 10 and aspires to become a soldier, explains that when you are educated “you cannot be taken as a slave”. Instead, “you are taken as someone and have more freedom”.\textsuperscript{106}

Gift connected the empowerment of girls to the development of Zambia and explained that female education was crucial in achieving long-term growth. In view of the fact that “Zambia is a developing country”, she explains, “I strongly feel that if a lot of girls are educated, we can really speak out and do something. If we are educated, you know where to be, you know where to stand, and you won’t let anyone control you or a male to undermine you. That will really help in terms of developing the country”. Another benefit of investing in girls’ education that Gift underlined was that “females really cooperate in most areas”. She explained that, “you find that if there are females in development, something sensible will be done”. Gift finished by underlining the importance of gender equality in achieving sustainable development. Girls need to be educated and women’s voices need to be heard in order for the society “to develop together as one instead of only one sex developing and the other being looked down upon”.\textsuperscript{107} A male student expressed a similar opinion. He described the importance of decreasing gender disparities

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in school for the development of the nation itself by referring to the saying that “behind a man’s success is a woman”. “This success”, he explained, “can only be possible if that women is educated. If that woman is not educated, that success cannot come”. Another student added that involving women in politics would reduce corruption.108 Gift’s personal ambition for the future further demonstrates an understanding of the importance of female education. She plans to study chemical engineering at the university after high school. Her decision to choose this field of study is based on the fact that “there are few females doing those kinds of things” and on a desire to “show the boys that we can also do something”.109

**Recommendations on Achieving Education for Girls in Livingstone, Zambia**

A common thread in the recommendations that students and others gave for ways of making education more accessible to girls was the importance of encouraging and motivating girls. Many students underlined the importance of employing motivational tools in obtaining gender parity in schools.

**Girl Friendly Facilities**

Maria claims that one of the reasons behind the improvement in performance among female students is the construction of a girls hostel a few years ago. The construction of girls’ only schools was also described as one way in which female education could be promoted. The creation of such schools was described by an eighteen-year-old student named Bryan as an effective way of “sensitizing girls about education and telling them that ‘no, education is for both males and females’” and removing the “mentality that it is only for males”.110

**Role Models**

“My mother is a source of inspiration. I want to do better than her,” explains Cindy.111 The importance of role models was emphasized especially in my interviews with girls. Both when I asked girls to name their main source of motivation or reason for gaining an education and to give their opinion on how education can become more accessible to girls, they underlined the

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influence of role models. Role models mentioned include female teachers, women in high positions or active in government, and mothers or other female family members.

Lacking someone to look up to is especially common in rural areas where girls are more detached from current events. Having no one to look up to or query may result in a decrease in motivation to persevere with one’s studies. This is common among both girls and boys. But the situation for girls is further intensified due to a greater degree of social and cultural male domination in rural areas. Role models are important for students in shaping their goals. Many of the boys who mentioned wanting to become aviation engineers mentioned a certain Zambian man who had become successful in the business. The knowledge about him seems to have influenced or partly sparked their interest in aspiring to become aviation engineers themselves.

This finding underlines the idea of the girl effect being similar to that of a ripple effect. Empowered and educated women are sources of inspiration and encouragement to other girls.

Quality of Education

An improved quality of education is something that benefits all students. A number of students at Hillcrest remarked on the importance of the quality of education. Sandra explains that in her hometown Kapiri one of the reasons why girls do not enroll in school is due to a lack of good schools.\footnote{Sandra. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 24.3.2011.}

In view of my previous studies on the benefits of improving the quality of education in raising especially girls’ attendance in school I find that it is relevant to present what the Zambian students I met find is important in improving the standard of education. Although my interviews were not geared to identifying ways in which the quality of education can be improved, interacting with the students I found that there was an interest in making the subjects more practically based. Michael, a border student in the twelfth grade, explains that simply looking at the black board and reading textbooks makes it hard to get a complete understanding of a topic. “Learning”, he explains, “is when you can make what you read part of yourself”. According to Michael, the “lack of lab materials” and the domination of theoretical studies, inhibits learning to reach its full potential.\footnote{Michael. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 25.3.2011.} Maria emphasizes the same point and explains that her class’s visit to a power plant really complimented her studies in electricity.\footnote{Maria. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 20.3.2011.} Similarly, Gift, seventeen-years-old,
explains how a visit to the Bryan Livingstone Museum made the topic she was learning about at the moment come alive.¹¹⁵

**Quality of Food Served in School**

At Hillcrest National Technical High School the majority of the girls skip lunch. Instead they abstain from eating completely or consume junk food. The lack of a nutritional diet, Maria explains, often leads to girls fainting or struggling to focus in their classes/studies. To minimize the occurrence of fainting, the school has made lunch compulsory. The rule, according to Maria, however has not been proven successful in attracting girls to the lunch hall.¹¹⁶ Through interviews with other girls I found that the two main reasons that girls chose not to eat lunch in the school cafeteria were that the food was not appetizing and secondly that they sometimes feel uncomfortable dining in school because of the number of boys in the cafeteria. I didn’t get a specific reason explaining this discomfort, but I believe that it may have arisen due to a tension between the sexes and an insecurity among the female students created by the traditional mindset of women being inferior to men. Secondly, the uneasiness may have been shaped by the number of rules imposed by the school limiting the interaction between girls and boys.

In view of the current situation for girls as it relates to food, improving the quality of the food served in school and improving the relationship between boys and girls might make school more accessible to girls and lead to an increase in female enrollment in school.

**Girls Education Awareness and Encouragement Campaigns**

A number of the students I interviewed expressed a positive view of the impact that non-profit and non-governmental organizations have. The motivational tools utilized by organizations such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists Zambia (F.A.W.E.Z.A.) and the Program for Advancement of Girls’ Education (P.A.G.E.) were frequently cited as key in encouraging girls to complete and excel in school. “Motivational tools [including media, sports, debate competitions, and youth activities] are really needed to encourage girls,” Cindy explains.¹¹⁷

Christine Mwemba Mutema, a representative for the Young Women’s Christian Association in Zambia, also underlined the success of awareness campaigns. She explained that the decrease

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in violence directed against females and the increase in awareness of women’s rights between both sexes over the past few years is largely due to awareness campaigns.\textsuperscript{118}

Another source of encouragement for girls, a female twelfth grade student claims, is the government’s Education For All (E.F.A.) target set for the year 2015.\textsuperscript{119} The target is based on the United Nations’ Millennium Development goal of ensuring that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

\textit{Increased Access to Information and Awareness about the Value of Education}

I perceived there to be a clear link between access to information and girls’ enrollment in school. “An inspiration to me is the amount of things that are happening around the world,” explains Cindy, one of my interviewees. When I interviewed Cindy about her motivations behind completing high school and gaining a university degree, the first thing she mentioned was the increase in awareness of and exposure to current events around the world. “I want to get a good education so that I can be better educated about what is happening around the world,” she says. Taking part of the things happening around the globe through, for example, reading the newspaper and watching television, has, furthermore, according to Cindy, resulted in an increased awareness about the importance of education. “Everybody is realizing that there is value now in education. When you are educated, you can do anything. You can go anywhere,” she says.\textsuperscript{120}

One recommendation that I heard from students in regard to how to increase the accessibility of education to girls was to focus on increasing the access to information to girls in rural areas where school dropout rates are higher than in urban areas and higher for females than for males. Reaching girls and women in rural areas is also fundamental in YWCA’s campaign agenda. The non-governmental organization organizes awareness campaigns with a drama group, sends information via television and via two community radio stations to educate women in the rural village of Kazungula on their rights and to inform them about how they can deal with various situations including violations to these rights. Christine explains that decreased violence against women and increased awareness about women’s rights in urban areas is largely due to a facilitated access to information here.\textsuperscript{121}

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\textsuperscript{119} Female. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 25.3.2011.
\textsuperscript{120} Cindy. Personal Interview. Livingstone, Zambia. 24.3.2011.
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The value of an education was something that many students noted to be an important motivator in encouraging both boys and girls to gain an education and explained to be the main factor behind the recent increase in the efforts that students dedicate to their studies. Cindy claims that building a lot of schools in rural areas is an effective way of raising awareness of the importance of education, of facilitating girls’ access to school, and of encouraging especially girls to enroll in school. Andrew, a twelfth grade student, echoes this recommendation. He finds that the government’s construction of schools in villages to has, by removing the source of discouragement brought by long distances and the need to travel far, had a positive effect on girls’ enrollment in school and has increased the accessibility of education to girls.

**Increased Interaction between the Sexes**

A female student suggested that the school should make more co-ed classes to create opportunities for boys and girls to interact. She underlined the importance of granting students exposure to the opposite sex in order to create a more gender equal environment. The importance of interaction between boys and girls is also emphasized by Cindy who maintains that it is important to “make sure that boys and girls really share a lot of courses and subjects together”. This, she explains, would remove ideas that school and certain subjects are only for boys and motivate girls to gain an education. Gift expresses a similar view. To increase girls’ access to education, she argues, “governments can make all of the schools both male and female, see to it that the female teachers are distributed equally with the male teachers, and take measures to those boys who undermine girls to reduce that separation or gap between the girls and the boys”. Furthermore, Gift describes that when she came to Hillcrest Technical High School from a single-sex school, the competition really went up. According to her, introducing more co-educational schools is important because “Studying in the same school as boys will make the girl determined so that she can prove the males wrong”.

The need to create spaces for open interaction between boys and girls was also observed at a presentation about tuberculosis held at the school. In the auditorium the boys and girls had voluntarily sat themselves specific seats: all of the boys occupied the middle and far left sections of the auditorium while the girls occupied the far right section exclusively. When I asked a female twelfth grade student about the conformation of students she responded, “boys don’t like girls”.

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I find that her explanation demonstrates a tension between the sexes. I believe that this tension has arisen due to a meeting between the traditional mindset of what is considered feminine versus masculine and the growth of a more pluralistic and less definite definition of what distinguishes females from males. Furthermore, the friction might be triggered by the many restrictions and rules governing the relationships between boys and girls. The separation and decrease in communication that these regulations create between boys and girls may be responsible for the strained, uncomfortable, and conflicting relationship observed. Immanuel, a college student, partially confirms my explanation. He says that the separation in the auditorium “may have been caused by two things”. Firstly, it “may be the rules that the school has set” and refers to a rule at his own school which permits girls from “visit[ing] or step[ing] their feet into the boys’ hostels for no reasons”. Secondly, the division may have been caused by “traditional influence where men are more respected than women”. However, he underscores the rarity of such behavior and believes that another reason for this conformation of students could be have been that they were instructed to do this.\footnote{Immanuel. Personal Interview via Facebook. 19.4.2011.} Immanuel’s nephew, a former student at Hillcrest, gives two explanations for the separation. Firstly, the separation exists due to the fact that the school is technical and highly competitive. To be admitted to the school one must have graduated from the ninth grade with 500 points. Furthermore, the government pays for a certain percentage of their tuition fees depending on the percentile in which your examination results fall. This creates an immense competition among the students, especially between male and female students. There is a constant struggle in which “boys say they are more intelligent than girls while girls also say they are more intelligent than boys”. According to the former Hillcrest student, the girls and boys sat separately in the school hall “to see which side is better when asked questions”. He summarizes that this competition “has brought hatred between [the sexes]”. The second reason behind the tension and separation between male and female students is that the “school, being a boarding school, has caused many girls to be bullied by boys. So it’s like girls fear boys”. He adds that the school hasn’t intervened or promoted commingling between the sexes because they want to promote competition, ensure that both sexes maintain high grades, keep the school’s ranking (Hillcrest Technical High School is currently the second best school after Bryan Kaunda Technical High School) and prestige.\footnote{Immanuel’s nephew. Reported by Immanuel via Facebook. 19.4.2011.}

\textit{Involve Parents}
Cindy explains that parents play a decisive role in whether or not girls enroll in school. She claims that, “In order for a girl to get access to education, her parents need to be there for her from the start and feed her with information about the importance of education”. Gift also identified the importance of involving parents and argued that, “the government should educate parents, especially those in rural areas, about the importance of girls going to school”. She explained that “some parents don’t know the importance [of educating girls] and instead parents take the males [to school] and they take the girls to get married at a young age”.

**Female Representation in Politics**

When I interviewed students, the fact that there were women in governmental positions often came up. In describing the current situation for girls as it relates to education, the existence of women in governmental position was referred to as an indication of an improvement in girls’ accessibility to education and a change in people’s perception of the role of women. Furthermore, female representation in politics was seen as a motivating force behind girls’ enrollment. A female twelfth grade student explains that “you find that most people in the government are males, but if they had to put more women [in government], girls will get inspired that if I get educated at least I can be someone one day”.

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