



Topic 2: MDG 3, Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

Part1: Educating Girls & Opportunities in Life

Aim: To identify obstacles girls face in having access to education; to compare and contrast the different life opportunities of girls in developed vs developing countries in the Asia Pacific; to draw conclusions about the implications for society if girls are educated.

Overview: Students will follow the life cycle of a girl in a developed country and a non-developed country. Students will draw conclusions about the implications for society and a country as a whole if girls are not educated at the same rate as boys, and conversely the difference it makes when women and girls are given equal opportunities and benefits.

Materials: Copies of the 'Difference Educating Women Makes' handout which includes *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 'Women Around the World statements' handout, 'Demographic data of women in Laos and Australia', 'The Life Cycle of a Girl' handout, and Case Study materials.

Introduction Activity:

Ask the class why they think education is important? Why do they think education is considered to be a human right?

Explain that worldwide, girls constitute 55% of all out-of-school children. In some countries the gender gap is much higher. Lack of access to school can be caused by factors such as general poverty, poor school quality or distance to schools. However, there are some added challenges that reduce girls' access to education. For example, girls are often kept home to assist with chores such as collecting water. If girls are able to go to school, they are the students who typically receive the least teacher time.

Ask students to brainstorm (as a class or in small groups) why the following obstacles would keep girls from going to school: **Poverty, Safety, Local Traditions, Emergencies**

Poverty: some families do not have enough money to afford school fees or the cost of uniforms and school supplies. When funds for education are limited, boys are often given the priority. Families in this predicament may need children to work to contribute to the family income or do house hold chores so the parents can work.

Safety: some families keep their children at home because the school is too far away and children can't make the journey twice a day. Getting to school might also be dangerous, particularly for young, vulnerable girls who might encounter harassment or violence.

Gender roles: Girls may be forced to marry young, drop out of school and dedicate themselves to housework or care for younger children and sick family members.

Emergencies: During times of conflict, crisis and times of natural disasters, millions of children do not attend proper schools.

Students could respond to this question in written format or in a group discussion.

Group Discussion:

Place/project statement on the board:

“ We have found from study after study that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls and women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, promote health- including the prevention of HIV- and increase the chances for education for the next generation. Let us invest in women and girls.”

(Kofi Annan, Former United Nations Secretary-General n.d.)

Ask students what they think about this quote. Do they agree/disagree? Ask students to justify why they made their decision.

Have students watch either of these youtube clips:

- The Girl Effect- www.thegirleffect.org
- The Girlfund- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VwnTVYDsOY>

After watching the video clips, ask students:

- What happens when girls are taken out of school?
- What different strategies were used to improve the status of girls?
- How might educating girls contribute to better economic and health outcomes? (think at the individual, family, community, and national levels)

Activity: The Life Cycles of Girls

Materials: Worksheet- ‘Demographic data of women in Laos and Australia’, worksheet- ‘Life Cycle of a Girl’

Look at the worksheet with statistics showing demographic information for women in Australia and Laos. Point out some of the indicators which show inequalities eg secondary school enrolment rate, antenatal coverage. Then mention the indicators which are similar eg women in parliament. Discuss reactions to the data as a class.

Direct students to complete the worksheet of the life cycle of a typical girl in Australia and Laos based on the demographic data. Descriptions will cover **Childhood, Education, Health, Career, Marriage, Family**. Have students compare the life situations they devised for a typical girl in Laos, and then have them compare the possibilities for the typical girl in Australia.

After students have identified the patterns found in their descriptions (work, education, early marriage, early childbearing, greater chances of maternal death), have groups synthesize what they have learned from this activity. What surprised them? How might a boy’s experience be different?

Ask students to predict the impact for a community as a whole if girls are not educated (greater poverty without economic impact of educated women, more expenditure on reactive health care rather than less money on proactive health care, etc).

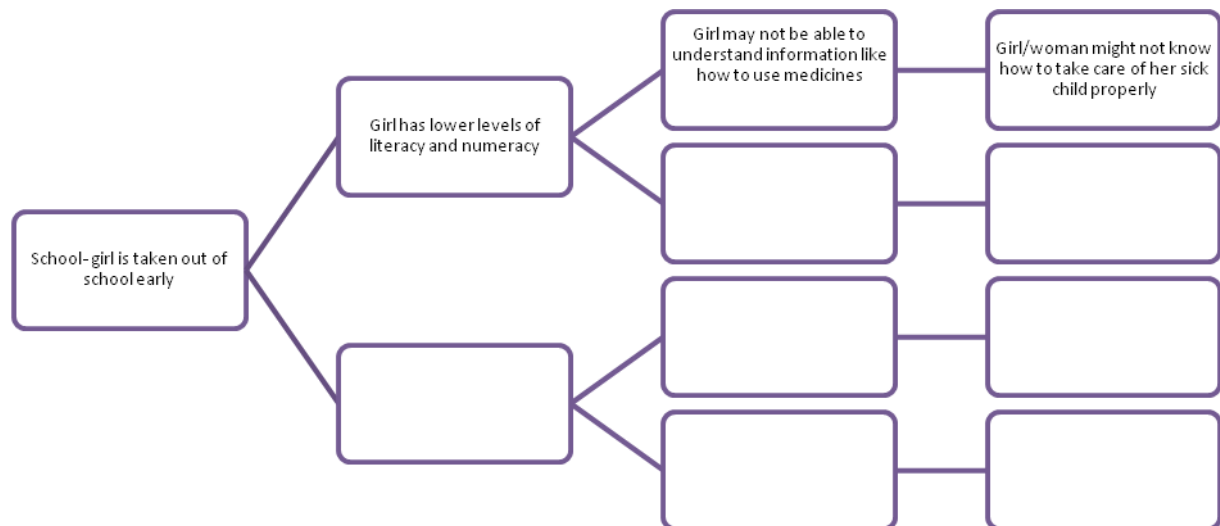
Conversely, what are the impacts if all girls are educated? In what ways may girls who have received an education contribute positively to their community and country? Eg economic productivity.

Variation:

In small groups, students select one stage in the life cycle, and draw a **“futures web”**. Use the “futures web” to discuss the consequences for the girl, her family, community and country. Eg “girls who miss out on school may have fewer job opportunities.”

Ask students what strategies they would use to break the cycle and improve the lives of women. Eg if the girl is allowed to finish high school, then she might be able to get a better job, earn an income, she would be better informed about her health, then she would make better decisions about the nutrition and health of her children, then her children would be healthier and able to concentrate at school, and so on.

NB May need to prompt this discussion by providing a few examples: eg What happens if the girl is married at 15? How could that impact her future opportunities to work, earn an income?





Case Study: Water and Women (web-based activity)



Across Asia, the Pacific and Africa, poor communities often cite access to clean water as their main challenge.

Improving water access helps everyone, but girls stand to gain the most. It's girls who are mostly responsible for collecting water and they often miss out on school when the nearest water source is far from home.

Students look up the following article and video clip at the addresses below:

- http://www.worldvision.com.au/Issues/WaterSanitationHygiene/Who_is_it_happening_to_/Why_women_and_girls_suffer_most.aspx
- http://www.worldvision.com.au/Issues/WaterSanitationHygiene/Who_is_it_happening_to_/A_heavy_burden_to_carry_girls_water_and_sch.aspx

Discuss

- What impact does poor access to water have on the girl's daily life?
- What are some of the daily tasks that interfere with girls being able to go to school?
- What would happen if these tasks do not get done? What are the impacts on the girl? On her family? Her community?
- Brainstorm: what are some of the solutions you can think of? Who has the power to change things?



Extension Activity: Human Rights and Women's Rights

Materials: Worksheet- 'Difference Educating Women Makes' which includes a summary of Articles from the *Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, worksheet- 'Women from around the world statements'

Students are introduced to the *Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, and identify the linkages between justice issues and how they affect the real lives of women around the world. Students are encouraged to think about the causes and effects of denying certain rights to women.

Ask the class what they understand as a 'right'?

Explain to them that according to international law, men and women are entitled to equal entitlements and protection eg right to education. Introduce the *Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*.

NB Refer to handout 'The Difference Educating Women Makes' or <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> for more information.

The students form pairs. For each pair, hand out the worksheet summarising selected articles from of the *Convention in the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. Also hand out 'Women Around the World' worksheet, with contains statements illustrating rights from the Convention being unmet.

In pairs, have students identify the linkages between the statements from women and the human rights Articles. Ask them to discuss what rights are not being met in each situation.

Eg "This statement illustrates Article 10 is not being met because the girl is prevented from attending school whereas her brothers can"

Discussion questions:

- What are some possible reasons the rights aren't being met in the statements?
- What are some cases of rights being unmet that they have heard about in Australia? Eg girls prevented from playing some sports, not many female CEOs or politicians

Variations:

1. Students brainstorm ways in which the woman's rights in each statement could be improved.
2. Students use newspaper, magazine or online news articles from the Asia or Pacific to find other examples which highlight women's rights, and steps that are being taken to improve them.



Jargon Busters

Human Rights - the recognition that all people are equally important, regardless of age, race, gender, wealth, religion or place of birth, and should be treated with fairness and dignity. They are a statement of the basic freedoms and protections that belong to all people.

Women's rights - freedoms and entitlements of women and girls of all ages. They differ slightly from general human rights, because of the historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls. Issues commonly associated with women's rights include the right to vote, to work, equal pay, education and to own property.

Equality of opportunity - an approach which provides a social environment in which people are not excluded from the activities of society, such as education, employment, or health care, on the basis of traits, such as gender.

Empowerment - the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and decisions that affect their lives. People develop their ability to participate, negotiate, influence, and control decisions.