

Homeschooling: solution for educating girls in afghanistan

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Homeschooling: Solution for Educating Girls in Afghanistan On December 10, 1948, “ the General Assembly of the United Nations declared education a human right” (Kavazanjian 41). In other words, every individual has the right to learn and enhance their knowledge. Although most people exercise this right easily, others are not so lucky. For example, many girls in Afghanistan do not have the means to obtain a primary education. Traditional values, poverty and lack of security prevent Afghani girls from being schooled properly, which are forms of structural violence. According to the authors in “ Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology in the 21st Century”, John Galtung was the first person to recognize structural violence as a form of abuse and weakness. He illustrates this violence as “ any constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures” (DuNann and Leighton 1). He also described structural violence as “ almost always invisible, embedded in social structures” which is ordinary and accepted in our society (DuNann and Leighton 1). Although, this violence is invisible, it does have harmful effects and can lead to physical violence. Afghani girls who are struggling to get their education are victims of this form of violence on a daily basis. These girls are eager to complete their studies but often have to deal with many difficulties and conflicts to earn this human right. As a result, they are unable to benefit from an education and enhance their lives. There are many traditional and cultural barriers that make it difficult for Afghani girls to obtain an education . One of the most important obstacles they face are the traditional and cultural values. In their culture, marriage is a very important aspect and helps one gain respect in society. From an early age, girls are taught that their sole purpose in life is to get married, serve a

husband, and bear him healthy sons. Most of them are confined to their homes, in which they learn about household chores and obedience. The woman cannot leave the house without male guardians' permission or accompanied by them (Kavazanjian 43). Because of these traditional and cultural values, many girls are also married at a very early age. These thoughts are embedded in their minds because most of the men do not want western influence mingling with their traditions. In " Addressing Gender Disparities: An Investigation of Nonformal Education in Afghanistan, " the author states that nearly half of the families believe that educating girls " would be contrary to family commitment, the child's marriage or their tradition" (Kavazanjian 43). This shows that parents do not compromise on any changes to their traditions; instead, they choose no education for girls at all. Although, structural violence is invisible, the harmful effects are still present. Due to early marriages and traditional barriers, these girls are not getting a chance to explore their talents and skills. Instead, their talents are being confined and restraint. Therefore, these cultural barriers are clearly a form of structural violence on Afghani girls. Another obstacle that girls face to get their education is poverty. Afghanistan is a third world country, where basic necessities like food, water, and shelter are not easily obtainable for every citizen. Many of the children are malnourished and are not provided with three proper meals a day. For this reason, children are often forced to give up education to support their family. Boys are allowed to work outside the house whereas, " girls have domestic chores that keep them from attending school" (Kavazanjian 43). From raising younger siblings to cooking and cleaning, duties of these girls prevent them from going to school.

Although, some of the girls provide income for their families by doing small chores, the wages are not enough to fund their schooling. Even if the family can afford to send their kids to school, many parents prefer to send boys instead of girls. Boys are considered first priority to educate and have better opportunities in work. The girls are targets of structural violence since education is not seen as a necessity for them. Afghani girls see their brothers learning and improving in life, but do not argue or dispute their parents' decision. In fact, most of them do not even realize that one of their human rights is being violated. As a result, the literacy rate for young Afghani girls is very low. For example, " Meeting EFA: Afghanistan Community School" shows a study that in rural areas such as " Paktia, Paktika, and Ghazni have approximately sixteen percent enrollment of girls in schools" (Balwanz 3). Therefore, the rural nature of Afghanistan and its poverty causes many girls to forego school. Safety concerns for the girls are another obstacle they face formed by structural violence also. Afghanistan was under control of the Taliban for many years and traces of the regime are still noticeable today. The government is unstable and unable to provide security for its citizens. As a result, women and children are being targeted as victims of violence. Specifically, girls that have to " travel long distance to attend school" are often abused verbally and physically (Kavazanjian 42). Some are even kidnapped and raped. To avoid such harassment, parents simply chose not send to their daughters to school (Kavazanjian 42). Parents would rather keep their children safe at home, than to risk the girls' lives by sending them off to school. Also, there have been many incidents where members of the Taliban burned schools and killed teachers and students, particularly women

(Kavazanjian 43). Such attacks have frightened and terrorized the Afghani society. Not only the parents, but students and teachers are also afraid of such violence. Therefore, Afghanistan's unsafe environment is another barrier that keeps Afghani girls from getting their education. Men and women of Afghanistan have been following their traditions from their fathers and forefathers. Respect and dignity is an important factor in their society. Afghani men are considered the head of the family, with complete decision making power. The woman usually listens to her husband because he provides her with basic necessities. Many Afghani men fear that educating girls will allow the girls to become independent. The girls could think more openly and could question the rules and traditions of the household. This would cause the men to lose their importance in the home. This is clearly a form of structural violence since Afghani men do not want the women to overpower them. By keeping women beneath their status, the men can have more control and command. This not only destroys the women's self-esteem, but causes them to believe that they are powerless and worthless in society. Therefore, by denying girls their education, Afghani men are harming their self-worth and confidence. Another opposition that Afghani girls face is the acts of terrorism by the Taliban and others. There are many schools that have been burned, destroyed, and terrorized by shootings that "take aim at education to make a war on the government" (Bearak 1). Many parents fear such violence and dread the toll that it can take. These guardians want to protect their kids like any normal parent would in their situation. In their opinion, it is better for their daughter to stay at home safely, rather than to risk her life daily. As a result, many parents simply

avoid this terrorism by not sending their children to school. Although educating every Afghani child is a difficult task, it is not impossible to achieve. There are many educational programs in progress that have successful stories. For example, the International Rescue Committee's Home-Based Schools is a program which provides supplies, training for teachers and education for girls in “ teachers’ homes, compounds, or community spaces such as mosques” (Kirk and Winthrop 2). These schools provide accessible opportunities for young girls to get their education with not as much of a struggle. For example, it is not considered safe or respectable for girls to be taught by male teachers. As a result, most of the teachers from Home-Based Schools are females and are often from the same village (Kirk and Winthrop 2). This not only pleases the parents but also makes the girls feel comfortable and safe. Also, many Afghani teachers have discontinued teaching because of security purposes so this is a good opportunity to support their family in the comfort of their homes. With schools nearby, parents don’t have to worry about girls walking long distances alone. In addition, the classes are shorter compared to regular school so that the girls can finish their chores at home (Kirk and Winthrop 2). These girls will not be forced to give up their education if they can have time for their household duties and families (Kirk and Winthrop 2). Therefore, institutions such as Home-Based Schools not only educate the Afghani girls, but also work with the girls’ schedules and duties. The program is designed to serve the girls’ needs, while maintaining the traditions and regulations of Afghanistan. If such programs are established throughout the country, every Afghani girl could complete her education without worrying about the numerous barriers

in the way. There are many benefits that come with an education. For example, educated Afghani girls can serve their country, community, and their families. The most significant treasure they will use from schooling is to be able to read and write. By being literate, they can be aware of current issues from newspapers and books. Afghani women can also learn about their rights and laws. Furthermore, they can pass the learned information to the future generations or to the illiterate elderly. These girls can not only make their homes a better place but can have a major impact on the entire society. The education can open many doors for Afghani girls to work such as becoming a teacher, doctor, or simply a better human. By gaining an education, these girls will be in a better place to help their communities and help to rebuild their country. Mothers are often considered the first teacher of a child. However, if Afghani women are not educated, they will have nothing to teach to the future generations of Afghanistan. Although there are many obstacles in educating Afghani girls, home schooling and international organizations can work together to tackle the traditional values, poverty and safety issues. This will not only improve the quality of life for the girls, but will also prevent them from being a target of structural violence. Remember, education is a human right, and nobody, not even young girls in Afghanistan, should be denied from this right. Works Cited Balwanz, David. " Meeting EFA: Afghanistan Community Schools. " Academy for Educational Development (2007): 3 ERIC. Web. 4 April 2011. Bearak, Barry. " As War Enters Classroom, Fear Grips Afghan." Wwww. nytimes. com. New York Times Company, 10 July 2007. Web. 15 April 2011. . Kavazanjian, Laura. " Addressing Gender Disparities: An Investigation of Nonformal Education in Afghanistan. "

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