

# **EDUCATION: A HUMAN RIGHT FOR GIRLS\***



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*Though we loved school, we hadn't realized how important education was until the Taliban tried to stop us.*

**GOING TO SCHOOL, READING AND DOING OUR HOMEWORK WASN'T JUST A WAY OF PASSING TIME, IT WAS OUR FUTURE.**

—MALALA YOUSAFZAI

## **BACKGROUND**

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), education is a human right and essential for the exercise of all other rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women calls upon states to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure them equal rights with men in the field of education.

While girls are gaining access to primary education, gender disparities still remain high. Around the world, girls are unable to attend school for discriminatory reasons, including fear of violence. Girls are often discouraged from continuing in STEM fields, expected to do more housework as young adults than boys, and in many areas of the world are subject to forced and early child marriage. In 2013, 123 million young people worldwide lacked basic literacy skills, and girls comprised 61% of that total. Improving the socio-economic outcomes for girls and young women is of central importance not only for girls and women themselves, but also for their communities and future generations.

In July 2016, Malala spent her 19th birthday, Malala Day, visiting girls struggling to go to school in refugee camps in East Africa to make sure the world hears their stories. She launched the #YesAllGirls campaign during her visit to remind world leaders that they have promised 12 years of free, safe, quality education to all girls, including refugees.

Malala believes that access to quality education is a human right, for every girl as well as every boy. Education allows us to learn more about others and ourselves, and engage meaningfully with our world. However, across the world more than 130 million girls are denied this right as a result of poverty, lack of access, violence, or discrimination.



UNHCR / Jiro Ose / March 2014

## **ACTIVITY**

The purpose of this activity is to get you thinking about how power and privilege can influence our lives, sometimes without us even realizing it. The goal is to identify and understand how even the simplest privilege—say, getting a ride to school from a parent—can affect one's education. By understanding that these privileges are not universal, we can identify the gaps in equality so as to work towards ensuring that all girls have the same opportunities to learn.

\*Adapted from resource guide material written by Michele A. Clark and Larisa Warhol

## **EDUCATION PRIVILEGE WALK\***

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Find a large room with open space, enough for each member of your group to stand an arm's length apart in a straight line.

Choose one person, either a club leader or member, to be the moderator. This person will be giving the instructions that determine whether you step forwards, backwards, or stay in place during the walk.

#### **To be read by the Moderator:**

"We all come from different walks of life. Today, we're going to illustrate just how some walks are different from others—literally!

This activity is meant to engage each member of the group in an exercise on privilege, as it relates to education as a human right for girls. I will say various statements out loud with instructions and, as they pertain to you, you will step forward, backwards, or stay in place. This activity should be done in silence. As you hear each question out loud, think to yourself about how it relates to you, your peers, and girls all over the world.

Remember: If at any time you feel uncomfortable with a statement as it's read, you can stay where you are.

Everyone form a straight line with an arm's length apart."

### **STATEMENTS:**

1. If the language spoken at your school is your first language, **take one step forward**
2. If either of your parents or guardians graduated from college, **take one step forward**
3. If you were/are being encouraged to apply for college by your family members, **take one step forward**
4. If you have visible or invisible learning disabilities, **take one step backwards**
5. If your work and school holidays coincide with your religious holidays that you celebrate, **take one step forward**
6. If you have ever studied the culture and history of your ancestors in school, **take one step forward**
7. If you have been bullied based on something you cannot change (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation), **take one step backwards**
8. If you were ever offered a job or opportunity based upon your relationship with a friend or family member, **take one step forward**

\*Adapted from the Privilege Walk Activity from State University of New York, found at: [http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/pdf/Module%205\\_1\\_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/pdf/Module%205_1_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf)

9. If you feel you were ever passed over on a job or opportunity based on your gender, ethnicity, or age, **take one step backwards**
10. If you come from a family environment that encourages taking challenging courses in your educational career, **take one step forward**
11. If you receive a regular allowance from your family, **take one step forward**
12. If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke or statement you overheard about your race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, or sexual orientation but felt unsafe confronting the situation, **take one step backwards**
13. If you rely on public transportation to get to school, **take one step backwards**
14. If you have ever felt unsafe walking at night, **take one step backwards**
15. If you have ever felt like your opinion was valued less than another classmate's by your instructor or peers based on you race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, or sexual orientation, **take one step backwards**
16. If you can look at the mainstream media and find people of your race/ethnicity represented fairly and in a wide range of roles, **take one step forward**

**To be read by the Moderator:**

"Take a minute to look around you, and, without speaking, think about where you ended up. Where are you in relation to your peers? What statements, if any, struck you in particular? Where might you be if this activity was being done in another country, such as Pakistan?"

When everyone has taken a moment to gather themselves, take a break. Grab a snack or sip of water and allow yourself a moment to decompress. When you're ready, come back as a club to discuss.

## DISCUSS

- What was your initial reaction to where you found yourself at the end of this list of privileges?
- Have you come to any new realizations? If so, which one has the strongest impact?
- What challenges/gaps in equality do girls face when it comes to education?
- What can we do to minimize those gaps?
- Where do you think Malala would be standing at the end of the Education Privilege Walk? Why?

## TAKE IT FURTHER!

Join Malala's movement! Visit [malala.org](http://malala.org) to learn how you can Stand #withMalala and demand a quality education for every girl. Use your creativity and passion to take an active role by spreading awareness or advocating for every girl to get 12 years of a free, safe, quality education.

Want to try this activity again? Download Girl Up's "A Walk in Her Shoes" (<http://bit.ly/2erueM8>), which takes you through the journey of both Ethiopian refugee girls and Guatemalan indigenous girls in UN programs as they struggle for their education as well.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### WATCH:

#### "HE NAMED ME MALALA"

DVD is available for purchase at:

<http://www.henamedmemalalamovie.com>

Gather a group of friends or classmates for a screening of the film on campus or at your after-school club. Visit [malala.org/students](http://malala.org/students) for more information and resources, including the discussion guide to help facilitate a conversation following the film.

You can also watch the video about the Malala Fund:

<https://vimeo.com/141199855>

### WATCH:

#### "A GIRL WHO DEMANDED SCHOOL: KAKENYA NTAIYA"

[http://www.ted.com/talks/kakenya\\_ntaiya\\_a\\_girl\\_who\\_demanded\\_school](http://www.ted.com/talks/kakenya_ntaiya_a_girl_who_demanded_school)

Kakenya Ntaiya made a deal with her father: She would undergo the traditional Maasai rite of passage of female circumcision if he would let her go to high school. Ntaiya tells the fearless story of continuing on to college, and of working with her village elders to build a school for girls in her community. It's the educational journey of one that altered the destiny of 125 young women.

#### Discuss:

1. What is female genital mutilation (FGM) and why is it prevalent in Kenya? How does it affect girls?
2. If you were a human rights expert, what could you do to challenge this practice? How is Kakenya Ntaiya an inspiration to girls and women around the world?

### WATCH:

#### "TO EDUCATE A GIRL," UNICEF

<https://www.linktv.org/shows/viewchange/episodes/to-educate-a-girl>

In 2010, filmmakers Frederick Rendina and Oren Rudavsky traveled to Nepal and Uganda, two countries emerging from conflict and struggling with poverty, to find the answer to one question: what does it take to educate a girl? Framed by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) to provide equal access to education for girls by 2015, "To Educate a Girl" takes a ground-up and visually stunning view of that effort through the eyes of girls out of school, starting school or fighting against the odds to stay in school.

#### Discuss:

1. What are some challenges that girls face when trying to obtain equal access to an education? Compare and contrast Uganda and Nepal.
2. What are major organizations doing to address the challenges of educating girls? What more can be done to ensure girls have the opportunity to attend school?

### WATCH:

#### DARE TO EDUCATE AFGHAN GIRLS: SHABANA BASIJ-RASIKH

[http://www.ted.com/talks/shabana\\_basij\\_rasikh\\_dare\\_toEducate\\_afghan\\_girls#t-548954](http://www.ted.com/talks/shabana_basij_rasikh_dare_toEducate_afghan_girls#t-548954)

Imagine a country where girls must sneak out to go to school, with deadly consequences if they get caught learning. This was Afghanistan under the Taliban, and traces of that danger remain today. 22-year-old Shabana Basij-Rasikh runs a school for girls in Afghanistan. She celebrates the power of a family's decision to believe in their daughters—and tells the story of one brave father who stood up to local threats.

#### Discuss:

1. What are the consequences of not educating girls around the world, especially in places like Afghanistan?
2. What do you find inspiring about Shabana, her father, and their belief in education?