I AM MALALA: 
A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

THEME 5: Malala and Violence against Women and Girls

For more information or to submit feedback about the resource guide, visit malala.gwu.edu.
To expand the reach of Malala’s memoir—*I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*—and spread Malala’s message to young people and activists, the Global Women’s Institute (GWI) of the George Washington University (GW), in collaboration with the Malala Fund, developed a resource guide for high school and college students around the world. Building on the content of Malala’s memoir, the resource guide supports global efforts to mobilize women and men to address women’s and girls’ rights to an education.

Malala’s memoir opens the door to some of the greatest challenges of our modern world. It is about politics, education, culture, religion and violence against women and girls. It is a moment in the life of a young girl and in the history of a country. To do these broad themes justice, faculty from a wide range of disciplines contributed to the development of the resource guide.

The resource guide challenges students to think deeply, share their experiences, and engage with their communities. Each theme is divided into 4 parts:

- **Part 1** is the narrative with learning objectives to frame the conversation and help plan lessons;
- **Part 2** lists the resources to help students and teachers deepen their knowledge about the theme;
- **Part 3** lists individual and group activities, including some to be done outside of class if students are interested;
- **Part 4** is the high school supplement intended to help high school teachers introduce and discuss some of the concepts and context that appear in the theme narratives.

Each part may be printed separately to be used by teachers or students.

**THE EIGHT THEMES ARE:**

1. **Memoir as Literature and History**
2. **Education: A Human Right for Girls**
3. **Cultural Politics, Gender and History in Malala Yousafzai’s *I am Malala***
4. **Religion and Religious Extremism**
5. **Malala and Violence against Women and Girls**
6. **Malala Leadership Essay**
7. **Malala and the Media**
8. **Global Feminisms: Speaking and Acting about Women and Girls**
The attempted murder of Malala Yousafzai by the Taliban for speaking out for girls’ education and peace can be viewed as an isolated act by religious extremists. But it is also emblematic of the discrimination and violence that women and girls throughout the world are subjected to because of their gender. This narrative will explore the global phenomenon of violence against women and girls through the lens of Malala’s story by addressing the following topics:

1. One girl’s story: Malala’s story as an act of violence against women and girls
2. The world as we know it: Violence against women today
3. Taking action: Standing up to violence against women and girls

One Girl’s Story: Malala’s Story as an Act of Violence Against Women and Girls

In the first pages of her memoir, Malala points out how poorly girls are valued in her community and in the Muslim world, as compared with boys. “When I was born, people in our village commiserated with my mother and nobody congratulated my father... I was a girl in a land where rifles are fired in celebration of a son, while daughters are hidden away behind a curtain, their role in life simply to prepare food and give birth to children” (Page 13).

Malala’s upbringing was unusual for her setting: Her father encouraged her to excel academically, to speak up, and to dream of a future where she could participate actively in society, as a doctor, a politician, or whatever else she desired. These aspirations led her to reject the growing restrictions on her education and mobility by the Taliban and to speak out publicly to defend her own rights and those of her schoolmates.

The Taliban’s violent response was an attempt not only to silence Malala’s voice as a human rights defender and peace activist but also to reinforce patriarchal and extremist values that keep women and girls in the shadows of society. Sadly, Malala’s story is not unique. Throughout the world, girls are neglected, denied education, physically mistreated, sexually abused, sold into slavery, mutilated, and married against their will in the name of tradition, religion, honor, and male entitlement. Women’s human rights defenders are threatened, beaten, raped, and murdered in order to keep them from speaking out. There is not a country in the world devoid of abuse, violence, and discrimination against women. However, thanks to the courage of girls like Malala and men like Ziauddin Yousafzai, Malala’s father, international efforts to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls have become increasingly visible.
The World as We Know It: Violence Against Women and Girls Today

“It’s not just the Taliban killing children... Sometimes it’s drone attacks, sometimes it’s wars, sometimes it’s hunger. And sometimes it’s their own family. In June two girls my age were murdered in Gilgit ... for posting a video online showing themselves dancing in the rain wearing traditional dress and headscarves. Apparently their own stepbrother shot them.” (I am Malala, Page 312)

Violence against women and girls, also referred to as gender-based violence, is one of the most pervasive and underreported human rights violations in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately one in three women in the world will experience physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives.1 This violence takes many forms, from physical and sexual assault by intimate partners and family members to child marriage, trafficking, female genital mutilation, femicide, and violence in the name of “honor,” tradition, or religion. The types of violence that women and girls face vary according to their social, ethnic, cultural, and religious background, their economic circumstances, and their age. What links all these acts is that they are overwhelmingly more likely to be committed by men against women and that the main purpose of the violence is to maintain a system of women’s subordination to men.

According to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), violence against women “…refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” This definition includes but is not limited to:

- physical violence, such as slapping, kicking, hitting, or use of weapons
- emotional abuse, such as systematic humiliation, controlling behavior, degrading treatment, insults, and threats
- sexual violence, including coerced sex or being forced into sexual activities considered degrading or humiliating
- denial of resources, services, and opportunities also known as economic abuse, such as restricting access to financial, health, educational, or other resources with the purpose of controlling or subjugating a person

Violence against women and girls can take place within the family and the community; it can be perpetrated or condoned by governments or social structures. Both men and women can be victims or agents of violence, but the characteristics of violence commonly committed against women and men differ. Women and girls are much more likely than men to be physically assaulted or murdered by someone they know—often a family member or intimate partner. They are also at much greater risk of being sexually assaulted or exploited, in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. Men are the main perpetrators of violence against men as well as against women.2

The costs of violence against women and girls are enormous, for women themselves, their families, and for society as a whole. The impact of violence on women’s health and well-being has been documented in serious health problems ranging from injuries, chronic pain, and gastrointestinal disorders to mental health problems such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as pregnancy complications, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Intimate partner violence is a major cause of death among women, due to femicide as well as suicide. Women who are physically abused in pregnancy are more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby, and to have a child die before the age of 5. The effects of violence extend to future generations; boys who witness their father’s violence against their mothers are more likely to abuse their own partners, and girls who witness violence are more likely to experience violence as adolescents and adults.3

The economic and social costs of violence are also significant. The World Bank estimates that the costs of intimate partner violence, in terms of lost productivity and public expenditures, are as much as 2 percent of GDP, which is more than many countries spend on primary education. Violence is also a major barrier to girls’ education. Several studies in Africa and South Asia have found that sexual violence in schools is common, and many girls drop out of school because of violence, unintended pregnancy, or being married by their families, often to much older men.4

3 Ellsberg, M., H. A. Jansen, et al. Intimate partner violence and

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Despite the high costs of violence against women and girls, laws and social norms in nearly every society in the world legitimize, obscure, and deny abuse. The same acts that would be punished if directed at an employer, a neighbor, or an acquaintance often go unchallenged when men direct them at women, especially within the family.

The causes of violence against women and girls are complex and shaped by forces operating at the levels of individuals, relationships, communities, and societies. Key risk factors include exposure to violence as a child, low educational levels of men and women, male alcohol abuse, male control of household decision making and wealth, cultural norms supporting violence as a way of resolving conflicts, male dominance over women, and policies and laws that discriminate against women, for example, by restricting their mobility, ability to get divorce, and rights to property and assets. In many countries some forms of violence (for example, marital rape) are not criminalized, and women often suffer additional stigma and abuse when they try to report violence committed against them to their families, police, and other authorities.5

Taking Action: Standing Up to Violence Against Women and Girls

For over three decades, women’s advocacy groups around the world have focused attention on the physical, psychological, and sexual abuse of women and called for political action. They have provided abused women with shelter, lobbied for legal reforms, and challenged the widespread attitudes and beliefs that support violence against women and girls. Increasingly, these efforts are having an effect, and now policies and laws to address violence against women and girls figure prominently on the international development agenda. Numerous international documents, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations Resolution on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, commit governments to take necessary measures to eliminate violence against women and girls, and establish indicators for monitoring governments’ progress. According to a recent World Bank report, 475 out of 100 countries studied have enacted laws to criminalize domestic violence and sexual violence against women. Even the U.N. Security Council has passed several landmark resolutions addressing sexual violence in conflict settings and recognizing the necessity of including women’s voices in peace and security issues. To date, most efforts have focused on increasing women’s access to justice, through better laws to protect women and girls and to increase sanctions on offenders, as well as providing safe haven and compassionate care for survivors of violence. Although these constitute important first steps, experience has shown that laws and services by themselves are not sufficient to effectively improve the lives of women and girls, as evidenced by Malala’s struggle for girls’ education.

Prevention of violence is equally important, and the cornerstone of prevention is ensuring that women have access to the information, education, resources, and ability to make decisions regarding their lives.

A key component of violence prevention involves challenging social norms regarding appropriate roles and responsibilities for men and women. According to the World Health Organization’s Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women, women in many countries believed that a husband would be justified in beating his wife for reasons such as disobedience, impertinence, failure to prepare food on time or adequately care for the children, questions about money or girlfriends, ventures outside the home without permission, refusing sex, or suspicions of infidelity. All of these represent transgressions of dominant gender norms in many societies. Malala’s courage in challenging traditional views of appropriate behavior for girls in her community is an inspiration for women and girls everywhere who are standing up for their right to education, to work, to marry when and whom they choose, and to live free from violence of any kind.

**Films:**

*Girl Rising, Half the Sky, Very Young Girls, Maria en Tierra de Nadie*

**Publications:**


**Websites:**

(Organizations that work to end violence against women)

**Breakthrough:**

http://breakthrough.tv

**Futures without Violence:**

www.Futureswithoutviolence.org

**GBV Prevention Network:**

www.preventGBVAfrica.org

**Half the Sky Movement:**

www.halfthesky.org

**International Center for Research on Women (ICRW):**

www.icrw.org

**Women Thrive:**

www.womenthrive.org

**Equality Now:**

www.equalitynow.org

**Vital Voices:**

www.vitalvoices.org

**Women for Women:**

www.womenforwomen.org

**UN Women:**

www.unwomen.org
PART 3
Activities

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

“Other Malalas”: There are many other Malalas around the world, such as Fahma Mohamed, who spearheaded a campaign to provide education on female genital mutilation (FGM) in British schools, or Laxmi, the young woman in India who nearly died from having acid thrown in her face, and who now leads efforts to end acid assaults against women.

Research and write a short biography about these or other “Malalas,” who can be either international or local figures. In your essay, consider the following:

• The form of violence she is protesting, notably its links to culture and tradition
• Her efforts to eliminate violence
• The challenges she has faced
• The progress she is making
• What will it take for this form of violence to be eliminated?

Different forms of violence: Violence against women takes many forms. Students will research and present to the class some of the many forms of violence against women that exist in the world today. These may include:

• Acid burning
• Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)
• Human trafficking
• Violence committed in the name of honor
• Child marriage
• Intimate partner violence
• Rape
• Violence against special groups of women (immigrants, women with disabilities, indigenous women)
• Other

In their projects, students will research where the form of violence is prevalent, what is its prevalence, and what measures are being taken to eliminate this form of violence. Measures may include national legislation, including enforcement, as well as civil society initiatives such as media campaigns, hotlines, shelters, and citizen activism. The essay will conclude by examining the effectiveness of these measures and raising questions as to what needs to happen next.

Standing up to violence against women and girls:
Organizations and activists in every country and community advocate for women’s rights and an end to violence against women and girls. Other campaigns, such as the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, the White Ribbon Campaign, One Man Can, One Billion Rising, and Girls Not Brides, are global campaigns to raise awareness and encourage communities to stand up to violence. Students will research a group or campaign in their own country or community that is working to end violence against women and write a short essay about the organization/campaign. The essay should consider the following:

• How did the program start?
• What kind of violence does it address?
• What kind of approach does the program use? Is it trying to strengthen women’s access to justice? To provide support for survivors of violence? To change social norms that support violence? To improve national laws and polices?
• What have been the program’s most important achievements and challenges?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Film: Students will watch one of the suggested films addressing violence against women today. These can include Girl Rising, Half the Sky, Very Young Girls, Maria en Tierra de Nadie, among others.

Bring in guest speakers from a community program for battered women or from groups that work to prevent violence against women and girls to talk about their work.

Students read out loud in small groups the biography they wrote (in Individual Activity 1) and compare/contrast their lives with those of their chosen “Malala.” This would include reflecting on their upbringing and the elements they may have taken for granted, and how this has led to their current situation of privilege (or not). Elements could include education, health, social norms, social support networks, broader legal system/protection, etc., that have enabled them to be where they are today.
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

1. How does Malala’s story help us understand the discrimination and violence that women and girls throughout the world are subjected to because of their gender?

2. How is violence against women and girls manifested in your own culture and community and what can be done to address this problem?

CONTEXT:

What are the different types of VAWG?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) “…refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” 1This includes:

• physical violence, such as slapping, kicking, hitting or use of weapons;

• emotional abuse, such as systematic humiliation, controlling behavior, degrading treatment, insults and threats;

• sexual violence, including coerced sex or being forced into sexual activities considered degrading or humiliating;

• denial of resources, services and opportunities also known as economic abuse, such as restricting access to financial, health, educational or other resources with the purpose of controlling or subjugating a person.

How are women and girls impacted by gender-based violence?

Violence against women is not confined to a specific culture, region or county, or to particular groups of women within a society. The main purpose of the violence is to maintain a system of women’s subordination to men. 1 in 3 women in the world will experience physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. 2

VAWG can take many forms, from physical and sexual assault by intimate partners and family members, to child marriage, trafficking, female genital mutilation, femicide and violence in the name of “honor.”

Who perpetrates VAWG and how?

These acts are overwhelmingly more likely to be committed by men against women. Women and girls are much more likely than men to be physically assaulted or murdered by someone they know—often a family member or intimate partner. They are also at much greater risk of being sexually assaulted or exploited in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. In addition, sexual violence against women during or after armed conflicts has been reported in every international or non-international war zone.


2 WHO, LSTHM and MRC Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. (2013) pg. 2
What is the cost of VAWG to society?
The costs of violence against women are extremely high. They include the direct costs of services to treat and support abused women and their children and to bring perpetrators to justice. The indirect costs include lost employment and productivity, and the costs in human pain and suffering. The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner and the World Bank estimates that the cost of Intimate Partner Violence can be as much as 2% of GDP in terms of lost productivity and public expenditures. Violence is also a major barrier for girls’ education.

What can be done to address VAWG?

- A key component of violence prevention involves challenging social norms regarding appropriate roles and responsibilities for men and women
- Women’s advocacy groups worldwide have focused attention to the physical, psychological, and sexual abuse of women and called for political action
- Now policies and laws to address violence against women and girls are being developed internationally. A recent World Bank report states that 75 out of 100 countries studied have enacted laws to criminalize domestic violence and sexual violence against women
- Laws and services by themselves are not sufficient to effectively improve the lives of women and girls. Prevention of violence is equally important, and to prevent violence women must have access to the information, resources and ability to make decisions regarding their lives

KEY TERMS OR NAMES

Early, Child and Forced Marriage - Child marriage, defined as a formal marriage or informal union before age 18, is a reality for both boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately affected. About a third of women aged 20-24 years old in the developing world were married as children. Child marriage is most common in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, but there are big differences in prevalence among countries of the same region. Evidence shows that girls who marry early often abandon formal education and become pregnant at an early age, which is dangerous for both the mother and child. Child brides are at greater risk of violence, abuse and exploitation than unmarried girls (UNICEF, State of the World’s Children, 2009). Finally, child marriage often results in separation from family and friends and lack of freedom to participate in community activities, which can all have major consequences on girls’ mental and physical well-being. [http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html) For more information on the harmful practice of child marriage read the fact sheets compiled by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRWR) [http://www.icrw.org/publications/child-marriage-factsheets](http://www.icrw.org/publications/child-marriage-factsheets)

Trafficking - Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad. According to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Trafficking in Persons is the “Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” ([http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html)) Both men and women are trafficked, but women and girls are more likely to be enslaved in the commercial sex industry or as domestic labourers. The State Department estimates that 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year and 80% of those trafficked are women and girls.

Figure 1. Global map showing regional prevalence rates of intimate partner violence by WHO region* (2010)

*Regional prevalence rates are presented for each WHO region including low- and middle-income countries, with high income countries analyzed separately. See Appendix 1 for list of countries with data available by region.

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Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) - Female genital mutilation includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women. Procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later cysts, infections, infertility as well as complications in childbirth and increased risk of newborn deaths. More than 125 million girls and women alive today have been cut in the 29 countries in Africa and Middle East where this practice is concentrated. FGM/C is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15. FGM/C is a violation of the human rights of girls and women and is often practiced in the name of religion or culture. FGM is also increasingly being practiced within immigrant communities from countries where the practice is commonplace. Successful programs, such as Tostan in Senegal (http://www.tostan.org/), have been replicated in other parts of the work to eliminate FGM/C
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/

Femicide - Femicide is generally understood to involve intentional murder of women because they are women. Although in some settings femicide can be related to gang violence, or political motives, most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex-partners, and involve ongoing abuse in the home, threats or intimidation, sexual violence or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner. The WHO and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine estimate that more than 35% of all murders of women globally are reported to be committed by an intimate partner. In contrast, men are more likely to be murdered by someone they do not know. Other forms of femicide that are specific to certain regions are murders committed in the name of honor or related to dowry (see right side).

Dowry related Murder - Dowry murder is a brutal practice where a woman is killed by her husband or in-laws because her family cannot meet their demands for dowry — a payment made to a woman’s in-laws upon her marriage as a gift to her new family. While dowries or similar payments are prevalent worldwide, dowry murder occurs predominantly in South Asia.

Sexual Violence in Conflict - Sexual violence in conflict is an atrocity affecting millions of people, primarily women and girls. It is frequently a conscious strategy employed on a large scale by armed groups to humiliate opponents, terrify individuals and destroy societies. Women and girls may also be subjected to sexual exploitation by those mandated to protect them. Although rape has long been used as a tactic of war, with violence against women during or after armed conflicts reported in every international or non-international war zone, it has only recently been recognized as a war crime, and international efforts have increased to end sexual violence in war.


Gross domestic Product (GDP) - The gross domestic product is one the primary indicators used to gauge the health of a country’s economy. It represents the total dollar value of all goods and services produced over a specific time period - you can think of it as the size of the economy. In economics, the gross domestic product (GDP) is how much a place produces in some amount of time. To know the GDP of a country, one would need to add up the consumer spending, investment spending, government spending and the value of the exports and subtract the value of the imports. This measure is often used to find out the health of a country in an economic way. In other words, a country with a high value of GDP can be called a large economy.
http://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/199.a
http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_domestic_productsp

Violence in the name of honor - ‘Honor’-related murders involve a girl or woman being killed by a male or female family member for an actual or assumed sexual or transgression, including adultery, sexual intercourse or pregnancy outside marriage – or even for being raped (14). Often the perpetrators see this femicide as a way to protect family reputation, to follow tradition or to adhere to interpreted religious demands.

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/77421/1/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf

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For more information or to submit feedback about the resource guide, visit malala.gwu.edu.