



Lucy Harrison, Year 9

Close your eyes with me. Imagine you are in sub-Saharan Africa, walking multiple kilometres just to get a basic human resource, dreaming of sitting in a classroom. For us school can be a drag, however for millions of girls around the world that is all they want to do; learn. Open your eyes, as this is the reality for 130 million women around our globe in countries such as the Central African Republic, Cameroon and Senegal.

These women are being turned away from education for reasons including gender, extreme cultural beliefs, poverty and many more. As stated by the UN, women in sub-Saharan Africa collectively spend about 40 billion hours a year collecting water. If it takes each of you 11,000 hours to complete school from kindergarten to the end of Year 12, this means that underprivileged women could finish school 3 million times. Imagine what could be achieved if those women spent that time learning?

Investing in the education of such girls would result in numerous benefits. Firstly, education helps to break the cycle of poverty. An article from the World Bank stated that an extra year of secondary school for an underprivileged girl can increase her lifetime earnings by 15 to 25%. This goes to show that when women have the opportunity to learn it provides them with more options for earning a living. They are then not restricted to manual labour jobs but rather can apply themselves for numerous job industries or career paths.

This plays into my second point, being that an educated workforce (including women) aids economic growth and stability. A study taken from Sweden in 2017 showed that increased educational attainment accounts for 50% of the economic growth in developed countries over the past 50 years. Having more educated workers increases the efficiency of tasks that require critical thinking, in essence making workforces more productive.

Finally, my last point is that by educating women we break down harmful practices such as childhood marriage. As stated by World Vision, educating all underprivileged girls can put a stop to almost 62% of childhood marriages and unplanned pregnancies. If women were educated and more financially stable, they can eliminate the fear of having to depend on a man to fund living needs at any age.

In conclusion, we can see through numerous reasons why educating women is not just the right thing to do, but that educating women impacts surrounding countries and economies for the better, making our world a more modern and developed place.

The UN has put certain steps in action to conquer this problem, however, why can we see no change being done? Why does it take a woman to get shot in the left side of her head for advocating women's education rights in these undeveloped countries for the world to realise how big this problem is? We need to act now through advocacy, charity and speaking for those whose voices are not heard. Otherwise, if not now, when? And if not us, then who?