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LINKING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND THE QUEST TO REDUCE VULNERABILITIES

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Abstract

Notwithstanding the fact that children's right to education is a gateway to the enjoyment of many other human rights, it can be hampered and impeded in various ways. The fact that millions of children have no access to primary education signifies the looming global crisis of children's vulnerabilities. The right to access education is in urgent need of improvement. Closely linked to the right to access education for everyone is the empowerment of women. Various studies have shown that the empowerment of women plays a crucial role in enhancing children's right to access education. This paper intends to highlight the link between women empowerment and the increase of access to education for children. The paper begins with the explanation of the concept of children's right to education and women empowerment. Thereafter it illustrates the negative impact of the infringement of women's rights and the denial of education. The paper also discusses the positive impact on education and the empowerment of women in society by looking at the experiences of selected projects in different jurisdictions. An analysis on the right to education and the role of women empowerment is the core of this paper. Adopting a qualitative study, this research shows that the human rights of different right holders are interconnected and should be utilised to enhance one another.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Child rights to education, Children rights.

Introduction

Children, like adults, are capable of being the holders of rights. This means they are recognised as individuals with inherent dignity and consequently their rights should be respected in each and every situation and environment. The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989,¹ the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990² as well as several other international documents set out the rights of the child and furthermore grants protection to the rights of the child. Bearing the aims and objectives of these conventions in mind, it is therefore envisaged that children will be reared with the principles of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. In addition to this, it is envisaged that children will be treated without discrimination, grow up harmoniously and develop to their full potential regardless of physical limitation, difficult conditions and cultural differences. Education, being a fundamental right of each and every human being, is a vital tool for social and economic development. Thus, children's right to education and the ability to access education is seen as the core catalyst for building children's capacity and empowerment in the light of responsibility and contribution to the society. Children's vulnerability and naivety make it of the utmost importance to equip them with a suitable defence system to face a challenging world. Education is the best means to prepare children for the fourth industrial revolution with its myriad, unique and novel challenges. Given the fact that the world we live in is primarily knowledge based, a world where knowledge becomes the driver of change, social development and economic growth, education is undeniably the most indispensable aspect of human life. The attainment of knowledge goes hand in hand with the acquisition of information which is of the utmost importance for the survival and progress of

¹ *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, New York, 20 November 1989, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, p. 3, available from

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201577/v1577.pdf>

² *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, New York, 11 July 1990, CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990), available from

https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/afr_charter_rights_welfare_child_africa_1990.pdf

humanity. The more knowledge and information people possess, the more developed the country becomes. In developed countries, access to quality education is more readily attainable. Due to various factors, the contrary is, however, not true in developing and third world countries as there is a constant battle to enrol children at school and to further ensure that they remain in school to complete their education. For example, the drop-out rate in South Africa has reached a national crisis as studies have shown that approximately 60% of first graders will not remain in the schooling system to complete grade 12.³ In the same vein, by grade 12 only 52% of the age appropriate population will remain enrolled in school.⁴ According to data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)⁵ there are approximately 263 million children and youth not attending school. To demonstrate the severity of the educational crisis, this number is equivalent to a quarter of the population of Europe. The 263 million children and youths not attending school include 61 million children of primary school age, 60 million of lower secondary school age, and 142 million youths between the ages of 15 and 17 years old.

Unfortunately, grave human rights violations and armed conflict in many parts of the world have repeatedly disrupted and meddled with children's enjoyment of their right to education. Poverty, discrimination, inequalities, citizenship status and other social background issues have negatively impacted on children's right to education. Marginalised groups such as indigenous children and children who are refugees form part of the community of people who find it difficult to access education because of economic reasons, cultural differences or armed conflict taking place in their country. They are either denied access to education or provided with education that is of an inferior quality. The consequence is that these children are unable to develop to their full potential. As children are

³ Department of Basic Education. *Annual Report 2014/15*, (South Africa: Department of Basic Education, 2015).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UNESCO. "Leaving no one behind: How far on the way to universal primary and secondary education?" UNESCO Digital Library. July 15, 2016. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245238>. Accessed March 20, 2019.

vulnerable members of society and in most cases unable to fend for themselves, they need the support of members of the family especially the mother when the children are of a tender age, to ensure that effect is given to their right to education and that the right to education is made accessible to them. Where illiteracy is rife amongst family members, they may not attach much significance to the importance of receiving quality education. Therefore, whilst the family might not prevent their children from attending school, they may not be very supportive of their children's education or indeed place little value on their children's formal education. For example, because the parents are illiterate, they may not be able to assist their children with their homework or may be reluctant to attend parent-teacher meetings at school. In this manner, children's education will be further neglected and this vicious cycle may continue for generations.

It is submitted that illiterate women as compared to illiterate men, are more vulnerable due to their financial reliance on men and the gender discrimination that women experience in society. According to the report by the UIS, girls are more likely than boys never to set foot in a classroom, despite all the efforts and progress made over the past two decades. UIS data indicates that 15 million girls of primary-school age will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school compared to about 10 million boys.⁶ More than 9 million of the 15 million girls live in sub-Saharan Africa.⁷

Due to the subordinate position that women occupy in certain societies, they are under-represented in politics, receive lower wages than men and are often the victims of domestic violence. In certain societies women are also primarily responsible for the family and children and as a result they do not have opportunities for career advancement which in turn lead to low self-esteem.⁸ Through education human beings, women in particular, can empower

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Stromquist, N. P., "The Theoretical and Practical Bases for Empowerment." In *Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathway Towards Economy*. Report of the International Seminar on Women's Education and Empowerment, edited by Medel-Anonuevo, C. (Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education, 1995), 13-22.

themselves so as to change the position they occupy in society. Empowered women are able to exercise their basic human rights and protect the rights of the family members especially children who are regarded as vulnerable members of society. Hence, empowered women who are income generators and those who have the awareness of the importance of education are in a better position to support the children in their family to gain access to education, and furthermore ensure that the children complete their education.

This study aims to highlight the importance of empowering women in order to protect children's right to education. It shows that women empowerment and the enjoyment of children's right to education are interrelated and one influences the other. By adopting library based qualitative method, this study demonstrates that the protection and realisation of children's right to education and women empowerment are crucial components of sustainable development goals.

Rights to Education

Education is a basic human rights and not a privilege reserved for the elite group. It is, therefore, submitted that the rights to education is one of the natural rights which every human being should have and be able to have access to from childhood to old age. The rights to education guarantees that there is access to good quality schools for the purpose of 'full development of the human personality'. The prominence of the rights to education and its normative framework is found in many international instruments.⁹ Several other instruments

⁹ United Nation General Assembly. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)." In *UN General Assembly* 302, no. 2 (1948): Article 26; *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, Geneva, 28 July 1951, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 189, p. 137, available from <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20189/v189.pdf>; Article 22; *Convention against Discrimination in Education*, Paris, 15 December 1960, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 429, p. 93, available from <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20429/volume-429-I-6193-English.pdf>; Article 22; *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, New York, 7 March 1966, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 660, p. 1, available from <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20660/volume-660-I-9464-E>

also set the standard for the rights to education in general for example those referred to by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.¹⁰ This study focuses primarily on the provisions of the UNCRC but other conventions and legislation are referred to where necessary.

Article 26 of UDHR declares that:

“1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of

English.pdf: Articles 5 & 7; *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, New York, 16 December 1966, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 999, p. 171, available from

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20999/volume-999-I-14668-English.pdf>: Article 18; *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, New York, 16 December 1966, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 993, p. 3, available from

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20993/volume-993-I-14531-English.pdf>: Articles 13 & 14; *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, New York, 18 December 1979, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, p. 1, available from

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201249/volume-1249-I-20378-English.pdf>: Article 10; *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, New York, 20 November 1989, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, p. 3, available from

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201577/v1577.pdf>: Articles 28 & 29; *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*, New York, 18 December 1990, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 2220, p. 3, available from

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%202220/v2220.pdf>: Articles 13, 30, 43 & 45; *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, New York, 13 December 2006, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 2515, p. 3, available from <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%202515/v2515.pdf>: Article 24.

¹⁰ Daudet, Y. and Singh, K. *The Right to Education: An Analysis of UNESCO's Standard Setting Instruments* (Paris: UNESCO, 2001).

respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”

The UNCRC provides the following:
Article 28:

“1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at school and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy.”

Article 29 lays down the aim of education as follows:

“1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment. “

Article 26 of the UDHR and Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC underline fundamental parameters of the right to education. In addition to fact that the UDHR places great emphasis on human entitlement to education, its significance for children is further reiterated in the UNCRC. This reflects the particular importance of education for human survival. The education of the peoples of a

nation is, therefore, one of the biggest investments that a country can make in its human capital as this impacts the nation's growth and development. It is through education that human beings access all of their other human rights. In South Africa, the right to a basic education is entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 and is regarded as one of the most crucial constitutional rights, particularly because it promotes economic and social well-being.¹¹ The right to education is therefore unequivocally guaranteed to all South African citizens, children in particular. This right to a basic education is enshrined in section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution. In terms of section 29 everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education; to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible. There is an obligation on the state in terms of section 29(1) to make education available and accessible to everyone; the Constitution explicitly guarantees the right to a basic education. Section 29(2) places a duty on the state to respect an individual's right to education.

The most basic content of the right to education is that it must be enjoyed and realized without discrimination on any grounds. Both boys and girls, rich and poor, able bodied persons and those with disabilities are entitled to the right to education. Differences in children and their culture should be treated as an advantage rather than a hindrance to education. Children's dignity should be respected and valued, thus punishment that amounts to torture and degrading treatment must be avoided. Education is an important component of children's development since it helps children to attain a sense of human dignity;¹² to develop to their fullest potential;¹³ to develop respect for human rights of others, respect for parents, their culture, country, and language as well as respect for the natural environment.¹⁴ Most importantly, education prepares children to

¹¹ Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, (1996), § 29

¹² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). "General Comment No. 1 (2001), Article 29 (1), the Aims of Education." 2001. Para 4

¹³ Van Bueren, G., *The International law on the Rights of the Child* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publisher, 1995): 232.

¹⁴ *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, New York, 20 November 1989, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, p. 3, available from

function and live a meaningful life in society and how to live in harmony with other people.¹⁵

As an inalienable human right, the right to education must be protected at all times and in all situations¹⁶ even when children are in detention.¹⁷ Civil unrest, war, natural disaster, disease outbreak or any other unwanted conditions should not be used to justify denial of education. In fact, education is a good way of showing children that life goes on as “normal” despite them living in an abnormal war zone country, for instance. For example, when children are displaced and are forced to leave their hometown or country of origin, by going to school or continuing their education in refugee camps, children would perceive that their life is still normal and there is hope that things will get better. Even with minimum infrastructure and facilities as a result of conflicts and calamity, education should remain important and should still be accessible. Denying or stopping children’s education during these difficult times will make them feel lost with nothing to look forward to and thereby cause them to lose all hope.¹⁸ Barriers to children’s right to education include the following factors, namely, the cost of education, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and related issues, discrimination and lack of access to education, violence and child labour.¹⁹ The presence of child

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201577/v1577.pdf>: Article 29(1)(b), (c), (e).

¹⁵ *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, New York, 20 November 1989, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, p. 3, available from

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201577/v1577.pdf>: Article 29(1)(d); UN Economic and Social Council. "General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education (Art. 13 of the Covenant)." 1999. Para 4.

¹⁶ UNHCR. Guidelines on policies and procedures in dealing with unaccompanied children seeking asylum. (UNHCR, 1997): Para 7; Pigozzi, M. J., *Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction* (Paris: UNESCO, 1998); Tawil, S., 2000. International humanitarian law and basic education. *International review of the Red Cross*, 82, no. 839, 581-600.

¹⁷ UNHCR. Guidelines on policies and procedures in dealing with unaccompanied children seeking asylum. (UNHCR, 1997): Para 7.

¹⁸ Watters, C. *Refugee Children towards The Next Horizon* (London: Routledge, 2008); and Sinclair, Margaret. "Education in emergencies." *Learning for a future: Refugee education in developing countries* (2001): 1-84.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2005." (United States of America: Human

marriages and gender discrimination are especially disrupting to female children's education.²⁰ Education is regarded as an empowerment tool which is employed to eradicate poverty and prevent crimes as is experienced for instance, in the case of street children in Brazil.²¹

States parties to the UNCRC are required to make primary education compulsory and free of charge for everyone; secondary education available and accessible for everyone; and higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity.²² A different level of state duty is imposed on the different levels of education. Providing free education means no monetary charge should be imposed to enable children to attend school for primary or elementary education. States must avoid rules or practices that would exempt or exclude children from the education system on the basis of financial constraints. By providing free education and making it mandatory, states will be able to compel children of all backgrounds to attend schools or other similar institutions regardless of the situation they find themselves in and irrespective of their status or their nationality. Whilst the state bears the duty to provide free primary education to all children, the onus will fall on the parents or guardian of children to ensure that their children attend schools.²³ Family support in so far as the implementation of the right to education now becomes of vital importance.

The right to education also includes the right to the quality of the education as well as the means to obtain the education. In other

Rights Watch, 2005).

²⁰ Steinhaus, M. and John, N. A.. "Life Not Chosen: Early Marriage and Mental Health." ICRW Publications. 2018.

<https://www.icrw.org/publications/a-life-not-chosen-early-marriage-and-mental-health/>. Accessed April 3, 2019.

²¹ Mona Pare. "Educating marginalized children: The challenge of the right to education in Brazil." *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 12, no. 3 (2004): 217-257.

²² *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, New York, 20 November 1989, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, p. 3, available from <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201577/v1577.pdf>: Article 28(1).

²³ Robert Johnson. "The Child's Right to an Education: 'Consensus-Minus-One?'" *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 18, no. 2 (2010): 185-216.

words, schools should be accessible and supported by reasonable transportation where possible and practical. The buildings and facilities should be suitable for both boys and girls. For example, provision should be made that there are sufficient toilets for both genders to ensure they do not skip class only to go to toilets located far away from school.²⁴ States parties are responsible to ensure that the infrastructure and personnel in the education system are adequate to ensure that children receive quality education. This entails the employment of staff members with the necessary qualifications and also ensuring that these staff members receive on-going and proper training to enable them to deliver quality education to which children are entitled, and not merely any kind of education. States have to provide quality education so that children can achieve the envisioned aim in Article 29.²⁵

The content of education must aim towards “the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.” Article 29 (1) (a) of the UNCRC provides for the “full development of the human personality” and Article 26 (2) of the UDHR provides for the entitlement to every kind of learning needed for the development of all their dimensions: physical, affective, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, professional, civic and international. These provisions do not differentiate nor discriminate between children with and children without disabilities as far as the right to education is concerned. This means that children with disabilities should also be provided with education suitable in accordance with their disability in order that they may develop to their full potential. International law, therefore, acknowledges the role that education plays in developing the human mind and character and its function in creating and maintaining peace. It is through education that human beings gain knowledge and understanding of their world and in particular of different races, religions, cultures, languages, diverse social and economic backgrounds, and through

²⁴ Ruchira Sen. “Education for Women’s Empowerment: An Evaluation of the Government run Schemes to educate the girl child.” In *CCS Working Paper no. 183*, (New Delhi: Centre for Civil Society, 2008).

²⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). “General Comment No. 1 (2001), Article 29 (1), the Aims of Education.” 2001. Para 3.

this knowledge learn to tolerate these differences thereby leading to peaceful and stable societies.

Through education a person will find more options opening up for him/her and will be able to make informed choices having acquired the necessary knowledge. Education should be designed to enable human beings to understand peaceful co-existence and to develop respect for other human beings as right holders. At the minimum, primary education must include literacy and numeracy²⁶ or as stated in a declaration:²⁷

“...both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem-solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning.”

The right to education in Article 28 of the UNCRC is also closely related to the principle of best interests of the child (BIC). The principle of the best interests of the child has been described as “a golden thread, which runs throughout the whole fabric of the law relating to children. Whenever a decision with regard to a child’ has to be made, the best interests of the child are to be used as the determining factor. This echoes the requirements set out in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (Article 3) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Article 4(1)). It is always in the best interests of the child that they should spend their childhood in education at least at primary level, rather than working or contributing to family income. Work and other related activities that would interfere with or hamper children’s education should be avoided.²⁸ Even though by working for a salary children can help

²⁶ UNHCR. "Refugee children: Guidelines on protection and care." (Geneva: UNHCR, 1994): 48.

²⁷ UNESCO. World Declaration on Education for All. (New York: UNESCO, 1990).

²⁸ UNHCR, “Guidelines on Protection and Care of Refugee Children.” In Supaat,

increase the income of the family, in the long run the children are not benefitting as this leads to a lack or absence of education on their part. The connection between working children and its negative implication on education and children's long-term survival is well established.²⁹

In some countries, India for example, children within the poorest households are forced to work to make ends meet and as a result education does not form part and parcel of the plan in the children's lives, leaving them more vulnerable and open to exploitation in the long run.³⁰ Parent's desire to see their children earn money for the family has also led to human trafficking as the parents resort to the services of a human smuggler who undertakes to relocate their children to other cities or a foreign country in order to find gainful employment. Unfortunately, in most instances these children end up in the employ of unscrupulous, immoral and merciless employers, such as pimps and brothel owners who further exploit these vulnerable children.³¹

Notwithstanding the hardships that children face where the right to education is made inaccessible to them, female children experience further discrimination as far as the right to education is concerned as male family members are given priority in so far as receiving an education due to the belief that males have better prospects of achieving successful education and are then more likely

D. I. et al, "Children in the Malaysian Entertainment Industry and Their Rights to Education." In Proceeding International Conference on Technology, Science, Social Science and Humanities 2014 (Langkawi: UITM Kedah, 2014). 36; Supaat, D. I. 'Refugee Children and the Customary International Law'. Ph.D Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2015.

²⁹ Guarcello, L., S. Lyon, and C. Valdivia. *Evolution of the relationship between child labour and education since 2000: evidence from 19 developing countries*. Working Paper March 2015. Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Programme, 2015.; De Hoop, J., J. Friedman, E. Kandpal, and F. C. Rosati. "Complementarities between schooling and child work in the presence of an education subsidy." *Understanding Children's Work Working Paper* (2016).

³⁰ Maria Quattri, and Kevin Watkins. "Child labour and Education: A survey of slum settlements in Dhaka." *London, Overseas Development Institute* (2016).

³¹ Bimal Kanti Paul, and Syed Abu Hasnath. "Trafficking in Bangladeshi women and girls." *Geographical Review* 90, no. 2 (2000): 268-276.; and International Labour Organisation (ILO). *Child Trafficking- Essentials* (Geneva: ILO, 2010).

to support their parents. Studies show that there are more female children who drop out from school than boys, and who then enter into a marriage at a young age to escape poverty in their parents' home.³²

The structure, design, content, delivery and administration of education as well as law and policy of education must be made based on the principle of BIC.³³ Educational needs of a child must be considered in determining his/ her best interests.³⁴ The importance of education in securing the BIC of children by emphasizing the respect for BIC, the importance of quality education and the need to overcome children's vulnerability are stated as follows:³⁵

“It is in the best interests of the child to have Access to quality education, including early childhood education, non-formal or informal education and related activities, free of charge. All decisions on measures and actions concerning a specific child or a group of children must respect the best interests of the child or children, with regard to education. In order to promote education, or better quality education, for more children, States parties need to have well-trained teachers and other professionals working in different education- related settings, as well as a child-friendly environment and appropriate teaching and learning methods, taking into consideration that education is not only an investment in the future, but also an opportunity for joyful activities, respect, participation and fulfilment of ambitions.

³² Gobezie, Getaneh. "Empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming in rural microfinance." *SEEP Network* (2011).

³³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "General Comment No. 14 (2001), Article 3, "the Rights of the Child to have His or Her Best interests Taken as a Primary Consideration." (2013) Para 1: para 30, 32 & 79; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). "General Comment No. 6 (2005), Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside their County of Origin." (2015): para 93.

³⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "General Comment No. 14 (2001), Article 3, "the Rights of the Child to have His or Her Best interests Taken as a Primary Consideration." (2013) Para 1: para 71 & 84.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Responding to this requirement and enhancing children's responsibilities to overcome the limitations of their vulnerability of any kind, will be in their best interests." [Emphasis added]

Women Empowerment and the Protection of Children's Right to Education

Women constitute approximately 70 percent of the world's underprivileged people who "do not have access to credit and other financial services."³⁶ The lack of education is a contributing factor towards women's vulnerability to poverty.³⁷ Without education women will not be able to get a decent job with good income. The consequences of poverty are namely, hunger, poor health and living conditions which in turn lead to inferior education, no education or skills at all. This causes people to become alien to and isolated from the decision-making processes at national and international level. Family poverty forces parents to send their children to work instead of school so that family income will increase but such arrangement is short-lived as the children's lack of education gives them limited opportunity in the job market, causing them to rely on low income work. Their income will remain low even when the needs of the family are increasing. When these children reach adulthood and have a family of their own, their children too will live in poverty and will also be expected to work. Thus, the vicious cycle of poverty continues from one generation to the next.³⁸ To break this cycle, women need to be empowered through education so that they can bring change within their family life, especially in respect of the education of their children. A research by International Centre for Research on Women shows "...that women are more likely to control

³⁶ Khan, R E A., and Noreen, S. "Microfinance and Women Empowerment: A Case Study of District Bahawalpur (Pakistan)" *African Journal of Business Management*, 6, 12, (2012): 4514- 4521.

³⁷ Bastosa, A., Casacab, S. F., Nunes, F., Pereirinha, J., "Women And Poverty: A Gender-Sensitive Approach" *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 38, no. 5, (2009): 764- 778.

³⁸ UNESCO. *Empowering Adolescent Girls: Breaking the Poverty Cycle of Women A UNESCO Pilot Project* (Paris: UNESCO, 2003).

their own destinies and effect change in their own communities when they have higher levels of education."³⁹

Empowerment is the term used to explain the process of "giving of power to someone who has been deprived of it, someone who will remain vulnerable without that power and someone whose hope for justice and fairness seem to hinge on the possession of that power"⁴⁰ and a description of process where ".powerless people becomes conscious of their own situation and organize collectively to gain greater access to public services or to the benefits of economic growth".⁴¹ Empowerment is also described as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives."⁴² One of the definitions of empowerment is: "empowerment is about people - both women and men - taking control over their lives: setting their own agenda, gaining skills, increasing self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. It is both a process and an outcome."⁴³

According to Schuler and Hashemi,⁴⁴ the empowerment of women is:

"a continuous process comprising a series of conscious

³⁹ International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). *A Second Look at the Role Education Plays in Women's Empowerment* (Washington: ICRW, 2005).

⁴⁰ M. A. Ayuba. "Women Empowerment From an Islamic Perspective quoting Abdul Hamid." In *The Social Economy Poverty Alleviation and Social Wellbeing* edited by M. A. Choudhury and U. A. Malik (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

⁴¹ *Official Development Assistance (ODA). 'Stakeholder Participation in Aid Activities'*. (London: ODA, Draft Technical Note, 1994) no. 12, p. 32 In "Guide to Gender- Sensitive Indicators" edited by Tony, B., & Morton, S. (Canada: CIDA, 1997): 39.

⁴² D. Narayan. ed. *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction A Sourcebook* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2002): 40.

⁴³ *Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Corporate Implementation Strategy for the Women in Development Gender Equity Policy* (Hull: CIDA, 1994) 3 In "Guide to Gender- Sensitive Indicators" edited by Tony, B., & Morton, S. (Canada: CIDA, 1997): 39.

⁴⁴ Hashemi, S. M., Schuler, S. R. and Riley, A. N.. "Rural credit programs and women's empowerment in Bangladesh" *World Development*, 24, no. 4, (1997): 635-653.

steps taken by individuals to gain access to economic, educational and health resources; to better express and defend their rights and in the process, gain greater awareness and control of the self.”

An empowered woman is in a better position to access and control resources, to do an informed evaluation of the situation in which she currently finds herself and make informed decisions knowing what the consequences of her actions will be as she is aware of the options available to her in order to achieve her life goals.⁴⁵ Women who are empowered also tend to have and take control over their own lives and in doing so are able to influence social change.⁴⁶ To this extent, according to United Nations World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014, there is a direct relationship between the empowerment of women on the one hand, and economic, social and environmental sustainability on the other hand. Through education women’s earning capacity increases and this has a direct effect on improvement of the upbringing and education of children. It is submitted that the lap of the mother is the first school of the child. It is, therefore, imperative that women seek to empower themselves through education in order for them to educate their children. Women empowerment is also part of the 5th Sustainable Development Goals.

In Bangladesh, women empowerment programmes using microfinance has successfully been implemented and it has led to an increase in the accessibility of education for children.⁴⁷ In India, microfinance, which is regarded as an effective intervention against

⁴⁵ Lazo, L. “Some Reflections on the Empowerment of Women” In Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathway towards Economy. Report of the International Seminar on Women’s Education and Empowerment, edited by Medel-Anonuevo C. (UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg, 27 January - 2 February 1993.

⁴⁶ United Nations Fund for Population Activities. *The state of world population*. (United Nations Fund, 1990).

⁴⁷ Bhuiyan, A. B., Siwar, C., Ismail, A. G., and Hossain, T. B.. “Microcredit impact on children's education and women empowerment: A review experience of grameen bank microfinance schemes in Bangladesh.” *Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology*, 5, no. 1, (2013): 66-71.

poverty,⁴⁸ is where poor women are provided with credit to start and expand a business in order to increase their income. Swain & Wallentin⁴⁹ claims that women are likely to share the benefit of microfinance with their children. With the increase in their earning capacity, women are then able to improve the educational status of their children. Numerous studies have shown that women spend their income on their families and for the benefit of their families in terms of education, healthcare, diet and clothing.⁵⁰ The positive effects of women empowerment on the right of children to access education is also evidenced in studies undertaken in Tanzania⁵¹ and India.⁵² Research also proves that there is a positive connection between the empowerment of women and level of children's literacy in Nepal.⁵³ Furthermore, education is key to get better employment and higher income.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The implication of the lack of education is extensive; the family and their children will be vulnerable and the cycle will continue unless serious intervention action is taken. Education is seen as an effective instrument to reduce vulnerabilities of children as well as the

⁴⁸ Fiona Leach and Shashikala Sitaram. "Microfinance and women's empowerment: A lesson from India," *Development in Practice*, 12, no. 5, (2002): 575-588..

⁴⁹ Bali Swain, R., and Wallentin, F.Y. "Does microfinance empower women? Evidence from self-help groups in India." *International Review of Applied Economics*, 23, no. 5, (2009): 541-56.

⁵⁰ Susy Cheston, and Lisa Kuhn. "Empowering women through microfinance." *Draft, Opportunity International* 64 (2002); Gobezie, Getaneh. "Empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming in rural microfinance." *SEEP Network* (2011).

⁵¹ Kato, M. P. and Kratzer, J.. "Empowering Women through Microfinance: Evidence from Tanzania." *ACRN Journal of Entrepreneurship Perspectives*, 2, no. 1, (2013): 31-59.

⁵² Begum, S. A., and Beena M.N. "Empowerment of Muslim Women." *Islam Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19, no. 10, (2014): 27-29.

⁵³ Hattlebakk, M., & Gurung, Y. B.. *Female Empowerment and Education of Children in Nepal*. (Nepal: CMI, 2014).

⁵⁴ Sher Verick. "Female labor force participation and development." *IZA World of Labor* (2018). 87; International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). *A Second Look at the Role Education Plays in Women's Empowerment* (Washington: ICRW).

community for its snowballing effect - it empowers members of the society who will then empower other members and more. Being able to bring a community out of vulnerabilities will have a domino effect on a country as a whole. Education is a foundation of a sustainable development. It equally is important for socio-economic wellbeing as well as peace building as it will benefit individuals and the community they live in. Without education, children can become a liability to society. The right to education is legally protected under the law but enjoyment of the right is affected by many factors that can impede the right to education. The empowerment of women can be employed to minimise the factors that impede the right to education of children. Empowered women are not only able to help themselves but others in their care especially children. When women understand the importance of education, their decision will take into consideration the present and future needs of their children's education. Similarly, empowered women will be able to influence decisions in the family setting that would affect children's education. The human rights of different right holders are interconnected and should be utilised to give effect to the other. It has been widely acknowledged that there is a positive association between women empowerment and the enjoyment of children's right to education. Empowering women through education has widespread benefits not only to their families but to society at large. The empowerment of women and the implementation of children's right to education are very important factors which can be used to escape the vicious cycle of poverty experienced worldwide.

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	
ء	ء	ء	ء	ز	z	z	z	گ	—	g	g	g
ب	b	b	b	ژ	—	—	ʀ	ل	l	l	l	l
پ	—	p	p	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m	m
ت	t	t	t	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n	n
ث	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ş	ه	h	h	h ¹	h ¹
ث	th	th	th	ص	ş	ş	ş	و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḍ	ḍ	ḍ	ی	y	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	—	-a ²
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al ³	—	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	—	—	—	—	—
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğh	—	—	—	—	—
ڈ	—	—	d	ف	f	f	f	—	—	—	—	—
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	q	—	—	—	—	—
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	—	—	—	—	—

¹ – when not final
² – at in construct state
³ – (article) al - or l-

VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	iy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)
	و	uww (final form ū)	uvv
	و	uvv (for Persian)	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	ev
	ی	ai or ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a or e
	ا	u	u or ū
	ا	i	o or ö
	ا	i	i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. چ jh گ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

AL-SHAJARAH

Special Issue

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