

4 miles, Just to Get Water

Imagine the hot sun burning your skin and your feet sinking into the dusty sand. Imagine that you must walk 3-4 miles every day, just to get water. And even when you get to the water, it is not even clean. This is true for many girls in Burkina Faso, who dream of going to school, but spend their whole day getting water. Around the world 120 million girls are missing school because they must cook, clean and get water for their families. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is targeted by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5. Gender equality is women and men having access to the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities regardless of their gender. Female empowerment is where women gain power over their own lives and the ability to make choices. Educating girls has huge benefits for health, prosperity and security. And still, millions of girls don't go to school, compared to all the boys that are sitting in a classroom right now. I believe that this is not right, and I would like to work on making life fairer for women and girls.

If I was hired by the United Nations to lead a project addressing gender equality by empowering women and girls, I would focus on girls getting a safe education. I would choose to work in Burkina Faso because it has one of the lowest education rates in the world and girls in Burkina Faso must spend their whole day getting water. In order to achieve my goal, I would go to Burkina Faso, and then I would help get water clean and closer to their homes. Next, I would open a school for girls near the poor neighborhoods.

In some parts of the world, parents believe sending their girls to school is a waste of time and money (malala.org). In some places only 4% of girls can read (BorgenMagazine.com). That means that they can't get a job and make money. Also, educating a girl is better for the planet, but still, there are so many reasons that girls can't go to school. A reason that girls are not going

to school is that school is so far away from their homes. Sometimes, the nearest school can be more than 90 miles away. Another reason is, in some parts of the world, there are war zones right where children are trying to go to school. Some schools have walls covered in bullet holes (theat/antic.com). Wars and conflicts keep more than 48 million children out of school (borgenmagazine.com). The next reason why girls are not educated is that they are doing chores at home, like cooking, cleaning, getting water, getting firewood, and babysitting. Girls are more likely to not learn if they live in a rural area or if they are poor. It is healthier for girls to get an education and I believe that educated women could change the world.

Next, I would choose to work in Burkina Faso because it has one of the lowest education rates in the world. Also, girls must walk 3-4 miles every day to get water instead of getting an education (The Water Princess). The quality of teacher training in Burkina Faso is generally low and the education system is often not tailored to the needs of the population (reliefweb.org). The water in Burkina Faso is so far away from homes and the water is not safe to drink. More than 2.2 million children die every year, (that is 4 every minute) because of diarrhea caused by contaminated water and poor hygiene (stories.plancanada.ca). 2.1 billion people lack the access to safe drinking water at home (stories.plancanada.ca). If we made water cleaner and closer to villages, than girls wouldn't have to walk 6 hours a day, just to get water. Also, girls would have a chance to go to school. In Burkina Faso more than 40 children in 100 drop out of school before finishing 6 years of education and most of those children are girls (reliefweb.org).

Now, I will talk about what I would do to solve this problem. First, I would go to Burkina Faso. Second, I would help get water clean and closer to their houses by building pipes from the water source to a well by the villages. Then girls don't have to spend their whole day getting water for their families so they could get an education. If girls get an education than in the future,

they could get a good job to make money for themselves and take responsibility over their own lives. After that, I would help build a school and teach girls how to read and write. The school would be near a poor neighborhood so that even the poor girls can get an education. All girls need an education even if they live in a poor family. If we opened a school for girls then they would have a safe place to be during the day and they could learn, just like the boys.

Gender equality in Burkina Faso is a big problem because many girls do not know how to read or write so they can't get a job. Around the world 120 million girls are not in school. If we opened a safe school for girls then they could get a better education. Also, if we made water cleaner and closer, than girls could take a break from long journeys to get water so they could go to school. Even if an educated woman got a job, she would still be paid less than a man. I believe this is very unfair, and I will work to make girl's lives fair, no matter where they live or if they have a disability. If you learn more about girl's education, then you could help with the problem of girls not getting an education too. We need to stop this, because in 20 years, the world will be full of illiterate people, and that will be a disaster.

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