

TeachRight: An Initiative with the Goal of Improving Literacy Rates and the Quality of Life of African Women

Africa. A continent riddled with inefficiencies and severe inequalities. A region filled with countries lacking in gender equality. A place where women continue to be harshly discriminated against.

Gender inequality, by definition, is the impression that men and women are unequal, and that gender affects an individual's lifestyle. Not only does this inequality have the capacity to divide a population, it can create stigma regarding the occupations and social status of males and females. This conflict regarding gender is one that has become increasingly prevalent in modern society. Stereotypes regarding gender role have become increasingly common and have caused social instability in developing countries and regions.

Africa is one of these troubled continents, seeking respite for its poor reputation as a developing country. The levels of gender inequality in this region are at an all-time high and show no signs of regressing. In addition, the occupations of women are highly restrictive and as a result, females are often forced to take on laborious agricultural occupations. Almost seventy percent of women in South Asia work in agriculture, but women only represent five percent of all agricultural landholders in North Africa and West Asia. Not only are women unfairly represented, they are mostly illiterate in terms of education. According to the UN Women website, women make up more than two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people. Women are heavily lacking in their education, and the number of girls who attend secondary school is a mere thirty-nine percent.

While the continent of Africa is known for its poor and unhealthy standard of living, this misconstrued narrative does not consider the voices of women, who are forced into completing onerous tasks of labor. According to an article by *Quartz Africa*, in Sub-Saharan Africa, “74% of women...are more likely to be employed in lower-paying jobs” This leaves women prone to exploitation, low job security, and intensive poverty. In turn, this reduces the lack of women representation in the African Government and forces women into strenuous agricultural roles.

In addition to being largely underrepresented in large political affairs, women also have a limited participation in the economic workforce. In reference to the World Bank Data website, the ratio of female to male labor participation rate is 84%, which demonstrates the heavy gender-based imbalance within the economic workforce. Not only are women’s opportunities in the workforce restricted, the notion that women’s educational opportunities are severely limited has become familiar.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released its first estimates of teacher shortages across the world. These estimates reveal that Sub-Saharan Africa has the world’s worst teacher shortage, with it needing over 17 million teachers by 2030. Not only is this concerning to the educational opportunities of African women, it reduces their ability to qualify into a high-paying job.

This is why I created the initiative, TeachRight.

TeachRight is a novel initiative aiming to fairly represent African Women in the economic workforce. I hope to implement *TeachRight* in countries like Niger, Guinea, and South Sudan, which rank amongst the lowest when it comes to literacy rates in Africa. After implementation, my initiative will reach out to underrepresented villages and communities and

accept five women from each community into the Pilot Program. The Pilot Program will then educate these women, outlining basic educational requirements and other important pieces of knowledge. The women will then go back to their communities and be instated as teachers, with the responsibility of educating the illiterate.

TeachRight will also pay these teachers a salary of three hundred dollars, which matches the average per capita income in Africa. Not only will these women be financially assisted, *TeachRight* will also send two hundred dollars to the village for the building of any required infrastructure. In this way, teachers and their families can become literate *and* sustain themselves.

But that's not all – *TeachRight* will also reach out to the African Government and create a series of workshops for educating young women. My initiative will do this by creating a sub-branch within the South African Government's Department of Education. This sub-branch will include educational facilities, classrooms, and will offer paid tuition to students. The workshops within this government program will be two weeks long and will go over basic educational principles as well as suggesting advanced career paths for young women.

My hope is for *TeachRight* to become a global initiative, spanning across a multitude of developing countries. I plan to initiate a variety of workshops and work with governments to effectively increase women literacy rates and better represent females in important political corporations.

In my opinion, I believe that addressing gender inequality is key in order to remove social restrictions, especially those relating to the division of labor. My initiative aims to balance the two genders and reach a peaceful resolution where women are represented in the economic

workforce. My dream is to live in a world where gender discrimination is nonexistent and where men and women coexist in social equality. *TeachRight*, by creating workshops to foster early education, inspires young women to pursue their interests – a notion that is rarely encouraged. By supplying older women with teaching abilities, the literacy rates within Africa will be improved and women will have a greater role in the workforce.

TeachRight will not be the average pledge for women empowerment, it will be an initiative with an aim to reduce gender inequality in the troubled continent of Africa. My solution will not only prove to realistically increase the average African woman's socioeconomic status; it will greatly empower the female narrative.

I hope to take a step to create a world where men and women are judged on an equal platform and where gender discrimination is nothing more than an issue of the past.

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