

THE INVISIBLE GIRLS

SECONDARY LEVEL

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL #4: Promote gender equality and empower women

Activity Snapshot:

Through simulation, the class will understand a gender equality statistic in more tangible terms. They will then analyze a story to identify barriers facing women in the developing world, and strategies for working towards equality.

Rationale:

Globally, there are 121 million children between the ages of six and 11 who are not in school. More than 65 million of these children are girls. Around the world, girls and women lack equal access to the opportunities and the rights that would give them a chance at a brighter future and a fulfilling life. Girls and women are disproportionately affected by everything that prevents successful growth and development within the family and nation—poverty, AIDS, violence, lack of education, lack of job opportunity and so on. Until girls and women have equal access to their rights, social, political and economic development will continue to suffer.

Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to the issue of gender equality, specifically access to education.
- The objective of this activity is to generate class discussion about lack of opportunity for half of the world's population based on something over which they have no control—their gender.

Time: One hour, including time for debriefing

Materials: masking tape, bag of pencils or other writing instruments, copies of handout/worksheet G11: Easing the Heavy Loads of Kenyan Women and Children, blackboard or chart paper

Steps:

Fact: Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours and yet earn only 10 per cent of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property.²

1. Create two arbitrary groups by separating students based on their birthdays—everyone born between January and June is in one group and July to December is in another group. One group will represent women and one group will represent men. Keep this representation information from students until the activity is debriefed.
2. Using masking tape, create a box on the classroom floor that represents about one per cent of the room. Use a larger room, like the gymnasium or cafeteria, if possible. The entire group representing women must try to fit within that box, or as close to it as possible. The other group is free to stretch out around the room.
3. Distribute the bag of pencils between the two groups. Give approximately 10 per cent to the women's group. Give the rest of the bag to the men's group to share.
4. Now announce to the class that they will be doing writing assignments. The women's group will write two assignments and the men's group will write one. These are due by the end of the day. They must work within the classroom space they have been assigned.

5. Distribute copies of handout/worksheet G11: Easing the Heavy Loads of Kenyan Women and Children to every student. Ask them to read the story as it will provide the background for the writing assignment.

Transition:

6. When students are finished with the stories, reveal that the previous activity was a simulation about gender equality. Read this statistic to the class: Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours and yet earn only 10 per cent of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property.^{vi} Explain how each element of the statistic was represented in the simulation (work=writing activity, income=pencils, property=masking-taped area). Also reveal that there is actually no written assignment!
7. Debrief the activity by asking students to share their reactions. How did members of each group feel? How do they feel now, knowing that the simulation represented gender inequality?
8. Explain to your class that in the developing world millions of girls don't have the chance to go to school, simply because they are girls. In some cases, those who are attending school don't have the same learning opportunities as boys. Girls and women are more likely to suffer from poverty because they don't get the education they need. Explain that part of the reason women are not in school is because of the roll they are expected to fill, the work they must do in their communities and the effects of poverty.
9. As part of a large group discussion, review the story that was distributed in Step 5. Ask students to brainstorm a list of barriers facing girls and women based on this story. Ask them to consider familial and societal expectations and the effects of poverty. Record answers on the board.
10. Working with the list, ask students to brainstorm ways that education could help to eliminate these barriers. Record answers in a separate column on the board.

Closure:

Students will write a reflection about their experience in this activity. These reflections will specifically address the student's reaction to the causes for hope outlined in the last two paragraphs of the story. What do they hope for the future of women in the developing world?

Assessment Suggestion:

- Student participation during activity and discussions
- Depth of understanding as indicated in the written reflection