

GENDER EQUALITY



What does “gender equality” really mean? While a person’s **sex** refers to the biological differences between a male and a female, **gender** distinguishes the roles a person’s community considers appropriate for women and men. Therefore, gender roles, inequities, and power imbalances are not a “natural” result of biological differences, but are determined by the systems and cultures in which we live. In spite of the fact that there are international laws guaranteeing women equal rights with men, women in many places around the world are denied their rights to land and property, financial resources, employment, and education.¹



List at least three benefits of how improving the lives of women in the world directly benefit their children.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

DID YOU KNOW?

- It is estimated that women perform two-thirds of the world’s work, yet they only earn one-tenth of the income, and own less than one percent of the world’s property.²
- More than 110 million of the world’s children, two-thirds of them girls, are not in school.²
- Only 17% of the world’s elected government leaders are women.²
- More than 80% of the world’s 35 million refugees and displaced people are women and children.²

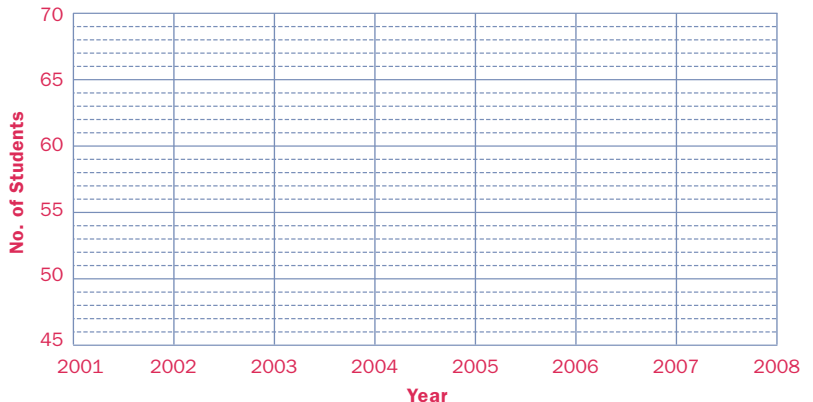


LOOKING AT TRENDS IN ONE PART OF THE WORLD

Use the data below to draw a line graph in the chart provided. Make sure to use different color pencils for the line representing girls and the line representing boys.

Percentage of Primary School Attendance in Sub-Saharan Africa 2001–2008

Year	Boys	Girls
2001	49	55
2002	58	54
2003	60	56
2004	60	57
2005	63	59
2006	64	60
2007	64	61
2008	69	66



1. Is there an overall positive or negative trend in percentage of boys and girls attending primary school in sub-Saharan Africa during the eight year period? _____
2. On average, what is the percentage gap between boys and girls? _____
3. Discuss with your class what kinds of concrete things must happen to close the gender gap between boys and girls in sub-Saharan Africa. _____

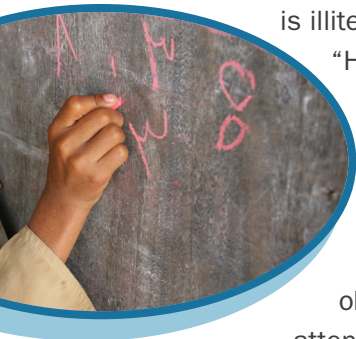
(For answers, see reverse side.)

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TWO COUNTRIES, TWO STORIES...

In **Afghanistan**, nine-year-old Nafissa (not her real name) loves going to school, and though her father is illiterate, he fully supports her studies.

“He is maghroor [proud] because I can read!” declared an excited Nafissa. In spite of continuing violent attacks by extremists, a shortage of teachers and adequate facilities, and numerous cultural obstacles, girls in Afghanistan are attending school in record numbers with help from UNICEF education programs.



Sulekha Bekum definitely does not want to follow in her mother’s footsteps — and her mother is just fine with that. Since the time Sulekha’s mother, Janaswari, was 16 years old, she has spent long, difficult days toiling on a tea plantation in **India**. Despite laws in the country against child labor, it’s not unusual for girls to drop out of school and start picking tea while still in their teens. UNICEF has helped create Adolescent Girls’ Clubs on the plantations to empower girls, giving them the confidence and support they need to continue their education.³



THINK ABOUT IT!

What advantages do you think education will bring to both girls that their mothers probably do not have?

What are the common challenges both girls face in achieving their educational goals? Are there any differences in the challenges each girl faces?

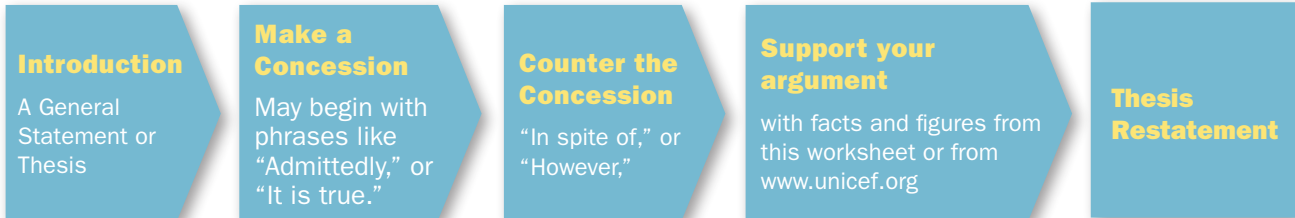
If Nafissa and Sulekha decide to have children, how do you think their children’s lives will be affected because of their mother’s education?

LEARN MORE
about gender equality and other global issues at www.teachunicef.org.



Conduct your own research on gender equality issues in your area, i.e. elections, wages, etc. Use the information gathered in this Activity Sheet and other resources and consider writing a letter to the editor of your school or local newspaper to inform them of the gender disparities which exist.

You may want to use the following process to build your editorial argument:



Answers

1. Positive. 2. 3 – 4 percent. 3. Construction of more schools, providing more teachers, families given more economic opportunities and incentives so that girls do not need to work as much, breakdown of cultural barriers, strengthened government education programs/funding.

Sources

1. www.unicef.org/gender/index_bigpicture.html 2. www.unicef.org/gender/index_factsandfigures.html 3. Adapted from U.S. Fund for UNICEF, Every Child No. 2, 2009, UNICEF in the Field, Feeding Girls’ Hunger to Learn in Afghanistan and Every Child No. 1, 2010, UNICEF in the Field, Girl Power on the Tea Plantations of India