

Ainsley Chrystal  
Ames High School  
Ames, Iowa  
India, Factor 16: Education

### **Education, for Boys and Girls, Puts India on the Upward Tick**

There is a food crisis in many countries in the world, especially in the large country of India. More people are undernourished in India, than there are people in the state of Iowa. Living in the breadbasket of the United States and the world, it is hard to envision hunger as an epidemic when people are tossing their food away at schools and markets. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that about 795 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world, or one in nine, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2014-2016 (World Hunger News). It is hard to believe that there are more starving people in the world than there are people in the United States. One solution to this crisis is through education. Getting people an access to education not only improves their quality of life, but also lets the people in India create solutions to their own specific crisis. Education leads to awareness which leads to action. Through education the people of India can take this matter into their own hands and offer solutions to which outside forces cannot, and together they can work to create a better, more food filled future, for India. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) compiled research of India in 2016. The population of India was last estimated 1,266,883,598 as of July 2016 (World Factbook). According to worldometers.info in 2017, India has the second largest population just after China (World Population Clock), but it is only 25% the size of China. Since the world's population is seven billion, India has one-seventh of the world's people in its borders, and as a result the space in India is running out. The population growth rate in India is 1.19%, which means more people are being born than dying, which leads to a population surplus. People need places to live, and where people are living, food is not being grown. People can't farm when buildings are on top of the land. Also, the actual space for people to live is running out, which means more slums, which means poverty, little education, starvation, and infant mortality. In 2016, the CIA reported 43.5% of children under the age of 5 years are underweight.

The Global Hope Network compiled a list of reasons why children aren't getting an education either at all or one that will suit their needs. Essentially, the report listed four main causes of miseducation: the children aren't accountable for their education, the available education proves inadequate, the children aren't motivated to learn, and families lack resources to offer their children an education. Now, let's look at each of these issues. First the children aren't accountable for their education. An example is parents work seasonal jobs, and they have to search for work in other places leaving the children to their own devices. No one is forcing them to go to school and actually receive that life saving education, or holding them accountable for their work outside of the classroom.

67.3% of India's population lives in a rural community (World Factbook), which means a smaller access to healthcare, clean drinking water, and an education. An average rural family will consist of a father and mother with one to three children. The parents will work as subsistence farmers on other land or float to and from seasonal manual jobs. If the family has access to a school, as well as money for the school, their children will attend elementary school, until they are around twelve years of age. After that, many families who may not be able to afford to keep all their children in school will take some or all out of schools. The girls will stay at home and cook, clean, and take care of any younger siblings, while the boys will find jobs to bring in another source of income. They will be kept from school to instead start work or provide and care for their families, causing them to be uneducated children who will grow up to be uneducated adults. They will often marry young, and new mothers will most likely be under the age of 21; in fact, most will be 19. The parents will work hard labor jobs and not bring in enough money to support their ever growing family. That family is ever growing because the parents did not have the option to go

to school and then learn about viable and affordable contraceptives to prevent against a child they could not afford. Also with little wages, they can't support themselves financially all on their own, or if they were to become unable to attend their job their family would have no financial stability on which to fall back on. Furthermore, if medical need arises there is no definite way to pay for that possibly life-saving service, which, when the father becomes unable to work, more often than not means they will pull their children out of school to make more money and pay for food and other basic necessities. Sometimes children do complete their education, but most will not leave their family village without a sum of money saved. The girls will get married fairly young, most likely in their teens, and live in the same town as their parents for familial support. Then, it all starts over.

Another issue is the ability of housing to allow children to be in a safe comfortable environment and let the parents rest knowing their children have a roof, and it is one less expense to worry about. Habitat for Humanity has helped a woman named Kala after her husband died from a prolonged illness and after her eldest daughter passed away as a result of domestic violence, as Kala and her other five children were struggling. Two are labor workers, and her youngest is still in school working his hardest to finish school. Most of the little money Kala made was put toward health care for her other children. After Habitat for Humanity stepped in, the quality of life for Kala and her family increased to a higher standard. Kala's social relationships grew, and her ability to put away money. Now her son has a place to continue his education, and Kala can focus on her family and work and not have to worry about housing as well (Habitat for Humanity).

Children are going to work and not school, which causes a lot of issues for them later in life. Boys will often become hard labor workers, which causes problems in the future. Girls will be pulled out of school to help raise brothers and sisters, help around the house, and then eventually married off and not have the option to continue their education. In fact 11,250,000 girls are forced to marry before the age of 18. Most children attend primary or elementary school until the age of 12, and then they are then taken out of school to work menial labor jobs. 26,965,074 children aged 5 to 14 work in factories or in fields instead of school. WE.org wrote, "Almost 60 million primary school-aged children aren't in school, according to the United Nations. Some of them, girls especially, have to stay at home to help take care of siblings and collect water; others have to go to work to help support their family; some live too far from the nearest school; others can't afford to pay for school fees or buy a uniform. These children are not getting the basic education they need to become empowered adults who can support their families and their communities out of poverty" (We.org). They also wrote, "There are four million more girls than boys who can't get an education, a child whose mother can read is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five, 25 million children will never go to school, investing in education can help a country lift its people out of poverty. Over 40 years, equitable access to quality education can help a country raise its gross domestic product per capita by 23%. if all women had a primary education, there would be 1.7 million fewer malnourished children." That alone is astounding. If just the girls had a full education, 1.7 million children would be getting the nourishment that they desperately need. This is a perfect example of why education is such an important step towards ending hunger.

Education is the key to a better life. Oftentimes when someone is uneducated their families suffer for a multitude of reasons. India is a place where a great many people live however do not have access to healthy food, clean water, education, and there is a great many prevalent diseases as a result of these conditions. People, especially girls, who spend more time in school and have a more developed education make better decisions. For example, they get married later in life, have fewer children, and sometimes make a better life for themselves and hoist themselves above the poverty line. It is a rarity, but when it happens, a longer education provides more tools for people to make a better life for themselves. We.org reported, "There are four million more girls than boys who can't get an education, a child whose mother can read is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five, 25 million children will never go to school, investing in education can help a country lift its people out of poverty. Over 40 years, equitable access to

quality education can help a country raise its gross domestic product per capita by 23%. if all women had a primary education” (We.org). India’s gross domestic product (GDP) is 1.877 trillion. A comparison is the United States has a GDP of 16.77 trillion with less than half of the population of India (World Bank). India puts only 3.6% of its GDP towards education (World Factbook CIA), which ends up being \$67,572,000,000 billion. It seems like quite a hefty number, the US spends almost India’s total GDP on education alone. Adding to the GDP will not only boost India’s education system, but the overall quality of life for its citizens.

A girl’s education is paramount to lowering the poverty and hunger line. There are a few programs specifically designed to empower young women, as well as focusing on their education. One of these programs is called Girl Rising that is based in many countries, including India. Some of their success stories from their work in India include:

- “Over 600 girls re-enrolled through door-to-door school enrollment drives.
- 100 adolescent groups formed in Rajasthan and Bihar.
- 266 sports for development programs, reaching 3,797 girls and 3,954 boys.
- 196 teachers trained on gender-sensitization.
- Students trained on filmmaking techniques resulting into 2 short films on access to education.

These were scripted, shot, and edited by the students themselves.

In 2017, we are launching a 24-week gender sensitization curriculum designed to reach over 40,000 students and 1,700 teachers. The curriculum is designed to increase self confidence and efficacy, and will empower participants to address local norms, question gender stereotypes and drive change within school environment, families and in communities.” (Girl Rising) This is just one example of some of the programs in place that specifically targets young women’s education.

There are already many programs established to help people get better jobs and to encourage parents to give their children an education. IAS by Skyskool has a database of all the poverty alleviation programs that have been put into place as examples that people can get ideas from. Past bills from lawmakers and legislation already put in place in the past, and a good example is the National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS), which was a part of National Social Assistance Program and was activated in the period of 2002-2007. Under this plan a pregnant mother is provided a sum of money. \$500 for the first two births. The women have to be 19 years of age, and with most mothers being 19 when they give birth for the first time it targeting exactly who they wanted, and with most families having 1 to 3 children. Another was the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) which was notified in 2005 and was put into action in 2006 and was further added onto as *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2008*. This program guarantees 100 days of paid work to people living in rural areas. Thus this programme has proved to be a major boost in the income of rural population of India.

There have to be ways to combat this issue without forcing people out of their cultural identity, and without forcing people out of their comfort zone, while still improving upon the lives of people. WE.org has a plan of attack already, “WE Charity education projects in partner communities include:

- Building new schools and academic buildings like libraries, administrative offices and teacher accommodations
- Rebuilding or refurbishing existing schools and school rooms
- Providing furniture, educational resources and supplies
- Offering leadership programming and training for teachers
- Facilitating extracurricular school activities like health and environmental clubs (WE.org)

These organizations are offering real solutions, without telling people to change their entire way of life. They are working with the people of India to create practical, useful programs to get kids in schools. Organizations like UNICEF work with many groups already established by Indian people in India to ensure that all needs are being met. From religious communities to celebrities, UNICEF is getting their

word out there to help with poverty and education. Their main goal is to fundraise for these communities so that change comes from within the country and not solely from outside sources. Another organization that helps education behind the scenes is Habitat for Humanity, which works on getting homes to the 73 million families without homes. This is essential for education because parents no longer have to worry about keeping a roof over their heads and can focus on their work, and let the children go to school, and the children will have a place to do their homework so they could move on with their education. Even if an organization has a primary focus other than education, the children and families are still receiving necessary help, and education is still benefitting. Education leads to awareness which leads to action. When India's own children are educated, they can be the ones to cause change on the homefront. While outside sources are essential to get the seeds planted, it is the fruit of that labor that will help India to grow. The more resources given to these children the further they can go in life. It is very similar to the proverb, if you give a man a fish he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime. Education offers permanent solutions that will carry people throughout their life. Distributing food is well and good, however it does not give the people the tools they need to continue their life in a higher quality. Education opens doors, feeds people, and offers up solutions. Only through this, will the people and the children of India thrive.

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