



## Education

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### How to use this Study Guide

- Read over the entire guide before you meet with your Global Women (GW) community and determine which parts you will want to use when you gather. Ask different ones to present the various parts of the guide in creative ways. In prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to guide your preparation and to open the hearts and minds of those who gather to ways they can personally respond to the needs mentioned.
- When you gather as a community, begin with prayer and then ask some opening discussion questions to help focus thoughts on the topic; use the suggested scripture; investigate the topic using the materials presented below; determine ways your GW community can address/meet the needs mentioned on both a local and global scale; consider further ways your GW community can influence decision-makers about these needs.

### Overview of the issue

The education of girls and women is an important issue to world leaders as illustrated by the fact that two of the eight Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations are specifically related to education and have targets that acknowledge the greater lack of accessible, quality education for girls and women. According to the *Education for All Report*, in 2006, 55 percent of all out-of-school children worldwide were girls, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, and 67 percent of all illiterate adults were women, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. Interestingly, half of 80 percent of the world's illiterates live in just 3 countries: China, India, and Bangladesh.

As Global Women, motivated by the love and mercy of Jesus Christ, we want to find ways to connect and empower women to transform our worlds. Investigating the education needs of women around the world is a first step in involving ourselves in meeting this global need. We can involve ourselves locally and globally to help alleviate this vast problem and we can influence leaders to cultivate cultures that value the education of girls and women.

## Suggested Scripture

The story of the prophet Huldah from 2 Kings 22: Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king [Josiah], “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest . . . “Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD’s anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”

Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter.

She said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read.’ . . . So they took her answer back to the king.

Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the LORD with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD. The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

2 Kings 22:10-12a, 13-16, 20b-23:3 (TNIV)

## Making scriptural connections

Huldah was a well-respected woman prophet in Jerusalem known to the high priest serving under Josiah. She was a contemporary of other prophets in the area: Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah. Yet *she* was the one the high priest sought out when King Josiah asked him to “inquire of the LORD. . . about what is written in this book.” Huldah was the first person recorded in scripture who confirmed that a written document was indeed the word of God. Her bold message of truth was taken back to the king and, as a result, the whole nation of Judah repented. Huldah’s education was vital to changing the direction of a whole nation. Educating girls and women today continues to have life-changing effects on families, communities, and countries. Just as Huldah was faithful to make good use of her education, we too can influence leaders to provide the educational opportunities necessary for the equality and empowerment of girls and women.

## Worldview

How do you and others in your sphere of influence view girls and women? Answer the following questions about the culture in which you currently live and in the surrounding communities with which you are familiar. Consider the evidence you observe and experience in everyday life. Your personal views may differ from those who live around you. While you can truly only answer for yourself, you can observe others’ behavior and surmise what their beliefs are.

1. How valuable are girls to the culture in which you live?
2. How accessible is health care for women?
3. What are some of the cultural/traditional expectations of women and girls?
4. What kind of education is needed by women and girls? Do they have easy access to it?



## Global Issues Affecting Women

5. How prevalent is the threat of diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis, dysentery, or sexually transmitted diseases? Does this threat differ for men?
6. How can we learn what the needs of women are?

## Statistics

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) publishes a report periodically updating the status of the Education For All (EFA) program which has established very specific goals in helping the world's least developed countries achieve universal primary education and adult literacy by the year 2015. The *2009 Global Monitoring Report\** (2009 GMR) helps us see the continuing need for education policy that will have long-lasting, culture-changing effects. Education is so important that the United Nations related two of its eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) specifically to education:

MDG 2. *Achieve universal primary education by 2015.* One of the targets for this goal is that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

MDG 3. *Promote gender equality and empower women.* One of the targets for this goal is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. [This means that equality won't happen until there are as many girls and women educated as there are boys and men. Our world is far from achieving that, but we are seeing some significant improvements in some areas.]

Research over the years has shown that education is a key factor in reducing poverty, improving child health, reducing mortality, and encouraging democracy and citizenship. According to the 2009 GMR, "If the world's governments are serious about Education for All, they must get serious about tackling inequality. . . . A pro-poor approach to education policy is imperative for the goals to have meaning for the world's out-of-school children and 776 million adult illiterates" (p. 3). While the Education for All report deals with educating both males and females, the purpose of this Global Women study guide is to focus on the needs of girls and women. Here are some statistics for the 2009 GMR that will help you get an idea of the situation around the world:

- In 2006, some 75 million children, 55 percent girls [41.25 million girls], were not in school, almost half in sub-Saharan Africa. . . . Projections for 134 countries accounting for some two-thirds of out-of-school children in 2006 suggest that some 29 million children will be out of school in 2015 in these countries alone (p. 4).
- An estimated 776 million adults – or about 16 percent of the world's adult population – lack basic literacy skills. About two-thirds are women [which is approximately 520 million women. To put that in perspective: the total US population is 304 million]. Most countries have made little progress in recent years. If current trends continue, there will be over 700 million adults still lacking literacy skills in 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia are where most of the lowest literacy rates exist. Nineteen countries have literacy rates of less than 55 percent [Can you imagine one out of every two people in your town *not* being able to read?] (p. 5).
- In 2006, of the 176 countries with data, 59 had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education. . . . However, more than half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab States had not reached the target. Only 37 percent of countries worldwide had achieved gender parity at secondary level (p. 5).
- Poverty and other forms of social disadvantage magnify gender disparities. For example, in Mali girls from poor households are four times less likely to attend primary school than those from rich households, rising to eight times at secondary level (p. 5).
- Once girls are in school, there progress is often hampered by teacher attitudes and gender-biased textbooks that reinforce negative gender stereotypes. These school-based factors interact with wider social and economic factors that influence school performance along gender lines (p. 5).

## Global Issues Affection Women: Education

- Global wealth inequalities are mirrored by inequalities in education spending. In 2004, North America and Western Europe alone accounted for 55 percent of the world's spending on education but only 10 percent of the population ages 5 to 25. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 15 percent of 5- to 25-year olds but just 2 percent of global spending. South and West Asia represents over 25 percent of the population and just 7 percent of spending (p. 6).
- One study found that an extra year of schooling could increase individual earnings by 10 percent. Inequalities in education mirror income inequalities: in India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, rising wage inequalities are closely linked with widening gaps between those with tertiary [college] education and those with lower education attainment levels (p. 9).
- The links between education and public health are well established. Mothers with education, whether at secondary or primary level, reduce the child mortality rate. Educated parents also tend to have better-nourished children. [Child stunting can be prevented if the parents are educated. HIV/AIDS prevention is more likely when people are educated.] (pp. 9-10).
- In terms of absolute numbers, 80 percent of adult illiterates worldwide live in only 20 countries and half live in Bangladesh, China and India (p. 18). However, Bangladesh is one of the few countries to have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and the only one besides Sri Lanka in South and West Asia. Good governance has played a major role. So have stipend programs, which have increased girls' participation in school. The improved levels of secondary education among girls have had a positive impact in other areas of society, with declines in child mortality, better nutrition, and more and better-paid jobs for women (p. 20).
- Regional adult literacy rates remain below the developing country average (79 percent) in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, the Arab States and the Caribbean. Severe poverty is rampant in 13 of these countries, with at least three-quarters of the population living on less than US\$2 per day (p. 18).
- In many countries, once girls are in primary school they do better than boys: they are less likely to repeat grades, more likely to reach the final grade and more likely to complete primary school (p. 19).
- An effective learning environment relies on basic infrastructure, professional leadership, motivated teachers, sufficient instruction time and resources, the use of performance-enhancing monitoring and evaluation, and adequate funding. Many essential resources taken for granted in developed countries, such as electricity, seats, desks and textbooks, are scarce in developing countries. In six sub-Saharan African countries, half of grade 6 students learn in classrooms that do not have a single book (p. 22).

\*To read the full Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009, go to [www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org).

There is another popular resource on the Internet entitled The Girl Effect. The following statistics are from that video which can be found at [www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org):

- An extra year of primary school raises a girl's lifetime wages by 10-20 percent.
- When girls have received 7 or more years of education, they marry 4 years later and have 2.2 fewer children.
- An extra year of secondary school raises a girl's lifetime wages 15-25 percent.
- A woman or girl will reinvest 90 percent of her income into her family. A man will reinvest 30-40 percent.
- Research has shown that children of educated women are healthier and are more likely to be in school themselves.
- Pregnancy is the world's leading cause of death in girls 15-19 years old.
- Without a birth certificate or an ID, a girl in the developing world doesn't know and can't prove her age, protect herself from child marriage, open a bank account, vote, or eventually get a job. That makes it hard to save the world.

To learn more about a ministry that is focused solely on placing Christian professors in secular universities around the world so that someday, every university student will have at least one professor who can articulate a Christian worldview and can demonstrate a life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, visit the website for the



## *Global Issues Affecting Women*

International Institute for Christian Studies, a Kansas City-area based ministry that is multi-denominational and has about 40 professors (many of whom are women) serving in more than 15 nations worldwide at [www.iics.com](http://www.iics.com).

To learn more about what the US government is doing to address global women's issues—especially regarding education—you can access the following web sites.

1. The White House Council on Women and Girls (Chair: Valerie Jarrett; Executive Director: Tina Tchen)  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cwg>
2. US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Chairman: Senator John Kerry)  
<http://foreign.senate.gov/about/>
3. Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women's Issues (Chairman: Senator Barbara Boxer)  
<http://boxer.senate.gov/>
4. US House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor  
<http://edlabor.house.gov/>

To watch a 36-minute video of the 2009 International Women of Courage Award ceremony where Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama present women from 7 different countries with awards for their acts of courage go to: <http://www.state.gov/video/?videoid=15389713001>

## **One Global Women Response**

Miriam Rivera would consider herself an unlikely candidate for leading a ministry as a pastor's wife. Miriam had survived years of an abusive first marriage when she was invited with a friend to seek some help at a local crisis ministry center. She said that as soon as she walked in the door, she felt loved. She met the Lord that day.

Miriam's life was transformed from the inside out and her husband was not at all supportive and would beat her every time she would go to church, but Miriam kept going. Finally, on his death bed, her husband repented and became a Christian. Miriam's newfound freedom and spiritual growth was almost overwhelming for her. There were several times when others would say that she would one day marry a pastor. She would laugh and think they were crazy. Then, just as others predicted, Miriam became reacquainted with a pastor she had known years before. He had become a widower and was very interested in Miriam.

After a beautiful church wedding provided by friends and family, Miriam and Enrique started their life together and soon started leading a ministry together as well. They now pastor the Lighthouse Ministries in Lakeway, TX, in a majority-Hispanic neighborhood just west of Austin. Lighthouse Ministries is sponsored by The Lakeway Church, a non-denominational church not far from this Hispanic neighborhood.

Miriam, a native of Puerto Rico and long-time resident of Austin, was never able to attend college, so her education has been through life experience, work, and raising a family. Recently, she learned about the Latina Leadership Institute (LLI) through a friend at The Lakeway Church. When the leaders of the women's ministry, GEMS, at The Lakeway Church found out about the possibility for Miriam to attend LLI, they quickly approved a scholarship for her to attend the 2010 LLI. Miriam completed the week's training and was overjoyed by the new friends she made and the training she received. Miriam said that when her husband saw the list of topics to be covered, he asked if he could attend. He was reminded that it was just for women. Miriam is eager to incorporate all that she has learned into the ministry and to help other Hispanic women in her sphere of influence.

LLI is a ministry of the Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio, TX, and is led by Dr. Nora Lozano, associate professor of theology at BUA and a former Global Women board member, and Patty Villareal, a licensed social worker who works for Buckner and teaches at BUA. LLI's vision is the discovery, development, nurturance, and empowerment of women leaders from a Latina perspective to be transformational agents in church and community settings. Participants attend a week of educational seminars each January over a three-year period and complete assignments throughout the year. There have been two graduating classes of the full LLI program and the women testify to the growth, networking, and affirmation they have experienced through the relationships and learning at LLI. For more information about LLI, visit the BUA website at [www.bua.edu](http://www.bua.edu).

Global Women's board is pleased to provide a financial gift to LLI each year to help continue this training for Hispanic women as transformational leaders. Through the donations Global Women receives, more financial support can be made available to ministries such as the Latina Leadership Institute and more women like Miriam Rivera can be empowered by the love of God, valued by their communities, and equipped to fulfill their unique purposes.

## Resources

In addition to the websites listed above, books I would recommend include:

- *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time* (2007) by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin about a man's efforts to build schools in war-torn Afghanistan.
- *Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books not Bombs in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (2009) by Greg Mortenson
- *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Journey to Change the World . . . One Child at a Time (The Young Reader's Edition)* (2009) by Sarah Thomson, Greg Mortenson, David Oliver Relin, and Jan Godall
- *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunities for Women Worldwide* (2009) by Nicholas D. Dristof and Sheryl WuDunn

## Ideas for involvement

- Pray for girls and women around the world to have access and opportunities to receive the education they need to be productive members of society.
- Pray that every university student—especially young women—will have at least one woman Christian woman professor who can articulate a Christian worldview for her and can demonstrate a life lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for women in your own community who may not have adequate literacy skills.
- Pray for women you see in your community who may come from family or cultural situations where their education is not valued simply because they are women, wives, or mothers.
- Give to Global Women so that more educational ministries such as the Latina Leadership Institute can continue and grow.
- Give to your local church's ministries that support English as a Second Language programs, local literacy programs, children's afterschool ministries, etc.
- Give to local ministries that are reaching out with free educational opportunities for immigrants and migrant workers.
- Give to local reading programs that support giving books away to low-income families.
- Go to a local United Way agency in your community that teaches literacy or English as a Second Language and volunteer to help teach reading to a struggling teen or adult or to teach English to recent immigrants.
- Go on a mission trip to a place where schools need improvements, such as the impoverished Mississippi Delta region or the low-income Appalachian region in our own country. Volunteer to help with construction or remodeling or refurbishing projects in old schools.
- Go to websites to learn about the educational needs of women worldwide.



## Global Issues Affecting Women

- Do learn of any literacy ministries that your church is already connected to through your church's involvement with other churches or ministries and invite a representative of that ministry to come speak to your Global Women community, your whole church or other group.
- Do collect gently worn books to give to low-income families.
- Do collect new Bibles in the New Century Version especially designed with easy-to-understand text or the New International Readers Version with simple text. Give to new families in your church and community. Half Price Books is a good source for used and new discounted Bibles.
- Do learn to teach English as a Second Language or how to teach adult literacy.
- Do contact local community service agencies such as employment offices, welfare offices, etc. to learn of services where literacy may be a need. You may discover a workplace that would allow you to teach their employees some basic reading skills such as a cleaning service or warehouse where workers do not require reading skills.
- Do contact your local city officials, state representatives, and senators whenever there is a need concerning the education of girls and women, whether in this country or around the world.

## Discussion questions

1. Which of the statistics about the state of women's literacy in other countries surprised you the most? Why?
2. Are there literacy needs in our own city or county that you know of? Is there a way our Global Women community can connect with any of those needs? Have any of you been involved with any educational or literacy ministries?
3. In what ways has the education of women—or lack of—in your own family influenced your personal development as a woman?
4. If you were in charge of making sure women around the world were all given the opportunity to learn how to read, where would you start?

*Close your discussion time in prayer.*

## About the Author of this Discussion Guide



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