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### The Importance of Education for Children in Poorer Communities

Nelson Mandela once said “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” For many children this “weapon” is what will help them build a better life. However millions of children in poorer areas do not have access to good education. Some schools do not have enough teachers, supplies, or safe classrooms, while others struggle to stay open because of poverty. These challenges show how unfair access to education can be and why strong schooling is important. Education is important for every child because it creates opportunities, supports future success, and helps reduce inequality, especially for children that live in low-income areas.

Education is sometimes harder to get in poorer areas. To start off, Many schools in low income areas lack basic materials like textbooks and desks. The more a country spends on learning materials shows that its committed to providing quality education for its students. For instance, textbooks are one of the most important resources for students to have. Without any textbooks children will spend most of their time copying stuff from the board and not being able to actually be engaged in learning (UNESCO).

Another challenge related to school resources is that some classrooms are overcrowded because there are not enough teachers. In order to achieve universal and primary education aswell as the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), an additional 44 million teachers are needed by the year 2030, according to the World Bank. This statistic shows that there is a huge

shortage of teachers. Because of this many children in lower and middle income are not able to understand and read a simple text due to poor teacher recruitment, training, support, management, and motivation from teachers (World Bank).

In addition to teacher shortages, schools often have unsafe or damaged buildings that make learning difficult. According to UNICEF, at least 242 million children in 85 different countries had their school environment destroyed or damaged by extreme climate conditions in the year of 2024. This includes heatwaves, tropical cyclones, storms, floods, and droughts. In 2024, South Asia was the most affected region with over 128 million students being disrupted by climate related issues like heavy rainfall, floods, and primarily extreme heat. Schools being closed for a long period of time make it unlikely for students to come back to school and they often lose interest in learning and fall behind academically. Furthermore, limited access to technology reduces learning opportunities. Having access to technology can connect students who do not have teachers so that they can pursue their education. Online classes can provide education to students that lack teachers. Educational tools online that use AI (Artificial Intelligence) can help teachers who are untrained or volunteer teachers with their lesson plans and assessments (Global Partnership for Education).

Besides problems at school, families may not be able to afford basic school necessities such as uniforms or supplies. According to Save the Children, 30% of parents had borrow money just to afford their children's school uniform. This is causing families to pay a big chunk of money that they have to reduce money that they spend on food (Save The Children). Another financial barrier that parents face is that transportation to school can be too expensive for many families. Without safe transportation many children are at risk. For example, Lina who is 8 years

old, lives in a remote area of Jordan and is at a risk of dropping out due to bad weather conditions and long distances to school which make walking to school unsafe (Amer).

Because of these money problems, children in poorer areas often work to support their families instead of attending school. Many children do not see going to school as a loss because going to school means losing the income that they would earn at work. This is mainly due to poverty and their family members depending on their income just so they can survive (International Labour Organization).

Limited access to schooling can seriously affect a child's health and overall well-being. Children with little to no education often have lower understanding of hygiene and disease prevention because health literacy depends on education. Health literacy is the ability to understand and use health information. When children do not have enough education, they may have a hard time understanding health advice or practice healthy habits everyday, which can increase their risks of illness and can lead to more sickness. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) even in wealthy European countries, many children, teenagers, and adults struggle with health literacy skills and have a hard time understanding health information (WHO). This lack of basic knowledge can also affect children's nutrition and physical growth, it increases the risk of malnutrition due to poor feeding practices. According to UNICEF, children living in food poverty often do not eat enough nutritious foods during their early childhood, which harms their growth and development. Without the proper knowledge about healthy diets, families may struggle to provide balanced meals, increasing the risk of malnutrition and affecting the performance of children in school (UNICEF).

In addition to affecting nutrition, children not being able to go to school can force them into unsafe work environments. When children are unable to attend school, they often work in

dangerous labor environments. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) there are 138 million children in the world that are involved in child labour. 54 million of these children are involved in dangerous work that puts their health and safety at serious risk. It is estimated that 78 million of these children are boys and 59 million are girls. The ILO explains that child labour includes work that is dangerous to a child's health and development and requires hours long of work by children who are too young to even be working. This type of work prevents children from playing, learning, and receiving an education which affects their future. (International Labour Organization).

Beyond physical health effects, limited education also impacts children's mental and emotional well-being. Long-term stress is often the result of limited opportunities caused by poor education. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), financial struggles and economic insecurity are big reasons for ongoing stress. The APA report explains that people with lower income levels report higher stress compared to those that are in a better financial situation. The report also explains that money is one of the most common sources of stress in the United States. Over time, this ongoing stress can negatively affect both mental and physical health which increases the risk of anxiety and depression.

These challenges continue in adulthood through limited financial opportunities. Children without education face lifelong income struggles because individuals with lower levels of education tend to earn less throughout their lives compared to those with higher education, as workers with degrees such as bachelor's degrees often earn more than twice as much as those who only graduated high school. According to the Brookings Institution, a typical college graduate earns about \$1.19 million over their career, which is more than twice the earnings of the

average high school graduate (Brookings Institution). Individuals who do not complete high school earn even less on average which increases their risk of poverty.

While the lack of education can create financial challenges, children who have access to quality schooling can completely change their future in positive ways. Education plays a big role in changing a child's future by providing more job opportunities, developing important life skills, and helping break the cycle of poverty. According to OECD's Education at a Glance Report, individuals with higher levels of education tend to earn more over their lifetimes compared to those with lower levels of education, with adults who complete college earning on average about 50% more than those who only completed high school (OECD Education at Glance). OECD data also show that young adults who did not finish high school have an unemployment rate of about 13%, which is almost twice as high as those who finished high school. This connects to what the World Bank explains that skilled workers are more likely to get hired because they have the knowledge and training needed for modern jobs. Education gives children more choices when they become adults it can help them qualify for jobs that pay a stable income and have safer working conditions. It also gives them the skills to be able to apply for jobs, communicate professionally, and be able to keep learning through training or going to college. This shows that education provides access to more stable and higher paying careers (UNESCO).

Beyond employment benefits, education also helps children develop important life skills. Schools help students build communication and leadership skills, which are important because these skills help students speak better, listen to others, and be able to take responsibility in group settings (UNICEF). In addition, students learn teamwork and collaboration, which prepare them to be able to work with different types of people and share ideas with each other. According to the OECD, adults with strong literacy and problem solving skills are more than twice as likely to

be employed compared to those with lower skill levels. This shows that these skills do not just help in school but they also increase a person's chances of getting and keeping a job. Literacy skills also help students be able to manage their own finances, understand contracts like being able to read a contract before signing it, and handle responsibilities like understanding bills and other types of forms (National Literacy Institute). These skills allow children to become independent and confident adults.

Education can also help break the cycle of poverty. The World Bank explains that education can raise income levels not only for individuals but for future generations too. This happens because education helps people make smarter choices with their money. When families are more stable and bring in a steady amount of income they are able to afford basic necessities such as food, rent, and healthcare. It also makes it easier for parents to pay for school supplies, transportation, and other fees so that their children can attend school. UNICEF states that educated parents are more likely to send their children to school which creates a positive cycle of learning. When parents understand how important school is, they are more likely to support their children in school with their homework, attending school meetings, and encouraging them. Over time, this cycle helps communities grow because more people are able to work, earn money, and be able to contribute to local businesses and public services. As more members of a community become educated, economic growth and stability increase which strengthens entire communities (Global Partnership for Education).

Education does not only benefit individuals and families, it also benefits communities and supports a country's growth. This matters a lot especially in places where schools have fewer resources, because economic growth can lead to more funding for schools, teachers, and overall safer classrooms. When more people are educated, national economies become stronger and

more stable. According to the World Bank's Human Capital Project, countries that invest in education build stronger economies because educated workers are more productive and contribute to more economic growth (World Bank). Educated populations also attract more global investment, as companies prefer to operate in countries where workers have strong skills and knowledge (OECD).

Education also helps create safer environments. This is important in places where children have less safe options after school, because school can give support and have adults who keep students accountable and help keep them on track. Research from the U.S. Department of Education shows that education lowers the amount of crime and violence in communities. For example, federal school safety data shows that serious violent victimization at school is rare. In 2022, there were about 22 incidents per 1,000 students ages 12 to 18 in school. So being in school can actually help keep students in a safer environment instead of being out in dangerous situations. The U.S. Department of Education also says that the more years that someone stays in school, the less likely they are to get involved in crime (U.S. Department of Education).

While many children face problems getting education, there are solutions that can help every child get a chance to learn. One important step is providing support to families. Free meals and supplies can improve the attendance of children especially in low income households (UNICEF). UNICEF also states that in the poorest countries only about 2 out of 10 children have access to food and health programs in their schools. In those places, a meal at school can be a huge reason for a child to even show up to school. This shows that support like meals and supplies is not just helpful but help students attend school. When families do not have to worry about paying for school necessities children will be more likely to stay in school. Free transportation services especially in rural areas where children may live far from schools can also

help children go to school everyday without having to worry. When transportation is free and children are able to rely on it, they are able to miss less days of school and be able to arrive on time more often. It also takes the worries off of parents who may not have the time, money, or a safe way to drive their children to school everyday. Over time, being able to attend school consistently can help students keep up with what is being taught and lower their chances of falling behind or dropping out.

In conclusion, education is one of the most important opportunities that a child can be given, yet many children in poorer communities still struggle to access it because of limited resources, unsafe schools, and financial problems. When children are not able to receive proper education it can harm their health, limit their job opportunities, and lead to unstable living conditions later in life. Without education, many children remain in poverty and this cycle can continue on for generations. Having access to education can completely change a child's future. Education helps build life skills and helps people live healthier lives. It also strengthens communities by lowering the crime rate and supporting economic growth. If we want safer communities and stronger countries, education has to be put first. Every child deserves a fair chance to be able to learn and succeed and providing easy access to education will be able to create opportunities and a better future for everyone.

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