



## With Her: A Skilled Girlforce **SHE MIGHT BE A PRESIDENT ONE DAY**

A Girl's Club Workshop at Adra's Women's Centre, Serbia

*"School is a key of happiness.  
I want to go to school,  
So I can know my rights.  
I want to go to school,  
So I can inspire others,  
So they can help themselves in future.  
I really want to go to school,  
For my brighter future,  
And my independence."*

**"I want to go to school" landai (a form of Afghani folk poetry) created by Afghani migrants and refugees girls**

Education is the foundation of today's society. It not only creates better opportunities, security and stability, but also contribute to a healthy, democratic and inclusive society. The demand in the labour market requests more and more educated workers, and today's generations of girls are preparing to soon enter a competitive field of work. However, many do not have equal opportunity to acquire necessary education similar to their male peers. Statistics show that young women aged 15-29 are more than twice as likely as young men not to be in employment, education or training; it is assessed that 131 million girls worldwide are out of school. At the current rate of progress, by 2030, more than half the world's girls will not be on track to achieve basic skills – literacy and numeracy— at the secondary level. There are a number of barriers that girls face in completing school and other alternative ways of education that prevent them from achieving the necessary levels of education and, consequently, transitioning into decent work.



Summer school ADRA Serbia

Girls' disadvantage in accessing education is even more striking within refugee and migrant populations. Around 70% of refugee children in the world are enrolled in elementary schools and half of that number in high school. Unsurprisingly, girls are more disadvantaged, and they attend elementary schools up to 50% less than boys, while in the context of high schools the number of enrolled girls can even go down to 1%. In Serbia, elementary schools welcome migrant and refugee children regardless of their gender, ethnicity or religion. However, the discrepancy between the number of girls and boys attending school is clear when it comes to this population. And while the differences occur in lower grades, they strikingly increase with the children's age.

Many countries of origin also have considerably high rates of children out of school, which adds to the complexity of this issue. The largest number of migrants and refugees in Serbia are from Afghanistan, where the rate of out-of-school children is high, particularly for girls. A variety of reasons, including social norms, poverty, lack of security and conflict, child labour (paid or unpaid domestic), child marriages and adolescent pregnancy are some of the contributing factors. In addition, the low number of female staff in schools and poor infrastructure contribute to the barriers and bottlenecks to girls enrollment and completion of school. Political insecurity under the Taliban set the ground for such a situation, as fundamentalists viewed girls education as a Western influence, and one in opposition with Islamic principles. Some argued that school would spoil the girls, and deter them from traditional gender roles. Refugee families report that girls' schools were bombed much more often than boys' schools, their teachers were harassed, parents threatened and girls attacked. Recently, efforts have been made to increase access to education, and the number of children in school has started to increase slowly.

## For all the girls who stayed in Afghanistan, and to help them, we suggest:



That in every village exist one school so every girl can go to school not to worry about her safety.



To provide clean drinking water in school.



To provide school materials to all children so no one can stay out of school because they don't have notebook.



That teachers be more educated and their salaries to be bigger so we can learn better also.



That in school we have normal and clean toilets. Girls are often out of school during the period and after that most of them don't continue going to school.



There need to be more schools in general!"

## Afghani migrants and refugees girls' suggestions on improving the school conditions in their country of origin

However, the situation is still far from resolved, and the weak endorsement of the existing legal framework of Afghanistan that does foresee mandatory primary and secondary education and guarantee education as a right of all citizens, is still a challenge. In 2018 there has been a marked drop in school attendance, with some girl's schools closed.

A group of Afghani adolescent girls, who regularly attends transformative workshops in ADRA Serbia's Women's Centre, considered how the root causes of challenges to girls' education can be tackled. Their own safety and security was not their primary focus. Instead, they put an emphasis on the issue that could be changed by all families and communities in Afghanistan – revisiting negative gender norms. As a result, they wrote letters to Afghan parents, asking them to question existing gender norms, persuading them to support their daughters to go to school, and explained why girl's education is important for the entire community and society.

We are sending this letter to the world, and ask all the parents in Afghanistan to secure quality education for their daughters, starting today: Accompany your daughters to school, support them the same as your sons, and read them our landai every day. Your daughter will inspire other girls to do the same one day, and that is how we can make a better future for all.

## Dear parents,

Education is a key to a better and happier life. With letting your daughters go to school you will change their lives for better, so their lives won't depend on someone else. They could have life of their own, they could take care of themselves, not only staying at home and taking care of the kids. It's never too late to let your daughters make a better life.

**Sadaf, 15**

I have a friend that never went to school because it was too far from her home. Her brothers, on the other hand, were allowed to go and they went there together. She wish attended school and is very sad because she never got that opportunity. Today, she regrets because it is too late for her and she is too old. Parents, don't make difference between daughters and sons, both of them deserve education. Let your sons help your daughters in school.

**Heela, 18**

Since half of the society is female, we ask for fathers to let their daughters go to school, so they can work along with their brothers, and contribute to the progress of their country. On the daily basis, girls and boys should be spending time together, share everyday challenges and face them together. With education, girls can deal with their problems and find solutions for them independently, because education will give them a new strength.

**Farshta, 17**

If a girl is educated, she might even become a president one day. In Afghanistan there is so many smart girls, and if they would have a chance, they might help this country get better. But in order to do so, they have to go to school, so that no one could take them away the place they deserve.

**Leyla, 15**



Girl's Club, ADRA's Women's Centre

Education is what we need in order to make the progress the best we can. Parents, I advise you to let the girls study and improve their knowledge, instead of getting them married early. Otherwise you won't let them be what they want! Help them find the career they want and set themselves free from routines and troubles.

**Arezo 17**

Afghanistan is one of the countries with the lowest number of girls attending the school. The most violence against girls happen there, but the biggest violence is them not going to school at all. So I ask Afghans parents: do not prevent your daughters from going to school, because they should have education to become independent and wise women in their lives. Although there are a lot of problems and differences, I ask you to put them aside and send your daughters to school. If you do so, you will help not only them, but the whole society. They will be successful in their life and will raise healthier generations for the world. I dream of a day when no girls in Afghanistan would be deprived of her right to education."

**Khatera 19**

**Abstract of letters prepared by Afghani girls during "Girls club" workshops at ADRA Women Center**



#GirlFORCE  
#DayoftheGirl

Recreational activity in ADRA Serbia Centre

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## JOIN US AND TAKE ACTION ON 11 OCTOBER

### Call to action:

Join the #GirlFORCE by telling us one skill you believe every girl needs for the future and why.

### Hashtags:

#DayoftheGirl

\*This paper was made through the series of workshops in ADRA's Women's centre.

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