The World Bank was formed at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 as the “International Bank for Reconstruction and Development” to help reconstruct and support countries who were greatly affected by World War II.\(^1\) The World Bank has since grown to include 189 member nations, usually led by a US representative and composed of five subsections that focus on different aspects of dealing with money. It broadly focuses on ending “extreme poverty by reducing the share of the global population that lives in extreme poverty to 3 percent by 2030”\(^2\) and promoting “shared prosperity by increasing the incomes of the poorest 40 percent of people in every country”\(^3\). The World Bank has collaborated with many nations to give loan and grant money for projects aimed at eliminating poverty and equality gaps.

**Expanding access to education in underdeveloped countries**

**Statement of the Issue:**

The UN Declaration of Human Rights claims education is a universal human right.\(^4\) However, while most nations have access to at least primary education, there are still 61 million children who do not go to school, 53% of which are girls.\(^5\) Many underdeveloped and conflict ridden nations have limited access to strong education

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\(^1\) World Bank. (2019). Who we are.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
programs, well-trained teachers, and resources due to lack of funding and prioritization of jobs. Even with the support of UNICEF programs aimed at improving the quality of education, the programs are based on western education curriculums, which are informational but not always useful for students who will likely continue to work in rural settings after graduation.⁶

Furthermore, there are many other factors that impact the ability of children to go to school, regardless of the level of their education program. Financial status of the family is a large factor; students often need tutoring, uniforms, lunch and other fees⁷, while they are also taking away an additional income in the family because they are unable to work while in school. UNESCO has called all governments to raise revenues and investment in education by 2030 from 149 billion dollars to 340 billion dollars, however many nations are far from meeting that goal⁸. Especially for nations in the midst of war or serious economic instability, extra resources and a stronger workforce are needed that detract from the resources for trainings, time that students can attend school, and the opportunity for students to complete a full elementary through higher education program.

Many schools in nations of conflict are also not safe. Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Columbia, Somalia and Sudan are just some of the 70 plus nations where attacks on students and faculty have occurred recently. 37 million children do not have access to education because of this, so many families send their children to other nations hoping to give them a better education.⁹ However, while many nations are accepting of refugees, the education system is not always equipped for student refugees, making it an international issue that is crucial to address.

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⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ.
Currently, children are being radicalized not only in their own country, but also as refugees, and are being paid for it. While this allows them to get much needed money, it lessens the ability of the next generation to help regulate conflict instead of provoking it. Education is one of the most important issues needing to be addressed in underdeveloped and conflict nations, however it is one of the first to be ignored. Children must be educated, not only because it is a fundamental human right, but also because it is pertinent to helping nations decrease conflict in the future.

History:

From the enforcement of education for everyone in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, the number of children being educated has increased by about 20%. However, even in the 21st century education still is a crucial issue. In 2011, Lao PDR had a 6% rate of being on track for literacy and numeracy in 3 to 5-year olds. Only 5% of Uzbekistan’s children were in preschools in 2013. In 2015, 39% of the world’s population had “no formal education”. These statistics emphasize the effect continuous lack of resources for underdeveloped nations has on the population. Nevertheless, improvements overtime should be acknowledged as a part of the history of education. There is a strong belief in the power of education which fuels organizations like the World Bank to take action. For example, The Early Childhood Education Project has helped 70% of children in “target villages”, and the Improving Pre-Primary and General Secondary Education Project has influenced 49% of preschools and 90% of kindergartens in Uzbekistan. While there are increasingly more projects, funding and attention paid to education, there are still large discrepancies in

terms of quality, content, and discrimination in education. 17 Women, minorities and children with disabilities have a much less likely chance of getting past secondary education. 18

The primary impetus of a lack of a strong education program is its government. Nations in the midst of war do not prioritize education, and hence can have devastating effects on education in the nation. The Rwandan genocide “decreased the average level of educational attainment by 0.5 years.”19 The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, specifically the “fatalities in the academic year” correspond to lower probabilities of passing finals or being admitted to a university.20 Not only that, the effects of living in a nation full of war and violence are unsurprisingly negative on a child’s mental health, which further influence his/her ability to learn21. Additionally, refugees have been and still are a growing problem, especially in terms of education. Currently, 3.7 million refugee children are not in school. While nations like Sweden have developed strong programs to fully welcome and support refugees, it is still difficult for many nations to not only fund and provide resources for them, but also to offer suitable education methods with familiar language, teaching methods and lack of discrimination that is essential to a productive learning environment, especially for a student in a foreign nation.22

Analysis:

Regardless of social situations, all children have the right to a valuable and lasting education, yet despite countless efforts to achieve this, there are still many children who must sacrifice many parts of their life to access education. The World Bank has done research to show that simply having a classroom is not enough; children must

18 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
apply their learning, a school does not mean the teachers will effectively teach their students what is important.\textsuperscript{23} The World Bank and other UN programs have made attempts to address the issues at hand with programs like implementing the Higher Education Quality Model in Peru’s National Education Project, which added internal and external teacher and school evaluations, setting a clearer standard for the quality of education. However, the education deficit is the idea that the government may accept certain programs and sign documents but the extent that they actually implement the original plan is limited, hence creating a gap between the expected and real outcome.\textsuperscript{24} This is becoming an increasingly troubling issue, as it becomes more difficult to judge the value and result of putting money and resources into more programs for nations that may not follow through.

Another important aspect of accessible education is that its solution does not stem solely from the institution itself, rather the many surrounding social factors. As described previously, underdeveloped nations do not have access to training, location, supplies, etc. Groups like UNICEF and UNESCO mainly have focused on programs that are targeted at schools themselves, for example the Associated Schools Network, which helps administer specific curriculums in developing schools in nations that could not otherwise provide the resources for them.\textsuperscript{25} These programs are undoubtedly useful, however they do not address all issues surrounding education. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for every 100 wealthy children that attend school, only 65 of the poorest children go to school.\textsuperscript{26} This gap shows the drastic economic influences that will only continue to extend the rich-poor gap if education is not made fully accessible to all students by fully considering the economic issues of the families that are struggling to provide for themselves. While this is a difficult issue to address, it is considered one of the World Bank’s priorities. \textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} HRW. (2017, July 12). The Education Deficit.
\textsuperscript{25} UNESCO. (n.d.). UNESCO associated Schools Network.
\textsuperscript{26} World Bank. (2019). Education Overview.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
Another economic factor that has the most clear and drastic impact is the effect of nations in crisis on education and the extent that this affects the education systems of other nations. Nations involved in war do not focus on education even though it is crucial for a long-term way of addressing conflict. Accessible schools are often targeted as areas of attack, further taking away the implied right to a safe education.\(^{28}\) Not only that, with a lack of education comes a lack of social skills and increased radicalization with the incentive of pay for children with no other options.\(^{29}\) For children that do leave their home nation as refugees, their access to education may remain the same if not more difficult. According to the Migration Policy Institute, even first asylum countries have difficulty giving children access to education because refugees are often at a variety of levels and may have missed years of school or subjects, and are also more likely to change schools, making it less likely that students will establish strong relationships with their peers and teachers.\(^{30}\)

None of these issues surrounding education can be “solved” with one simple answer, rather, they must be addressed fully through a variety of programs implemented by individual governments, outside nations, NGO’s, and UN committees like the World Bank. By 2030, the World Bank aims to give “access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all” through the Education Framework for Action, and has already contributed millions of dollars towards this goal.\(^{31}\) It has worked with NGO’s like BRAC in Bangladesh that have been successful in starting and running over 32,000 primary schools.\(^{32}\) NGO’s have been especially beneficial because they do not rely on government willingness to contribute resources to be successful, and hence can better address the education deficit. Even so, while many aspects of education have improved, many aspects have worsened. UNESCO predicts that governments will have to allot from 149 billion dollars (2012) to 340 billion by 2030, or 15-20% of their national

\(^{28}\) Safe schools for children in conflict areas. (2019).
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{32}\) SSIR. (n.d.). Redefining Education in the Developing World.
budget.\textsuperscript{33} In order to adequately address this issue, individual governments and the world must be prepared to contribute what is necessary to truly give children their right to education.

**Conclusion:**

As a committee in the United Nations with the ability to influence funding and work with many other committees, it is imperative that the World Bank works to address the multi-faceted issue of access to education for underdeveloped nations. From funding for education on a large government scale to individual schools and families, and additionally addressing the refugee education crisis, the World Bank must tackle issues of resources, quality of education, and more. Furthermore, questions about what aspects of education should be prioritized come up; elementary education is the main focus of many education programs, and higher education is seen as secondary.\textsuperscript{34} How much attention should higher education garner? There are many questions like this that have only been touched on but are still highly important. While only some of these questions can be considered, the World Bank has a critical responsibility to tackle education in underdeveloped nations until every child’s right to education is fully achieved.

**Questions:**

1. How can the issue of funding for education be addressed on a global, national and local level?
2. How can the World Bank reasonably work with NGO’s and governments to ensure that education becomes more accessible, especially in nations where governments are less willing to comply with expectations?

\textsuperscript{33} Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ. (2019).
\textsuperscript{34} 10 Barriers to Education Around the World. (n.d.)
3. What role does the World Bank play in addressing accessibility of education for refugees and migrant children and families?
Resources


