

“In the past children were treated in law in many countries as simply the possession of their parents. Slowly it has been accepted that they should have legal rights as separate individuals and that their views should be taken into account when decisions are being made about them.” (Frederickson and Cline, 2002, p.11)

This assignment the author will critically discuss barriers to engagement in education for children in a specific country, comparing the findings to the situation for children living in the United Kingdom. Taking a global perspective on education the author will research and gather evidence to discover what these barriers are, identifying what impact and role governments, international organisations and charities undertake to overcome these barriers and make education accessible for all. The author has chosen the country Somalia in East Africa. Somalia's population is 15,523,084 a much smaller population compared to the United Kingdom who have a population of 66, 863, 963 (Worldometers, 2019). The average life expectancy in Somalia is 53 for men and 50 years old for women (borgen magazine, 2016) compared to the United Kingdom where figures are much higher 79 for men and 82 years old for women (Office for National Statistics, 2018). The Somali language is the official language spoken in Somalia, up until 1973 it had been an unwritten language (Britannica, 2019). Three million children are out of education in Somalia and 70% of the country's population is under thirty, yet youth unemployment is one of the highest in the world (Their World, 2018). It is a legal requirement in the United Kingdom that every child aged between five and sixteen gets a full-time education that meets their needs, parents/guardians can be fined or prosecuted if their child does not get an education (The Government, 2018). According to UNICEF (2015), Somalia has one of the lowest enrolment rates in the world for primary school aged children. The school year is slightly different in Somalia compared to the normal British three term school year in autumn, spring and summer. Schools in Somalia have been split into two terms, term one runs from January to May and term two from August to December (Their World, 2018). Recently a new curriculum was introduced with the welcome of an additional core subject information technology (Their World, 2018). Pupils have been divided into three groups of lower primary children aged between six and ten years old, upper primary aged between eleven and fourteen years old, and the third group are secondary for children aged between fifteen and eighteen years old (Their World, 2018). The author will conclude all the findings and will consider what the United Kingdom could benefit in learning from the Somalia education system if any.

What barriers are children living in Somalia challenged with for engagement in education? It is estimated that one hundred and thirty-three children out of a thousand die every year in

Somalia before their fifth birthday due to extreme poverty, diseases, drought, famine and conflict (Save the children, 2015). Britannica (2019) state that decades of civil hostilities and wars have virtually destroyed Somalia's economy, education system and infrastructure, the country has been divided and now ruled by various entities. According to Their World (2018) conflict is one of the biggest barriers to education and between 2016 and 2017 there were over 25 million children out of education in the world. Somalia has an ongoing civil war where terrorism is rampant and children are deprived from having an education and vital learning (Their World, 2018). As a result of the war by 1994 many schools in Somalia had been destroyed along with resources and learning materials, not only were children leaving education but teachers also abandoned their roles (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). Progress of receiving an education has differed across regions in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland who have greater security and political stability have seen the highest increase of children's enrolment in school within the last two decades (Global Partnership, 2019). Somaliland declared independence in 1991 which has helped the process of restoring and expanding their education services, in 2011 free education for primary aged children was established in this region of Somalia (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). Despite this positive step forward transition into secondary school is still very challenging with limited access to other vocational courses (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). Authorities in Puntland a region within Somalia since 1998 have developed educational provisions which have seen a rise in primary aged children attending school (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). Unfortunately, despite efforts there are still over 50% of children in Puntland not attending school and 83% of teachers who have not received proper teacher training (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). The worst affected as a result of the ongoing conflict is central and south Somalia, there is very little government provided education in these areas and what educational lessons are delivered are mainly through private or charitable organisations (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). In very difficult circumstances and conditions these organisations do well to delivery any kind of educational lessons, unfortunately though these organisations will mainly operate in large towns or cities meaning a vast number of children are still not receiving any kind of education (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). It is also estimated that nearly 75% of schools in this region are unsafe, badly damaged or don't have proper classrooms (Africa Educational Trust, 2014). Since 2012 a new internationally backed government has been put in place and Somalia have been working towards stability in the country, but they are challenged by Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab extremist groups (BBC News, 2018). There is reportedly been over six hundred attacks on education in Somalia by local clans or non-state armed forces, these attacks include schools, universities with arranged targeted killings or abductions on students or teachers (refworld,

2018). In December 2015 the United Nations reported that a hundred and fifty boys had been abducted from schools in the south region of Somalia for child soldier recruitment, war purposes. Most of the attacks took place in central and southern Somalia, however there were reports of attacks in Puntland and Somaliland (refworld, 2018). In 1991 Somalia tried to form a government called the Transitional federal government, they signed a law to put a stop on child soldiers and new laws with restrictions on how old you had to be in order to work (Prezi, 2014). Since then no new laws have been set and these laws are not enforced in Somalia (Prezi, 2014).

“Education was also reportedly promised in return for participation in fighting. A March 2016 report by AMISOM stated that al-Shabaab members frequently recruited or forcibly abducted children as young as 10 years old from madrassas, promising them a better education and access to a more prosperous life in return for their participation in fighting.”
(Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, P.6, 2018)

Having an education in Somalia is practically impossible or impractical for many families due to poverty. Poverty is high in Somalia and it is one of the poorest countries in the world, according to Africa Educational Trust (2014) it is estimated that 43% of the population in Somalia live on less than \$1 a day. Unlike the United Kingdom, most schools in Somalia do not receive any funding from the government and are dependent solely on school fees which are deemed very expensive by the parents for the everyday running of the school costs (Intersos, 2016). On average a monthly fee in lower primary costs \$8 a month and upper primary \$10 a month (Intersos, 2016). Understandably with 43% of the population living on less than \$1 a day education is not an option for these families. Poverty can leave a child to lose self-esteem, self-worth and ambition and will transmit from one generation to the next if nothing is to be done about it. With youth unemployment at 67% in Somalia, one of the highest in the world organisations such as World Vision are doing what they can to educate these children and get them into employment (World Vision, 2017). The organisation put in place a nine-month programme targeted at three hundred vulnerable youths to develop not only important literacy and numeracy skills, vocational skills also such as pottery, bee keeping, beauty, construction and tree planting which in hope would give them skills to access employment (World Vision, 2017). World Vision chose to use the funding available on the youth as they were the ones who had missed the opportunity of having a formal education when they were younger (World Vision, 2017). Somalia drought is ongoing today but between 2010 and 2012 the world saw the worst famine recorded in Somalia in over sixty years with a death toll of 260,000 people, half were children under the age of five (Unicef, 2017). It was reported that 30,000 lives were

taken each month from May 2011 to August 2011 (Save the children, 2015). Organisations such as The World Food programme contributed by supplying relief food and medical vaccines, to help prevent various diseases spreading such as measles to the millions who were affected (Brookings, 2011). A lack of rainfall resulted in severe drought which compromised crop and livestock having a devastating impact on communities, their livelihoods and money shortages (reliefweb, 2015). UNICEF (2017), reported in 2017 that 1.4 million children were faced with the risk of death and over five million faced malnourishment that year alone. According to the theorist Abraham Maslow, anyone not receiving their basic psychological needs such as water, food and shelter are unable to go on and fulfil their next need which are the safety needs, security, freedom from fear and stability (Simple Psychology, 2018). Maslow believed that the basic needs are the most important needs as they are needed for physical survival (Simple Psychology, 2018). Children in Somalia are not getting their basic needs met, they are starving to death, have to go searching for water, how will they ever succeeding in going on to fulfil their next need. Not only do schools provide an education for children but it can also be a place where children can have access to health care services and is crucial to a child's survival and development to be provided with learning opportunities in a safe environment for future long-term stability (UNICEF, 2011).

One of the biggest barriers to education in Somalia seems to be your gender, the education of boys is highly prioritised over girls (refworld, 2018). It is reported that only a quarter of the Somalia women aged between fifteen and twenty-four are literate, compared to 37.8% of men (The Borgen project, 2017). Early marriage, insecurities, cultural beliefs, attitudes of parents, child work, school fees and a lack of female teachers are just some of the reasons why girls are discriminated in education (GCPEA, 2018). In 2016 it was documented that only 43% of Somalia children were girls enrolled in schools (GCPEA, 2018). Raising girl's attainment in schools in Somalia is vital not only for educational purposes but to help put a stop on FGM, female genital mutilation. According to The Borgen project (2017) ninety eight percent of girls undergo female genital mutilation in Somalia at some time in their lives, with the highest percent having the procedure between the age of five and nine years old, girls who attend school are less likely to have the procedure though. Education itself can act as a prevention for girls against female genital mutilation as it teaches them of the risks and dangers involved, encouraging them to break the family cycle of generations having this procedure as many Somalian families believe that it is culturally acceptable to have it happen to them (The Borgen project, 2018). There are no health benefits from having this procedure but it can cause serious health problems such as, cysts, infections, bleeding and complications during child birth (Save

the Children, 2015). Save the Children a charity organisation, are doing everything they can to help expose the dangers and prevent FGM from happening in Somalia. Some of their work consists of training health workers to help women who are affected by FGM, organising talks in communities with girls and women teaching and speaking out about the dangers of FGM, seeking alternative training and employment for those who carry out the procedure in order for them to have an alternative wage and to stop FGM (Save the Children, 2015). Child marriage, it was recorded in 2006 that 45% of girls were married before their eighteenth birthday and 8% married before their fifteenth birthday (Girls not Brides, 2019). According to Girls not Brides (2019) religion, family honour, gender norms, armed conflict, displacement and peer pressure are the main reasons for child marriage in Somalia. It was reported that some religious leaders give permission for child marriage and it is a sad fact that some parents marry off their daughter in order to protect them from sexual abuse to and from school (Girls not brides, 2019). Intersos (2016) argue that all religious leaders have their daughters in education as they value the importance of education and equality between girls and boys, stating that religious figures should be used as advocates in promoting the importance of girls receiving an education. Unfortunately, child marriage is often seen as a tradition in Somalia where many mothers encourage and groom their daughters to get married at an early age, if they do not they can bring shame to the family name (Intersos, 2016). Forced marriage ends a girl's dream of an education, once married the girl takes on the role and duties of a housewife and may become a mother at a young age preventing any progress or success in education as inevitably they will quit school (Intersos, 2016). Negative attitudes and beliefs of the parents in Somalia has a major influence on a girl's education, which can determine whether or not their daughter attends school. Many believe that the men are the breadwinners so don't see the value of girls attending school as they will eventually be married off and have no benefits for receiving an education (Intersos, 2016). The learning environment/school itself may be a barrier for girls going to school, according to Intersos (2016) they state that many male teachers are married to school girls and will seduce the girls at school. A lack of female teachers is also an issue, the education sector is dominated by men in Somalia with school management solely ran by males (Gender Issues, 2014). Unlike Wales who have recently been awarded a period poverty grant for girls in schools under a new scheme to tackle period poverty (BBC News, 2019), Somalian schools lack any kind of sanitary facilities with little knowledge of what menstruation is (Intersos, 2016). Having a female teacher for girls can be inspirational and a positive role model who can have a major impact for a successful education and making school a positive, enjoyable experience (Gender Issues, 2014).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women establish education for girls as a basic human right (UNCRC, 2015). The United Nations convention on the rights of the child is a legal binding agreement established in 1989 which consists of fifty-four articles, they set out all children's rights regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, language and abilities recommending how each government should work together in order to make them all available to every child (Save the Children, 2015). Article 28 is the right to an education; primary education should be made available for free to every child with secondary education available in different forms (UNICEF, 2015). Article 28 also states that discipline should be done in a way that respects every child's dignity and their rights (UNICEF, 2015). Somalia became the 196th country in January 2015 to sign up to the convention on the rights of the child, this was a positive and crucial step in recognising the rights and well-being of the children who live there (UNICEF, 2015). The president of Somalia at that time promised that this was a new beginning for Somalia, the end of child soldiers, equal opportunities for girls and boys, education for all, to be protected from people who had bad intentions and much more (UNICEF, 2015). Following this declaration, the Somalian federal government is to work on making new policies and systems in accordance with the fifty-four articles, they are to issue regular reports to the committee on the rights of the child updating them on their work and progress (UNICEF, 2015). Somalia need to work towards these goals, what we need now is for more to be done by other richer countries in order to make Somalia a safer place.

“Success at school leads to success in life” (Nurture UK, P1, 2018)

Some people may wonder and challenge you on, why is education important in times of a crisis, when there is a war going on, children and families have enough to deal with in order to survive day by day? Education is important especially in times of emergencies as a childhood can be lost to child labour, child marriage, child soldiers and other life-threatening experiences (Their World, 2018). Having an education gives us the power to make our own choices, better decisions, acquire the skills and knowledge to secure jobs, be better people in order to contribute to the progress and development of the community (Intersos, 2016). Can the United Kingdom benefit from learning anything from the Somalian education? The author does not seem to think so; however, it does make us realise how lucky we are to have a successful education system in place within the United Kingdom. Although it may have it flaws, we are incredibly lucky compared to Somalia to have a free education system for our children. Slow progress is being made to restore peace at Somalia and give opportunities for all children there to have access to an education. Encouraging progress is being made such as the independence

of Somaliland and Puntland and the commitment made by the country leaders to the rights of the child convention. Charities and organisations such as Save the Children, UNICEF and World vision continue to do what they can to help support the children of Somalia.

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