

WOMEN'S HEALTH

October 16, 2013

Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist Teaching Case

Swat Valley & the Pakistani Taliban

Swat Valley, previously a tourist destination sometime referred to as the Switzerland of Pakistan, was located in Pakistan's northwestern region.^{1,2} In 2007, the militant group known as Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) began to occupy and control parts of Swat Valley and to impose their version of Sharia^a (Islamic) law.^{3,4} This included a prohibition on women's education and the death penalty for barbers, music shop owners, and thieves; the militants also claimed that polio vaccinations were a Western conspiracy.⁵ They also required women to wear shuttlecock burqas^b and banned them from going to market.⁶ Over the years, TTP militants periodically clashed with the Pakistani Army and engaged in two major campaigns in 2007 and 2009.⁷ Though the army was able to reclaim parts of Swat, including Mingora, the biggest city in the Swat District, large parts of the region remain impenetrable.⁸ According to government estimates, nearly three million civilians were displaced from their homes during the battles over the Swat Valley region.⁹



Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html> accessed October 2013.

The TTP was an organization distinct from but closely related to the Taliban based in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda, another militant group with anti-West tendencies.¹⁰ In December 2009, the TPP bombed a mosque killing 36 and wounding 75 people and closed over 150 schools.¹¹ It also claimed responsibility for the attempted bombing in Times Square, a popular tourist spot in New York City in May 2010.¹² According to the Director of Policy and Programs at the Jinnah Institute, a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Pakistan, TTP's primary target was the Pakistani state and military because "it resents the fact that it (Pakistan) has an alliance with the West, and it wants Sharia to be imposed in Pakistan."¹³

^a Many Muslims viewed Shariah law as Divine Law. The basis for Shariah was the holy Islamic book, the Quran as well as the Sunnah, the teachings of the prophet Mohammad. For practicing Islamists Shariah Law guided religious practices as well as guidance for daily life. Within the Islam community, there were differing interpretations of the nature of Shariah law. Source: Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, "Islam and Family Planning," Population Reference Bureau Policy Brief, 2004, <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Reports/2004/IslamandFamilyPlanning.aspx> accessed September 2013.

^b A shuttlecock burqa covers the wearer's entire face except for a small region about the eyes, which is covered by a concealing net or grille.

This case was originally developed by the Harvard Global Health Institute by Jaclyn Chai, MPH, Administrative Director, Global Women's Health Programs, Rachel Gordon, MBA, Case Studies Manager, and Paula A. Johnson, MD, MPH of the Brigham and Women's Hospital. It is used and distributed with permission by the Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University. Cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

Malala Yousafzai's Public Profile Before the Shooting

In 2009, Malala Yousafzai, an 11-year-old girl, lived in the town of Mingora in Swat Valley and was an outspoken education and human rights activist despite her youth. Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai was a poet, school owner, a member of Swat's peace jirga (tribal council), and educational activist.¹⁴ In 2008, he had taken his daughter to Peshawar to speak at a local press club about girls' right to basic education. The event was covered by newspapers and television channels through the region.¹⁵ (See **Exhibit 1** for ranking of countries with the most female out-of-school children.) Soon afterwards, she began anonymously blogging for BBC Urdu about what it was like to live under harsh TTP rule.¹⁶ These entries depicted life from a schoolgirl's perspective during the time whilst the TTP passed formal edicts prohibiting girls from attending school.^{17,18} Yousafzai was also featured in a *New York Times* documentary called "Class Dismissed: The Death of Female Education."¹⁹ In 2011, she was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by South African activist Desmond Tutu.²⁰ Later that year, Pakistan's Prime Minister awarded her Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize.²¹ As Yousafzai's public profile grew, she began receiving death threats.²²

The Events of October 9, 2012

On October 9th, 2012 in Mingora, Yousafzai, now 14 years old, was returning home from school when hooded TTP militants stopped and boarded the school bus. They demanded that the other schoolchildren on the school bus identify Yousafzai asking, "Who is Malala?"²³ After being identified, she was shot in the head. Although a bullet traversed her brain and lodged in her spine, she survived the shooting but was critically injured. Two other girls were also hurt during the shooting; they also survived.²⁴

The Government's Response

The Pakistani government took responsibility for her care, treating her at a military hospital in Peshawar under heavy security. Her doctors and the Pakistani government decided to transfer her out of country to an English hospital which specialized in military-related trauma.^{25,26} Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari stated that the violent assault on Yousafzai was "an attack on all girls in Pakistan, an attack on education, and on all civilized people."²⁷ Authorities offered a US\$100,000 reward for her attackers' capture.²⁸ Pakistan's Prime Minister and top military officials also condemned the attack, calling the shooting "inhuman" and a "heinous act of terrorism."²⁹ A month later, the Pakistani government pledged cash incentives to poor families to send their children to school.³⁰ (See **Exhibit 2** for role that lack of income plays in educational access and opportunity.)

Pakistani Taliban Response

A TTP spokesman confirmed that Yousafzai was the specific target of the shooting and added that she was a symbol of "infidels and obscenity."³¹ He went on to say, "She has become a symbol of Western culture in the area; she was openly propagating it," adding that if she survived, the militants would try to kill her again.³²

Public Response & International Outrage

Rallies and prayer sessions were held across Pakistan while social media forums bustled as people from around the world voiced their disgust with the attack and expressed their admiration for Yousafzai.³³ Fifty Islamic clerics in Pakistan issued a fatwa—an Islamic religious decree—against the gunmen, and the Sunni Ittehad Council publicly denounced the TTP's religious arguments for justifying the shooting of Yousafzai and her classmates.³⁴

Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

The shooting also drew significant international response. The US President Obama “strongly condemned the shooting,” calling it “reprehensible, disgusting and tragic.”³⁵ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also voiced his “outrage and strong condemnation” at this “heinous and cowardly” act.³⁶ Gabriella Giffords, the US Representative from the US state of Arizona who was shot in the head by a gunman during a public rally in 2011, and John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, former Senator from the US state of Massachusetts, were among the many who reached out to offer assistance.³⁷

“I am Malala”

On October 15, 2012, Gordon Brown, former British Prime Minister, who had been appointed UN Special Envoy for Global Education in July 2012, launched a petition in Yousafzai’s name to call on Pakistan “to ensure that every girl like Malala has the chance to go to school” using the slogan “I am Malala,” a chant that was heard at demonstrations across Pakistan.^{38,39} He also called on the international community to ensure that all children have access to education by the end of 2015.⁴⁰ On July 12, 2013, dubbed “Malala Day,” over 500 youth from 75 nations gathered at the UN headquarters calling for every child worldwide to have the right and access to an education as Yousafzai spoke to UN leaders to call for worldwide education.^{41 42}

Fall 2013

In the fall of 2013, Yousafzai published her memoir, “I Am Malala.” The European Parliament awarded her the prestigious Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and many believed that she might be a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.⁴³ However, even as Yousafzai was increasingly recognized worldwide for her efforts on behalf of educational access, there were reports by news agencies that within the Swat region some residents were ambivalent about Yousafzai and her impact.^{44,45} They worried that the TPP might return to power in the region. Yousafzai, they felt, had received undeserved attention especially because another schoolgirl who had also been shot and seriously injured by the TPP had not received any offers of medical assistance.⁴⁶ The girl’s father, a flour mill worker according to *The New York Times* “noted that in contrast to Ms. Yousafzai, no politicians or campaigners had rushed to help after his daughter was shot. ‘We are arranging her treatment with great difficulty.’”⁴⁷ However, despite the continuing threats on her life and the ambivalent attitudes of some at home, Yousafzai remained a steadfast advocate. In an interview with the popular American TV personality Jon Stewart she explained what she would do if she encountered a Taliban member,

“If you hit a Talib, then there would be no difference between you and the Talib... You must not treat others with cruelty [...] you must fight others through peace and through dialogue and through education. I would tell him how important education is and that I would even want education for your children as well,” the Pakistani girl added. “That’s what I want to tell you, now do what you want.”⁴⁸

Fall 2014

On October 10, 2014, the Norwegian Nobel Committee jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi, an Indian activist dedicated to improving children’s rights, “for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.”⁴⁹ The Committee noted, “Despite her youth, Malala Yousafzai has already fought for several years for the right of girls to education, and has shown by example that children and young people, too, can contribute to improving their own situations. This she has done under the most dangerous circumstances. Through her heroic struggle she become a leading spokesperson for girls’ right to education.”⁵⁰

Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

Yousafzai, the youngest recipient ever of the Nobel Peace award, reacting to the award said, “I want to tell children all around the world that they should stand up for their rights, they shouldn’t wait for someone else.” This award is for all those children who are voiceless, whose voices need to be heard.”⁵¹

Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

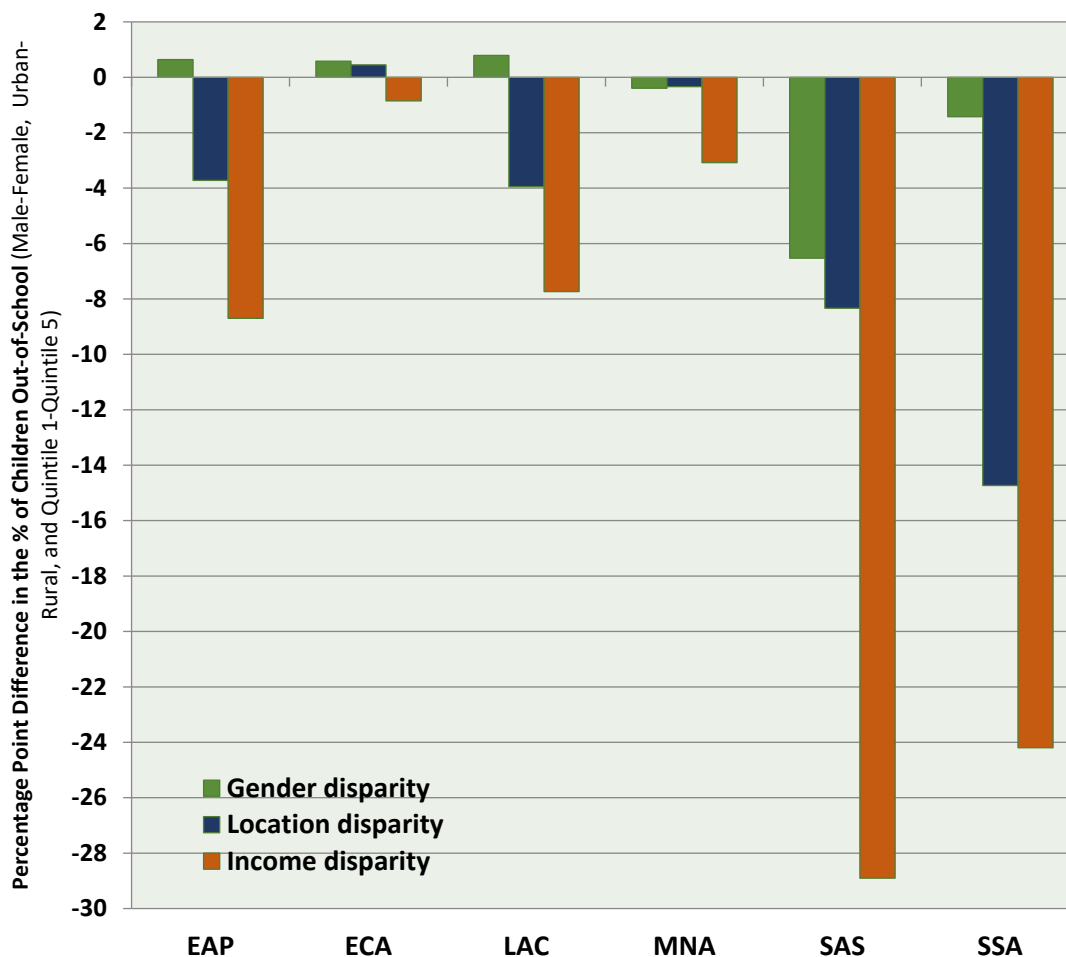
Exhibit 1: 10 Countries with the Most Female Out of School Children

10 Countries with the Most Female Out-of School Children (2008-2011)		
1	Nigeria	5,487,901
2	Pakistan	3,241,203
3	India	1,407,495
4	Ethiopia	1,367,141
5	Côte d'Ivoire	663,809
6	Philippines	661,551
7	Bangladesh	591,325
8	Niger	568,884
9	Yemen, Rep.	567,702
10	Burkina Faso	530,731
<p>Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics in EdStats, October, 2012;</p> <p>Notes: Data displayed is the most current year available; Data were not available for 61 of 213 countries.</p>		

Source: EdStats, "Access to Education: A Global Report," The World Bank, The State of Education Series, November 2012, <http://go.worldbank.org/WBYFTX6CM0>, accessed August 2013.

Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

Exhibit 2: Low Income is the Greatest Source of Disparity in Percentages of Out-of-School Children Across Regions



Source: Estimated by Porta (2011) using data from Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, and Living Standards Measurement Studies for 1985-2007

Legend:

EAP: East Asia Pacific	ECA: Europe and Central Asia	LAC: Latin America and Caribbean
MNA: Middle East and North Africa	SAS: South Asian Seas	SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa

Source: EdStats, "Access to Education: A Global Report," The World Bank, The State of Education Series, November 2012, <http://go.worldbank.org/WBYFTX6CM0>, accessed August 2013.

Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

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Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

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Teaching Case: Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

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