

YOUNG **HUMAN RIGHTS** **REPORTER** **OF THE YEAR**

Girls Education Improves the Nation

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Young Human Rights Reporter Winner 2013 (Upper Primary Category)

I work in the field collecting the crop. It's early afternoon and the blazing sun is high in the sky. I should be at school right now. My name is Rarni, and where I live girls don't get the chance to go to school. Boys do. My older brother goes to school and learns how to read and write, while I work hard in the field all day. I wish I could go to school and learn new things every day, learn new skills, learn about the world around me. I wish I could go to school and share my opinions and views and have everyone listen. But most of all, I wish I could go to school so that I have a chance to have a career, a future.

Equality? What does this word really mean? It means freedom, it means everyone having the same basic human rights. I believe every child has the right to an education, no matter what colour your skin is, no matter if you are a boy or girl, no matter where you are born.

Malala Yousufzai believes this too. Malala is an incredibly brave 15 year old girl who fought for the right of girls' education in Pakistan. Only 26% of girls in Pakistan are literate, able to read and write. From the age of 11, Malala started speaking publicly in the media about the need for girls' education. She was given an honour for her pure bravery. Sadly somebody thought that her sense of equality was wrong. Last October, on her way home from school with her friends, Malala was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman. She was flown over to England to have an operation on her skull.

Fortunately Malala survived the gunshot without any brain damage, but who's to say what will happen to others who dare to fight for their educational rights? Can you imagine having your life threatened or being severely hurt for standing up for a basic

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human right or just expressing your opinion about your own life? Sadly, equality is not always a reality in the world we live in.

At least one in five adolescent girls around the world is denied an education because of poverty or discrimination; does it seem fair or right to you that girls don't have the same opportunities or choices that boys do? Every day, girls are taken out of school and forced into work or married off early.

Statistics show that an education for girls can be totally life-changing. Educated women at work invest more into their families and their community, they have less children and those children are healthier and their standard of living is higher. They contribute more to their society which creates a happier society all round. Let's stand up for girls everywhere. We have to help girls fulfil their potential. They must have the right to an education: a better future for girls means a better future for us all.