

Education for Everyone

You might sometimes wish you didn't have to go to school. But can you imagine if you weren't ever *allowed* to go to school? If you never learned how to read or write?

Around the world, about 69 million school-age children are not in school. That's more than the number of people living in the states of Texas and California combined — and more than double the population of Canada!

Almost half of these children (31 million) live in sub-Saharan Africa. More than a quarter (18 million), like Razia, live in Southern Asia. There are many reasons why these children do not go to school, including poverty, political instability, regional conflict and natural disaster. Many children are also kept out of school because their local traditions forbid it. Instead of learning in school, children often must help to support their families, usually by working in jobs that earn very little money.

Razia's story is inspired by the lives of real girls living in the village of Deh'Subz, north of Afghanistan's capital city, Kabul. Only about one-quarter of girls living in developing countries go to school at all. And in Afghanistan, only about 13 percent of women are literate, which means only 13 out of 100 can read and write.

Imagine if your mother couldn't read or write. She wouldn't be able to read you a story, a map or the directions on a medicine bottle. She wouldn't be able to drive a car because she couldn't pass the written test. And there are few well-paying jobs for people who can't read or write, so it's likely your family would not have very much money. By contrast, women who are literate tend to have better incomes, housing and health care. And in turn, they provide these things for their families and communities. Everyone benefits from educating women.

Razia Jan with students Parwana, Bibi Ayesha and Bibi Begum. The best of friends, the three girls are among the top of their class.

The Real Razia Jan

Razia Jan was born in Afghanistan and moved to the United States when she was a young woman. She worked hard as a tailor and raised her son in a small town in Massachusetts.

After September 11, 2001, Razia felt she needed to connect people from her homeland in Afghanistan and people from her new home in America. In 2007, she started Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation. She hoped to improve the lives of women and children in Afghanistan through education.

In 2008, Razia made the big decision to give up her comfortable life in the United States and move back to Kabul, Afghanistan. She planned to open the Zabuli Education Center for Girls. The education center is in the middle of seven villages that never had a girls' school before.

Today, the center is full of 350 young girls learning to read and write. The students love school so much, says Razia, that they run in the door every day and even beg for school to be all year long, without vacation. Many of the girls take their workbooks home and teach their mothers the lessons! These brave young girls and their commitment to become educated are the inspiration for this book. In recognition of Razia's work, she was honored by CNN as one of their Top 10 Heroes of 2012, an award given to ordinary people doing extraordinary things to make the world a better place.

Razia believes that education is the key to positive, peaceful change in the world. Do you agree?



Classroom Activities: A Day in Razia's Life

The activities below are designed to help students

- compare the lives of girls where they live to the lives of girls in Afghanistan
- understand the importance of education and, in particular, educating girls
- consider how they can help kids around the world receive an education

You'll find these activities and much more at CitizenKid Central (www.citizenkidcentral.com).

Girls in School

Activity: Have the girls in your class stand up. Ask 60 percent (3 out of 5) of the girls to sit down. Explain that they are not lucky enough to attend primary school in Afghanistan. Of the remaining 40 percent still standing, ask 80 percent (4 out of 5) of those girls to sit. Explain that these girls are not able to finish their schooling. The girls left standing are approximately the number of girls who are actually able to complete a primary school education in Afghanistan.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- How many girls in your class expect to finish (primary, middle, high) school?
- How does it make you feel that many girls in Afghanistan and other countries are not able to attend school?
- How do you think these girls' lives will be different from the lives of girls who attend school?

A Typical School Day

Activity: Visit www.citizenkidcentral.com to print out "A Typical School Day" worksheets. Ask students to fill in their schedule of activities on the left-hand side of the grid. Once they have finished, ask a couple of students to share with the class how their lives are different from those of the girls in Razia's school.

Compare and Contrast:

- chores before and after school
- travel to and from school — length of time and mode of transportation
- who prepares dinner
- electricity supply, and how that affects studying and bedtime

Necessities versus Extras

Activity: Ask students to write down a list of items and activities they spend money on. These should be things that are nice to have, but not necessary (for example, designer clothing, posters, concert tickets, MP3 players, music downloads, fast food, movies and candy, popcorn and drinks). Then have them tally up the annual amount they spend on these extras. After they have done so, share with them the approximate donation needed to educate a girl for a year at Razia's school in Afghanistan.

Annual expenses for a student at Razia's school

	Cost (\$)
Tuition (pays for building maintenance, teachers' salaries, books, etc.)	200
Uniform (two uniforms, shoes and headscarf)	50
Pencils	1
Notebooks	2
	253

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- In one year, how does the cost of your "extras" compare to the cost of Razia's education?
- What items and activities can you think of that are "nice to have" that cost about the same as a year of school in a developing country?
- How can you use this information to help young people around the world receive an education? Some food for thought: You and your friends might save or raise money to donate by volunteering your time, skills and talents (for example, babysitting, raking leaves, organizing bake sales). Or perhaps you could spread the word on the issue of illiteracy and importance of education (for example, writing articles in the school paper or your house of worship newsletter).

These activities have been adapted and used with permission from the Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation, www.raziasrayofhope.org.

A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY

MY DAY		A SCHOOLGIRL'S DAY IN DEH'SUBZ	
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Before school		Before school	6:00 a.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wake up, put away mattresses • Sweep courtyard • Get and clean produce from a small family farm in the village • Tend to livestock • Eat breakfast
Travel to school		Travel to school	7:00 a.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half-hour walk to school
School day		School day	7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School
Travel home		Travel home	12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half-hour walk home
After school		After school	1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to market with relatives • Get water from well • Help prepare dinner • Clean dishes after dinner • Homework by candlelight
Bedtime		Bedtime	8:00 p.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to bed