

The following dramatic presentation is intended to raise awareness of the barriers many girls face in accessing education in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. It is not a GRAN document but is the creative copyrighted work of Victoria, BC GRAN Phyllis Webster. All questions and enquiries should be directed to Phyllis Webster at [nudgeccm@yahoo.ca](mailto:nudgeccm@yahoo.ca).

With many thanks to Phyllis for this submission.

### **Climbing the Staircase to Success: Barriers to Education for Girls in sub-Saharan Africa**

Thank you for your interest in this Readers' Theatre presentation.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this play is to help high school students and adults in community organizations learn about the significant barriers which girls in sub-Saharan Africa must overcome to get an education. It is hoped that some of the topics will lead people to want to learn more. I envision the play as a staircase, each step presenting one of the barriers.

**Audience:** I think the play will be best suited for Social Justice, Gender Issues and World Issues classes in high school. A skilled teacher who knows the students, parents and culture of a middle school might also be able to use it with modifications. It would also be useful for a presentation in youth groups, church congregations and community groups interested in Social Justice issues.

I would like it to be used respectfully and as an educational tool to help people understand and discuss the barriers which affect girls in sub-Saharan Africa. Of course, many of the topics will lead to the identification of barriers which affect learners in our own Canadian education system.

#### **Here are some suggestions.**

Establish that it will take about 35 minutes to read without interruption. The facilitator should give a warning that the play will deal with difficult subject matter (particularly in school classes) and point out that there will be time for questions. I found it helpful for the facilitator to announce each of the steps so that the next topic is introduced.

Ask for volunteer readers. Let everyone read through her/his part for a few minutes and ask for pronunciation help. I prefer readers to sit or stand in a circle if that is possible. At the end, the facilitator can answer questions. Of course, not every facilitator will know the answers but she/he could offer to find the answer and get back to the group.

I had a class at Victoria High School read the play and three young men used their own names and read very well, so I encourage you to let men take roles if they are willing. I have a list of African names if your group would prefer to use those names instead of their own.

The text is easily made age appropriate. If you are presenting this play to a younger audience, you will want to leave out a number of the steps or take out sections of a particular step. When presenting it to a senior high class, I asked for a verbal evaluation of the play; the students also answered several questions on paper when they were able to write how they were feeling about the experience and to ask

questions which we had not discussed. The students were very thoughtful in both the oral and written evaluation.

### **Beyond the discussion**

It is hoped that discussion will lead people towards an ACTION such as

- individual or group research projects which can be presented to other classes or groups
- the writing of a play around a social justice issue which affects Canadian learners
- a letter writing campaign to politicians
- an invitation to a local Member of Parliament to discuss how Canada is contributing to overseas education - a presentation of the play to another organization to help others learn
- or.....

**Changes:** I am happy for whoever plays the facilitator (the role of Ayodele Jelani) to leave out parts of the play and to focus on five or six issues. If the whole play is read, the facilitator must be very careful to warn people that there will be some aspects of the play which might be very disturbing to some. In particular, the sections about rape, female genital mutilation (FGM) and early and forced child marriage may be very upsetting to younger people unless they are well prepared in advance.

### **A Request:**

If you plan to use this Readers' Theatre presentation, I would ask you to do two things:

- A. Write to me at [nudgeccm@yahoo.ca](mailto:nudgeccm@yahoo.ca) and exchange phone numbers so that I can walk you through ways of doing the play and for you to ask questions.
- B. I would appreciate a short evaluation stating when the play was performed, for whom, and how it was received. Suggestions about problem areas will be welcome.

I will send each presenter a picture of the staircase image with each step labelled in case you have the technology to put it on the screen while the play is being read. I will also share the list of African names.

I hope you and your audience will enjoy presenting and discussing the play and perhaps designing an action.

Sincerely,  
Phyllis Webster  
Victoria, BC  
April 2017

## **Climbing the Staircase to Success: Barriers to Education for Girls in sub-Saharan Africa**

by Phyllis Webster

### **Steps to Success**

My name is Ayodele Jelani. My names mean “return of happiness” and “full of strength”. Here are the steps which all girls in sub-Saharan Africa must climb in order to get an education. Please listen to my sisters tell you what difficulties they have had and sometimes how they have overcome them. I have had many of the same problems. Perhaps at the end, you will understand why my forenames were so well chosen by my family!!!

#### **STEP 1**

#### **A Security from War/Conflict**

*To be read by Ayodele*

It is very sad that millions of children in sub-Saharan Africa do not go to school because of conflicts and wars in their countries.

Can you imagine being a child who is trapped in a war situation who may witness the death of parents and siblings and having to run to save your life.... Or having to leave home within minutes to walk with only the clothes on your back until you reach a safe place... perhaps a camp run by the UN. Once in the camp you may be housed in a tent and have a minimum of food.... And only some of the children in the camp can go to school. Here is the story of my friend, Esther.

Step 1 reader to begin reading here.

My name is Esther Nyakong. I am 16 and I am originally from Juba in South Sudan. My father had died so my mother, sisters and I had to leave because of the civil war. I was 10 years old. Every sunrise and sunset we could hear gunshots from every corner and we knew our lives were at risk. It took us almost one week to travel. We left Juba at night with nothing but the clothes on our backs. As we walked, we would be two or three days without food. Later when we caught a bus it broke down in the bush and we were attacked. We hid under the seats until help arrived and the attackers ran off. It was a terrifying journey. We finally reached Kukuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. The United Nations provided us with food, shelter, security and even clothing. The heat in the camp reaches 40 degrees and so life has not been easy but we are safe.

Because I worked hard at school, I am now at Morneau Shepell Secondary School where I love learning. You should know that I have a dream to become a neurosurgeon and to go to a university in Canada. “I am a girl full of confidence, determination, and hard work. I will do my best to achieve my dreams. I love, talking, laughing and cracking jokes, and I love people equally.”

Notes:

This is rather short because it is a real story. I have taken the information from a FB Post on ONE and from *Kakuma Girls*, page 42. Morneau School is the only boarding school with modern facilities and solar lighting in the camp.

For further information: GPR Out-of-school Overview and World Education Blog (GEM report) [www.educationcannotwait.org](http://www.educationcannotwait.org)

## STEP 2

### **Family Support**

My name is.....and I am 14 years old. I live in Namibia.

I had to work very hard to persuade my father that I should go to school because in my culture, there are many reasons why girls are kept home from school. Boys are considered more important than girls and therefore, if there is money for school fees, books, and shoes, boys will be the first to go. Girls are needed by their mothers to help with the younger children and to clean, cook, gather firewood and fetch water. It is a very hard life and then girls are also expected to marry young and have children.

My mother, even though illiterate, knows that schooling is very important because she has been attending a group sponsored by a Canadian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) where women talk about many things and are learning how to run a business. My mother did not know how to read, write or defend her rights and she wanted me to be able to do all these things. My father was finally persuaded by my mother that I could go to school as long as I continued to help her as much as I could when I was at home. I am now in school, and even though there are still many problems, I am so happy. My grandma now wants me to teach her how to read!

Note: You may need to explain what an NGO is for high school students in advance of the presentation.

## STEP 3

### **Freedom from full-time housework, care for siblings and carrying water.**

My name is..... and I am 15 years old. I live in Democratic Republic of Congo.

You have probably seen pictures of girls and women carrying large buckets of water on their heads. I have to walk many kilometers every day to a pump in a village to fill a large plastic container with water. I wait my turn patiently with all the other people and chat. It is one of the few rest times I have in my day. I fill the container and then balance it on my head and walk home. I often have headaches because the water is so heavy and my neck hurts. I long to go to school but I must stay at home to help my mother and carry the water. The water I collect is from a well and is clean which is better than the river water which gives my family many health problem like diarrhea and sick stomachs. I also have to

collect wood for the fire. I help with sweeping the yard, making sure the little ones are safe and cooking porridge for the whole family.

If I had some time and some money, I would love to go to school. If I could read, I could help my village in so many ways and even though I have never been to school, I would love to be a teacher. I would teach the children to sing, to read, and all about the birds and the animals in my beautiful place.

Notes: Explain that “porridge” is made from maize meal and is often eaten several times a day. You might like to explore the growing use of blue rolling pails which can carry 50 liters of water and can be used in areas where the paths and roads are reasonably flat. Students might like to research the benefits of building wells. There are many NGOs which focus on digging wells.

#### STEP 4

#### **Availability of an elementary school with a teacher and supplies**

My name is..... and I am 12 and I live in Tanzania.

Do you know that there are many reasons why I am having problems at school? There is a tiny little school in my village but there are too many children. I am in Grade 4 and we have 50 people in my class. There is only one small blackboard and sometimes the teacher runs out of chalk and we have to wait until she goes to the Saturday market to buy more out of her own pocket! There are some books but they are very old and there are not enough for each of us. We never have enough paper or pencils to practise writing. In fact, sometimes the teacher divides us into groups and a girl who is older takes us out to a space under the Acacia tree in the school yard and she tries to teach us how to read by holding up a book with large print and we write some of the words in the dirt with a little stick. It is so hot and noisy in the classroom and so I love going outside where it is cooler and quieter. Of course, if it rains we cannot go outside. Our teacher is very lovely but sometimes she is very cross and yells at us. If someone is bad, she has a long stick cut from a nearby tree which she uses to beat the pupil. I do not blame her but I wish she had fewer problems so that we could all have some fun.

A Canadian teacher once came and she gave us lots of pencils, pens, rulers and persuaded a school in our nearest big town to save waste paper from their photocopying so that we could use it for our lessons and to draw pictures.

Our school buildings are very old and in need of repair. Sometimes it is very cold in the winter and the teacher starts a little fire in a metal pot in the middle of the classroom. Our room has a hole in the middle where the fire pot burned through the floor. In spite of all these problems, I love going to school!

Notes:

Need to explain that there many elementary school teachers in Africa who have only Grade 12 or less and that few have any teacher training. Also that local school boards do not seem to care about the small schools in the rural areas.

**STEP 5****Money for school fees, uniforms and school supplies**

My name is ..... and I am 16. I live in Uganda.

My teacher says that in some countries in Africa that there are no school fees. Here in Uganda, primary school and lower secondary school is free but we must pay for the last two years of secondary. You call those grades 11 and 12. My parents have only enough money for two of us to go to secondary school, my oldest brother and me. They must also pay for a uniform, white shirt, a school tie, blue skirt for me and trousers for my brother and a sweater with a crest on the pocket. It looks very nice and I am proud to wear it... although because I am growing so fast the skirt is getting too tight around the waist and it is becoming too short. We have several pairs of shoes in the family and we must look after them so I walk barefoot to school and when I get to the school yard, I put on my white socks and black shoes. I do not know what I will be able to do when I need bigger shoes because my feet are also growing!

I have four younger brothers and sisters and I fear they may never go to school because of the lack of money for uniforms, shoes and school supplies. I am going to work hard so that I can get a job in the big city of Kampala, so that I will be able to pay for their uniforms and school supplies and later for their grade 11 and 12 years.

Notes: Some countries pay for primary school fees but there are many other costs as described above but secondary school fees often mean that students leave school at the end of grade 6 or 8.

**STEP 6****Safe clean bathrooms and personal hygiene supplies**

My name is..... I am 17 and I live in Cameroon.

I love going to school now but used to dread going to school when I started to menstruate. Some tribes in my area think that girls are dirty when girls have their periods and they have to spend a time in a menstrual hut. But the problem for girls in my area, until very recently, has been that we could only use old rags, grass, newspaper or stuffing from mattresses to soak up the blood. We had nothing to help us with the cramps. The toilet block at school is very, very dirty and so we had no place to change our make shift pads. The only water source is a tank in the school yard which is used by everyone so we had nowhere to wash privately. Sometimes a girl would leak and the stain on her clothes would mean she was teased. Boys often hang around the toilet block and so there is a tendency for girls to hang on all day which means that sometimes they get infections. My big sister always stayed home during her periods and missed so much school that she could not pass her exams. Many girls drop out of school for the same reason.

Fortunately for me and my friends, we now have amazing kits made by a group in Seattle who are the "Saturday Sewing Sisters" who have made us kits which have pads we can use and wash. They also came to teach us how to use the pads and to care for them. They also gave us sex education classes and ... I love this... a course in self defense. After that, we girls had a meeting and we decided that two

girls would stand outside the toilets to ensure that the girls inside were safe. And we also decided that each day one girl would carry a jug of water to the block so we can wash. It means I can go to school during my periods and continue my studies without fear of being embarrassed or harassed.

Notes:

Sources: Days for Girls. "It's a girl thing: Menstruation, school attendance, spatial mobility and wider gender inequalities in Kenya",

Global Giving. "Saturday Sewing Sisters". Another group in Kelowna which is affiliated with the Saturday Sewing Sisters is called ISEE Solutions They have completed 1500 kits which student nurses will soon take to Uganda. Students will find it interesting that girls in Canada also stay at home during their periods because of lack of hygiene supplies. This would be a worthy research project for a social justice class.

## STEP 7

### **Transportation to distant schools or safety while walking**

My name is..... and I am 15 years old.

I live in Nqutu, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, a long way from the city. Every day I wake up at 4:00 am to do my home chores. I walk to get water while my brother lets out the cows and helps milk them. I help my two younger siblings get ready for school. They are lucky because they have only to walk three kilometers. My brother and I have to walk 10 kilometers which takes a long time. If it is raining, we arrive at school very tired, wet and sometimes hungry because sometimes there is not enough porridge for all of us and being older, I give my portion to my youngest brother. It is hard to concentrate when I am cold, hungry and tired. The worst though is that sometimes the walk is rather dangerous. Sometimes there are bad people who lie in wait and jump out and rob us of any pocket money we have and beat us when we do not have any.

Last year, my best friend was raped on her way to school because she was walking alone and there was no one to protect her. Fortunately, I walk with my brother and several other students in year 8 so I feel safe. The boys walk ahead to make sure there are no snakes lying in the sun waiting to attack us. Much of the year, our area is dry but sometimes in the rainy season, the river between my village and the school is in flood and crossing on the log bridge is very dangerous. A few years ago, a teacher was drowned when he fell off this bridge so we are always very careful.

Some of my friends have dropped out of school because they have to walk even further than I do! The principal of our school has applied to the Kwa-Zulu Natal provincial government to provide a bus for students who walk more than three kilometers to get to school, but nothing has happened even though it is supposed to be a law!

I am determined to stay in school because I want to honour my grandmother's wish before she died that I become a teacher and help my family and my community. She always longed to read and write and I

will work hard to make her proud by helping many people, young and old, learn to read so that they can improve their lives.

“What’s So Bad About a 10-mile Walk to School? Two views of educational challenges in South Africa” Harvard Lad Today.

“Long Walk to Education: The Struggles of Rural Students” [berthafoundation.org/bejust/?p=465](http://berthafoundation.org/bejust/?p=465)

Note: Review how to pronounce Nqutu, KwaZulu-Natal.

## STEP 8

### **A place to study and a light source**

My name is..... , and I am 17 and I live in Malawi.

I am a very lucky person because I am in a school nearby my home. I particularly like mathematics and chemistry and one day hope to be a doctor because we have so few in my country, and we have so many people who are ill with AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. My father died of AIDS (please do not tell anyone) five years ago leaving my mother with three small children and no money. I am glad that a community organization supported by the Stephen Lewis Foundation in Canada has been helping her learn how to start a small business and now she grows pumpkins and other vegetables which she sells in the local market.

Until three years ago, it was very hard to study in the evening because we had only a kerosene lamp to light the table in our very small house where three of us try to study in the evening. My eyes were very tired after a day of working hard to help my mother and studying all day at school and I did not like the smell of kerosene. Sometimes, we ran out of kerosene and we all had to go to bed very early because in Africa, the sun goes down very early! And in the morning, I could not study because I had so much to do before I left for school.

It was very exciting when we got some new solar lights in our village. It is a miracle! It is a little box on a stand. In the daytime, we put it near the window so that the solar panel is charged. It provides more than five hours of bright light. We can use it as a desk light or hang it on the wall. My eyes are no longer so tired when I do my homework. The light costs costs \$5 and will last five years. This means that parents will have more money to pay for food instead of having to replace expensive solar panels every year. You cannot believe how much more fun it is to study when there is light! And because I can study, my grades are improving. Perhaps one of my girl friends at school will invent something even better or the government will provide us with electricity poles so that all the people who live in rural areas can have light in their homes the way they do in the big city.

Notes:

Malawi <http://solar-aid.org/sunnymoney-afric-live-video>

Bottle lamps <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23536914>

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**STEP 9****Sufficient food and healthcare to remain healthy and to be able to concentrate**

My name is.....and I am 16. I live in South Africa.

I live in a small village which is many kilometers from a major town. We do not have a clinic in the village but a nurse does come once every 2 weeks and sometimes a doctor will come to the village about once a month. There is a hospital in the town but it is hard to get to because there is no bus except on market days. So if you are sick, you can visit the local shaman for some traditional medicine or wait until the nurse comes or find a way to the town to get to the hospital. As you know, we have many health problems in Africa. No one likes to say the word AIDS but I know that my older brother who died 5 years ago had AIDS and so did his wife which is why my three cousins now live with me and my mother and grandma. My papa died 8 years ago and my mother will not talk about why he or my brother died because AIDS is a shameful disease and we do not want to be shunned by our community. We also have many people who have the coughing disease and malaria. One day I hope I can become a doctor so that I can help prevent diseases in my community.

My grandma has told us that we must always eat all the food which is put in front of us and to be grateful for every mouthful. She and my mother have a small garden and raise many vegetables and we also have 10 chickens and two pigs. We eat quite well even though we are a big family with seven children and two adults. This may change if the drought of the last two years returns. I know that there are many of my classmates who do not have enough to eat, and it is hard for them to concentrate on their studies. Sometimes my mother gives me extra food to take to people in the village who she knows are hungry and I simply leave the pot at their door without speaking because I know that they do not want to accept help from others.

The government knows there are hungry children in the schools so twice a week the government van comes to the school and leaves us loaves of bread, packages of peanut butter and packages of an orange drink powder. The teacher slices the bread, a student spreads the peanut butter and another makes the drink in a bucket with the orange powder and stirs it with a stick cut from the nearby bush. Some lucky person gets to lick the paper packaging to have an extra tablespoon of peanut butter. The rooster who patrols our school yard always seems to know that he should be there to find any dropped bread crumbs!

**STEP 10****Access to a secondary school with trained teachers**

My name is ..... and I am 17, almost 18. I live in Rwanda!

I am so proud that I have passed my exams and have been given a scholarship by the government to go to secondary school. Unfortunately, the school is so far from my little village so I have to live in another family's house in the town. On the weekend, I walk 25 kilometers to my village so I can see my family and help with the many chores on our tiny farm. We are very lucky that our school is receiving some help from a Canadian non-governmental agency so we actually have some computers and some simple lab equipment in the chemistry room. We also have only 35-40 students in each class because in the

junior grades we often had over 50 pupils. In this school, we have teachers who have been to university and some have become qualified teachers. It is my dream to become a teacher of Chemistry! Perhaps one day I can develop a drug to prevent so many people getting malaria.

I know from a Canadian teacher with the most wonderful accent and the strangest vocabulary who volunteered in our school with CUSO (that means Canadian University Students Overseas) that sub-Saharan Africa has a desperate shortage of teachers. In fact, 17 million teachers are needed to make sure every child can go to primary and secondary school by the year 2030. One day, my friends and I will be teachers and we can help others to dream about becoming doctors, or teachers or scientists. Unfortunately, there are not many teacher training colleges in Africa, but I will find one that I can go to!

There is only one problem at my school and that is one of the male teachers (I cannot tell you who he is) looks at all the girls in a bad way especially if they have large breasts. He puts his hands where they should not be and we feel very uncomfortable when he is nearby. Even though we are very shy, we have decided to tell the Canadian teacher that this teacher has offered several of my classmates that he will give them an A in his class.....if they sleep with him. Perhaps she can give us some advice about what to do. Do you think that is a good idea? (*Please look up and make eye contact with the audience.*)

Notes:

Source:“African countries are facing the world’s worst teacher shortage” by Yomi Kazeem October 06, 2015.

According to the UN, 19.6 million primary and secondary school teachers need to be hired in Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, 17 million teachers are needed.

(Soon a document from Grandmothers Advocacy Network on this topic.)

## STEP 11

### **Freedom from school-related gender-based violence**

My name is..... and I am 16 years old and I live in Nigeria.

I feel so happy for.....(previous reader’s name) who is now in school but also feel sad that she too has been harassed by one of her teachers. I have had the same experience but with the boys in my school. They try to trap the girls near the toilets and force them in and..... rape them or catch a girl when she is walking in a quiet place by herself. In our culture, boys are more important than girls and many of these boys have watched their fathers beat their mothers and act sexually towards other women so perhaps they do not know any better. One day an NGO came to our village and gave all the girls a workshop on sex education. We were encouraged to ask questions about sex and about violence from men and boys. We learned to be more confident about ourselves and to use language to talk to the boys to let them know that we did not enjoy their attentions which they said was “teasing” and which we now know is abuse. We also learned some self-defense techniques so we could help ourselves if attacked. Of

course, sometimes a boy uses a knife to ensure that he will get his way. All the girls at my school think that the boys also need a workshop to learn respectful behaviour towards girls and women.

We also have to be careful on our way to school that we walk with boys we trust and not to talk to any men who look at us and try to lure us away with sweet words and promises of money.

Some teachers have very short tempers and students who anger them will be beaten. Some parents believe this is all right and, in fact, will beat their child at home for behaving so badly that they were beaten at school. But I know now that no one should be beaten at home or at school.

Now that I know more about the problems I have told you about and with the help of the workshop, I feel more confident.... And my grades have improved!

Global Education Monitoring Report. "School-related gender-based violence is preventing the achievement of quality education for all." Policy Paper 17.

## STEP 12

### **Freedom from Female Genital Mutilation**

My name is ....., I am 15 and live in Bawku, Ghana.

There are many things which prevent girls from going to school. My sisters have told you of many of the problems and this is another very important one. You call it Female Genital Mutilation. In my culture, it is traditional for girls to undergo "cutting" down there (*look at your crotch*) which is done in a ceremony by an older woman using a razor blade. The cutting removes part of the genitals. It is very painful and often causes girls to have many problems in their futures including infections, terrible pain when they have periods and many difficulties when they deliver their babies. Some even die because of infection. Girls as young as two and three years old are cut and later made to marry against their will and have babies when they are too young. Many young mothers die in childbirth because their bodies are not yet ready to have children.

I would like to tell you about a very special thing which is happening in my community. Our Queen Mother, Veronica, has spent many years gathering the women in our area to talk about cutting and she has persuaded them not to cut their daughters and it is working! My mother did not allow me to be cut. Some people say that means I am not a woman and will never marry but I do not think that is true. I hope to find a good man who will be able to pay the two cows he must give my parents for the honour of marrying me. Queen Mother Veronica has persuaded our community to reduce the payment from 4 cows to two so young men do not have so much trouble finding a wife. She is also working very hard to get girls into school and to end early marriage. I will be an educated woman, married to a good man who will help me carry out the wishes of Queen Veronica when she is too old to travel around the country to help teach the women and the leadership of the community that girls should be educated, not be cut and not marry when they are very young.

Notes:

Source: Joe and Diana Scaletta. Queen Veronica Project. Joe has spoken to Queen Veronica and she has given permission for her name to be used in this document.

\*\*\*If this section is used in a secondary classroom, the teacher must ensure that the students have some background knowledge of FGM. There are many good sources on-line.

### **Freedom from Early and Forced Marriage and Pregnancy**

I am the last of my sisters to speak. My name is..... And I am 14 years old. I live in a small village in northern Kenya.

One of the reasons that I have been able to go to school is that my father has refused all offers of marriage from a number of his friends. Apparently, he was offered 10 cows for me which is called *lobola* in my culture. In my area it is traditional for girls to be married very young sometimes as young as eight years old. My father knew that I did not want to marry anyone because I want to go to school and become a doctor. He married my mother when she was 15 and she soon had me and three sons by the time she was 20 years old. She had no chance to go to school. You should know that there is a law in my country that girls must be 18 before they marry, but in the rural areas the law is often broken.

My parents know that sometimes very young girls have died in childbirth because their bodies are not ready to carry and deliver a baby and because there are no doctors to help care for pregnant women. I have found out that many married girls also get AIDS because they cannot refuse their husbands who may have HIV/AIDS. There are many traditions around marriage which you may not know about. For instance, girls are often seen as a financial burden to a family so parents marry their daughters early so that they can receive the *lobola* or bride price that is a requirement for the groom to marry. Ten cows add to a family's wealth. Marriage is also seen as way of preserving the family honour and protects the girl from "immoral behaviour" which means sex before marriage. That seems so unfair to me because the boy is not considered to have done anything wrong.

My father knows that if I get an education, I will be able to help my family and my community. I hope soon that more fathers will understand that letting girls continue to study will eventually help the whole country thrive. I thank my parents for allowing me to go to school! I wish my best friend could go with me, but she is going to be married next month. She and I have cried and cried but the *lobola* has been paid and she will soon be a bride.

Notes:

GRAN Child, Early and Forced Marriage Backgrounder.

Girls not Brides Kenya

Review pronunciation of "*lobola*"

## Success

Do you remember my name? I am your friend, Ayodele Jelani. You have heard the stories of many of my sisters, all of whom have had to struggle to get to school and to remain there. I want to tell you that I have reached the top of the staircase, and in a week will graduate from my secondary school. I will soon fold up my uniform which I have been proud to wear and will take my next steps into another world. I am hoping that I will win a scholarship to go to the university in Gaborone, Botswana where I can work towards a Bachelor of Arts and become a teacher or a Bachelor of science and then enter medicine.

My classmates who are also graduating hope to become engineers, architects, doctors, social workers, teachers, scientists, nurses, business people, leaders in the community and one wants to be prime minister of our country! I hope all the young women you have heard talk today will also reach the top of their staircase and will graduate and go on to fulfill their dreams. We all hope we can help make change for all the peoples of our beloved Africa.

Now... my name, Ayodele, means “return of happiness” and Jelani means “full of strength”. May all of your lives be full of strength and happiness!

## THEN

The Facilitator (who has played the role of Ayodele Jelani) could answer questions on three or four of the issues. I will try to create notes for each step in the future.

GRAN Victoria reminded me that the next step is ACTION.

What, for instance, could a class of Social Justice or Gender Issues students do as an action which would be meaningful for them? I expect they will have the same ideas that we, as adults, have.

## Notes:

The reading of the play by adults took 35 minutes. I am sure a student audience will take longer and will also need more time for the set-up ( time to read and ask for pronunciation help, some vocabulary help etc.)

I anticipate that some of the steps will need to be highly edited for a younger audience. For instance, steps 12 and 13 might be left out for the lower grades. Even those students in older classes should know about FGM. My Victoria High class have had a talk about FGM by Joe and Diane Scaletta.

I have tried to use the voice of a teenager so some sentences may seem a little awkward. Alas, sometimes I had to inject information that a student might not know but I tried to make the facts seem to be natural to the speaker.

Except for the facilitator and Esther in Step 1, I suggest people use their own names so that there is no difficulty with pronunciation of African names.

\*\*\*\*\*Once I send it out for everyone to use, I would ask the facilitators to talk or write to me with their questions before the presentation and also to give me a small report about how it was received, suggestions etc. I will keep a record so that I know how it is being received and if there are other suggestions for improvement.\*\*\*\*\*

Please accept this work as a gift to GRAN. It was inspired by the EdWG committee's decision to focus on the "Barriers to Education". I immediately envisioned a staircase which girls had to climb to reach success. I hope the play will help many people learn more about the role of education for girls in sub-Saharan Africa. Of course, it could also be adapted for a wider audience using the issues from the whole world; there are many girls around the world who need an education and face the same barriers.

I will include the staircase visual once it has been changed a little. Thanks to my daughter-in-law, Cheryl-Ann Webster, for the staircase and for being the first one-person audience.

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