



WE WILL RISE

Michelle Obama's Mission to Educate Girls Around the World

BACKGROUND ON LIBERIA & MOROCCO

Every child in the world deserves access to a quality education but, despite progress, girls are still more likely than boys never to attend school. A range of societal, physical and cultural norms can lead to girls in the developing world growing up uneducated, underemployed, or married as children.

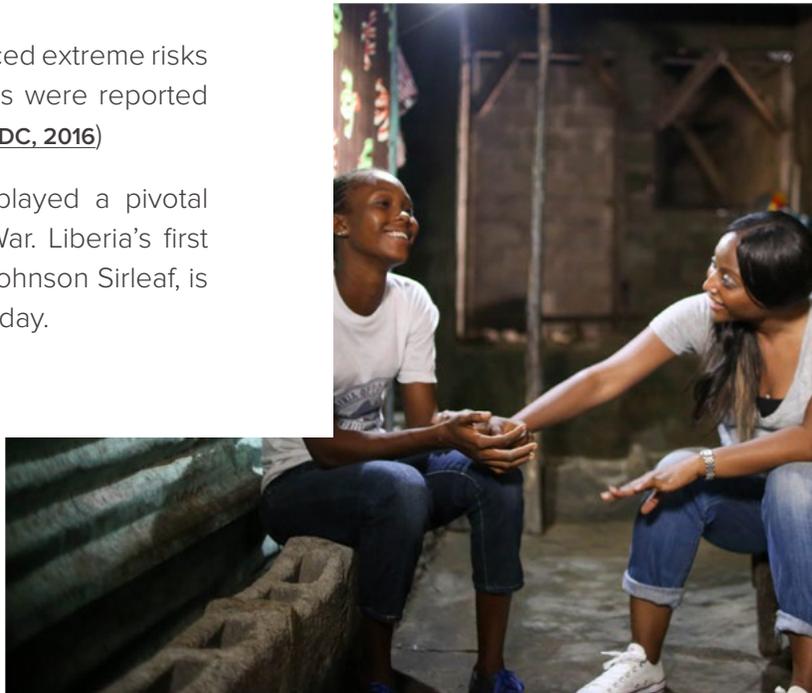
These issues are complex and vary significantly, country to country and community to community. This fact sheet is meant to give you a brief introduction to some of the issues affecting girls in Morocco and Liberia, where First Lady Michelle Obama visited for her We Will Rise project. All of the reports cited here are good sources to explore for more in-depth information.



Liberia

Liberia's education system is struggling to rebuild following 14 years of civil war. High rates of poverty, especially in rural areas, coupled with a war-affected education system, make it extremely challenging for Liberian girls to attend school.

- Only 24% of girls aged 15-24 years old complete lower secondary school (grades 7-9). ([GEM Report, 2013](#))
- About 62% of girls in Liberia are literate, compared to 83% of boys. ([GEM Report, 2013](#))
- In Monrovia, the nation's capital, financial hardship is the most common reason for girls aged 12-15 to drop out of school. 66.8% of Liberian households indicated high costs of school fees and school materials as a reason for children dropping out. ([World Bank, 2016](#))
- Over half of women in Liberia have been affected by female genital mutilation. ([UNICEF, 2016](#))
- Liberia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world – with 1 in 24 women dying during pregnancy or childbirth. ([WHO/ UNICEF, 2010](#))
- Women, who play a traditional role as caregivers, faced extreme risks during Liberia's 2014 Ebola outbreak. 10,500 cases were reported during the crisis, which claimed over 5,000 lives. ([CDC, 2016](#))
- Despite these sobering statistics, women have played a pivotal leadership role in ending Liberia's Second Civil War. Liberia's first female head of state and current president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is one of only 21 female heads of state in the world today.





Morocco

Morocco has made impressive progress in gender equality and school completion rates at the primary level, with participation rates reaching over 95 percent for both boys and girls. But there is still much work to be done. As girls reach puberty, lack of resources combined with socio-cultural barriers such as child marriage and early motherhood can lead to high dropout rates.

- Approximately 74% of young adolescent girls living in rural Morocco do not attend school. ([World Bank, 2013](#))
- Approximately 26% of adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 15-24 are illiterate. ([UNICEF, 2012](#)).
- The female labor force participation rate in Morocco declined from 30% to 26% between 1999 and 2010 ([Brookings, 2015](#))
- The number of seats held by women in Morocco's parliament rose from 0% to 17% between 1990 and 2015. ([World Bank, 2016](#))
- Women's rights greatly improved when dramatic amendments were made to Morocco's Family Code in 2004. Still there is no specific law in Morocco that prohibits domestic violence, including spousal rape. ([UNICEF, 2011](#)) ([Human Rights Quarterly 2009](#))

