



*Global Majority E-Journal*



Volume 10, Number 2  
(December 2019)



# *Global Majority E-Journal*

## **About the *Global Majority E-Journal***

The *Global Majority E-Journal* is published twice a year and freely available online at: <http://www.american.edu/cas/economics/ejournal/>. The journal publishes articles that discuss critical issues for the lives of the global majority. The global majority is defined as the more than 80 percent of the world's population living in low- and middle-income countries. The topics discussed reflect issues that characterize, determine, or influence the lives of the global majority: poverty, population growth, youth bulge, urbanization, lack of access to safe water, climate change, agricultural development, etc. The articles are based on research papers written by American University (AU) undergraduate students (mostly freshmen) as one of the course requirements for Econ-110—The Global Majority, which is an elective within the New AU Core.

## **Editor**

Dr. Bernhard G. Gunter, Assistant Professor, Economics Department, American University; Washington, DC; and President, Bangladesh Development Research Center (BDRC), Falls Church, VA, United States. The editor can be reached at [gunter@american.edu](mailto:gunter@american.edu).

## **Cover Design**

Based on an animated GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) available as Wikimedia Commons, created in 1998 by Christian Janoff, showing the “Globe” demonstration as it can be found on the Commodore REU 1700/1750 test/demo disk; please see:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Globe.gif>.

**ISSN 2157-1252**

**Copyright © 2019 by the author(s) for the contents of the articles.**

**Copyright © 2019 by American University for the journal compilation.**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing from the copyright holder. American University, the editor and the authors cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this journal. The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and should not be associated with American University.

# *Global Majority E-Journal*

**Volume 10, Number 2 (December 2019)**

## **Contents**

“War Within the War”: Overcoming a Legacy of Patriarchal Norms and Violence in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo

*Abby Hoover* 57

Income Inequality in the Prosperous Economies of Tunisia and Namibia

*Thierry Gysler* 75

Education is Power:  
Reducing Child Marriages in Egypt and Sudan

*Amanda Robic* 87

An Analysis of the Determinants of Poverty  
in India and South Africa

*Karl Usuka* 100

# **“War Within the War”: Overcoming a Legacy of Patriarchal Norms and Violence in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo**

Abby Hoover

## ***Abstract***

*The intent of this article is to examine gender issues and inequality in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Both countries have high levels of gender inequality demonstrated by a significant difference in average literacy and education level between males and females. Furthermore, both have a wide range of discrimination against women through norms, legal practices and actions beyond and not addressed by the law. In addition to these issues, both countries face more serious problems with war and conflict-related rape and sexual assault. These precedents are additionally worrisome considering the effect of the inadequate justice systems for women in both the CAR and the DRC. Overall, cultural norms that have allowed violence against women are unlikely to change soon unless these countries uphold the human rights of women.*

## **I. Introduction**

According to the World Health Organization (2013), 35 percent of women will experience physical and/or sexual violence throughout their lifetime. Although this percentage is high, it is much higher in developing countries, where gender norms and political instability culminate to a lack of protection for women. In the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), these cultural norms prevent women from reporting injustices and in the cases that women do communicate these crimes, they are likely to be targeted and/or ostracized from their communities. Highly publicized brutal sexual assault and wartime rape are not condemned and acted upon by these two countries, even though both countries have ratified international human rights accords.

The focus of this article is to examine the multidimensionality of gender inequality beginning with dynamics within the family and continuing with the most publicized elements of violence against women in the CAR and the DRC. This can be achieved through first examining the economic, political and social conditions of women in these countries and then examining trends of violence.

This article focuses on examining similarities and differences between the CAR and the DRC in terms of conditions for women politically and culturally. Furthermore, the objective is to examine how economic investment through ethical approaches can be effective in shifting cultural dynamics.

Following this introduction, this article begins with a brief literature review which outlines some of the scholarly conversations surrounding the issues of violence against women in these two countries. Subsequently presented is summarized socio-economic background sections on the CAR and the DRC. Section IV describes ethical backing to alleviate gender inequality in both of these countries. The next discussion section culminates the established gender norms into the specifics of family dynamics and violence against women while detailing the programs and policies to empower women which then transitions into the last section's conclusions.

## **II. Brief Literature Review**

Recently, with a heightened global awareness of gender inequality issues and domestic violence, there has been an increase in the focus on these issues in developing countries, such as the DRC and the CAR. Political instability paired with patriarchal norms result in harsh living conditions for the women in these countries. Tiruneh et al. (2018), Sano et al. (2018) and Sadie (2015) focus on the DRC, while Aurelie-Clemence and Zewei (2013) and Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) (2012) deal with the CAR.

- Tiruneh et al. (2018) describes a recent study conducted in the DRC concerning intimate partner violence (IPV) against married women. The report details the seriousness of the issue in the DRC, where 68.2 percent of the women face IPV, compared to 35 percent of women facing IPV globally. The study concludes that some of the main correlating factors to IPV are controlling behaviors by partners, women justifying wife-beating, women with mothers that experience IPV, and women with low decision-making autonomy. A major point of emphasis was the heightened effect of violence by community norms and social expectations. IPV was found to also correlate with unintended pregnancies and pregnancy losses as a result of physical trauma and stress-related psychological responses. Overall, Tiruneh et al. assert that violence against women is an epidemic that has become a public health concern in which intervention is needed.
- Sano et al. (2018) suggest that educational and employment opportunities may not be sufficient to improve the gender inequality in the DRC. This conclusion is drawn through examining the political instability and highly patriarchal society in the DRC following the civil war. Additionally, the article mentions the success of other countries like Ethiopia, Uganda, and Ghana, where increased women's autonomy led to a ripple of other positive effects for women. Thus, Sano et al. apply this result to the DRC and suggests that increasing the autonomy in the household is the missing piece that will lead to better health-related outcomes for women. The report also mentions some of the organizations working to increase family planning. The DRC's National Strategic Plan for Family Planning aspires to increase the use of contraceptives from 6.3 percent in 2003 to 19 percent by 2020. Sano et al. suggest that opportunities granted to women will not have a lasting impact if women are unable to gain decision-making power in the household.

- Sadie (2015) focuses on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the DRC, recent international and national strategies adopted, and the progress made. The introduction of the article addresses the legacy of violence against women which was heightened with sexual violence used as a weapon of war and the impunity of high-ranking officials. Sadie describes the efforts of international organizations like the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and the United Nations Population Fund. In addition, the report describes the strategy adopted by the National Strategy Against Gender-Based Violence to prevent violence and allow legal action following incidences of violence. Although the judicial system is widely acknowledged as corrupt and there are few female representatives in government, there have been some measures passed to increase accountability in the armed forces. The article suggests that there is potential for progress if these measures are acted upon and more women are put in public positions of decision-making.
- Aurelie-Clemence and Zewei (2013) discuss how political instability and resulting poverty have disproportionately negatively impacted women in the forms of social exclusion and violence in the CAR. In the year the study was conducted 27 percent of women in the CAR admitted they had experienced violence from a partner in the last year. It was further concerning that over 50 percent of the population believed violence against women is justified at times. This wasn't the case just among men, 71 percent of women thought it was acceptable for men to use violence against women when housework was not done properly. Further, the article provides details concerning the international laws that CAR is subject to as a result of signing on various human rights charters. Additionally, the report describes the regional and state laws protecting women. Although in all cases, the article recognizes the gap between written law and the reality for women. As a result, the authors suggest various initiatives and steps to prevent gender-based violence and include women under the protections of the law.
- Based on excerpts from a more detailed case study, Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) (2012) illustrates issues of domestic violence in the town of Bouar, in the CAR. The stories of women in this town were presented through interviews. The article addressed the tradition of violence against women as part of the cultural norm. Additionally, the report addressed the aggravating factors of domestic violence including child marriage, alcohol/substance abuse, infertility, lacking education for girls, etc. Legal barriers for women and government attempts to address the issue are also described, although they have been largely unsuccessful. The difficulty lies with the lack of training to deal with violence and cultural norms that do not take the issue seriously.

### **III. Socio-economic Background**

The United Nations has classified the CAR as one of the 47 least developed countries (LDCs) in the world.<sup>1</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency's World FactBook expands on this with details outlining high mortality due to aids, the humanitarian crisis from political instability, inadequate healthcare, lacking food security, a weak education system (low literacy rates) and lacking infrastructure. One of the sources of wealth in the country is diamond mining, which is also one of the sources of conflict and a factor in the high mortality rate. The backbone of the economy is subsistence agriculture, forestry, and mining. Specifically, agriculture makes up 43.2 percent of

---

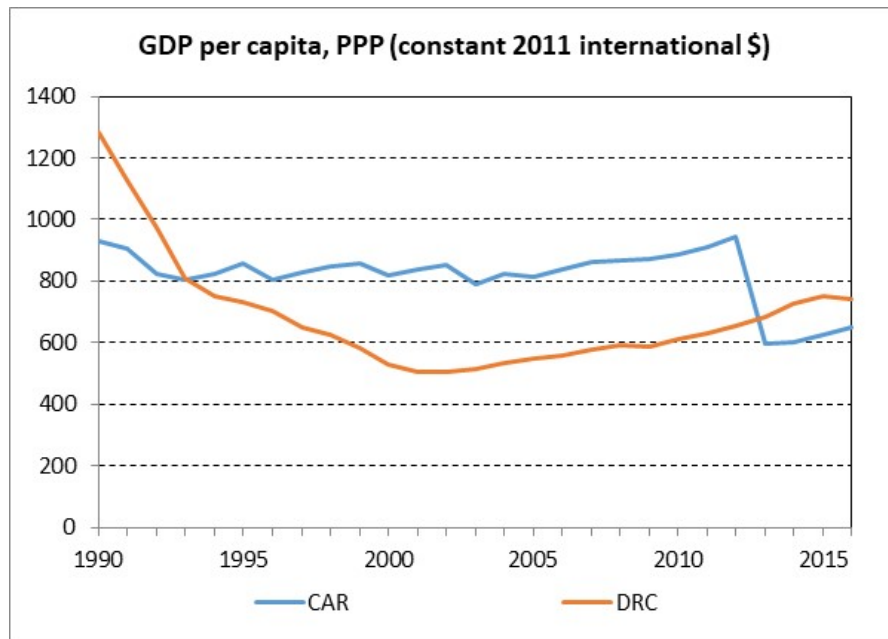
<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/lde\\_list.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/lde_list.pdf).

the economy, services are a close second at 40.8 percent and industry is only 16 percent. The political structure of the CAR is a presidential republic in name and was a French colony until 1960. Concerning the population distribution, about 60 percent of the population is between 0-24 years old. The fertility rate is also high at an estimated 4.25 children per woman.<sup>2</sup>

The DRC is also categorized as one of the LDCs. Similar to the CAR, the DRC struggles with malnutrition, healthcare, education, and infrastructure dilemmas. Additionally, there is a growing refugee crisis due to the ongoing conflict in the region. The economy and government suffer from corruption and negative consequences of the “resource curse.” The largest sector of the economy is industry at 43.6 percent, followed by services at 36.7 percent and finally agriculture at 19.7 percent. The DRC has a semi-presidential system and was a Belgian colony until 1960. Regarding population, over 60 percent is between the ages of 0-24 years old. The current fertility rate is about 4.54 children per woman.<sup>3</sup>

As displayed in Figure 1, both countries have experienced a decline in GDP per capita since 1990. This is a severe problem as the world GDP per capita has experienced a dramatic increase, which demonstrates the growing wealth gap between the poorest and richest countries. GDP per capita of the CAR was \$932 in 1990, after which it declined to \$804, and then stayed between \$790 and \$870 for the next 26 years. The CAR then experienced a slight increase for the next three years, reaching an all-time high of \$946 in 2012, after which it collapsed to \$598 in 2013, likely due to the civil war in the country that began in 2012 and continues today. The CAR’s GDP per capita then increased slightly over the next 3 years, reaching \$648 in 2016.

**Figure 1: GDP per capita (PPP-adjusted, constant 2011 international \$), 1990-2016**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

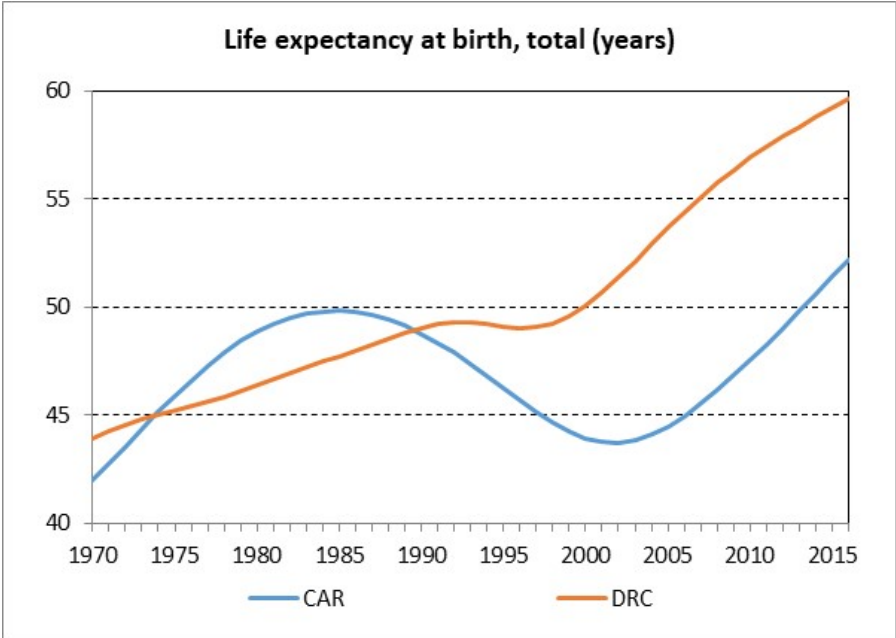
<sup>2</sup> See Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2018a).

<sup>3</sup> See Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2018b).

Although the DRC had a higher GDP per capita than the CAR in 1990, this quickly flipped by 1994, and the DRC’s GDP per capita remained below that of the CAR until the dramatic collapse of the CAR’s GDP per capita in 2013. The DRC has a more extended history of conflict than the CAR. The First Congo War lasted from 1996-1997, the Second Congo War occurred from 1998-2003. This helps to explain the decline in GDP per capita during this time and the slight rise following this time. However, growth is somewhat stunted, which is likely associated with the ongoing conflicts with various rebel groups. In 2016, the DRC’s GDP per capita was \$743, which is \$537 less than it was in 1990.

Despite lacking improvement in GDP per capita for both the CAR and the DRC, life expectancy has increased over the past 46 years, as shown in Figure 2. Additionally, the life expectancy of these two countries was relatively close to each other until the late 1990s, after which a wide gap emerged. The life expectancy in 1970 was 42 years for the CAR and 44 years for the DRC. Although both countries lag behind in development, the rise in life expectancy is due to the global advances in medicine, healthcare, and sanitation. The drastic decline in life expectancy for the CAR from 1985 until 2002 is partly due to the CAR’s civil war and the HIV/AIDS epidemic during this time. In 2016, the life expectancy for the CAR was 52 years, while it was 59.6 years for the DRC.

**Figure 2: Life Expectancy at Birth (in years), 1970-2016**



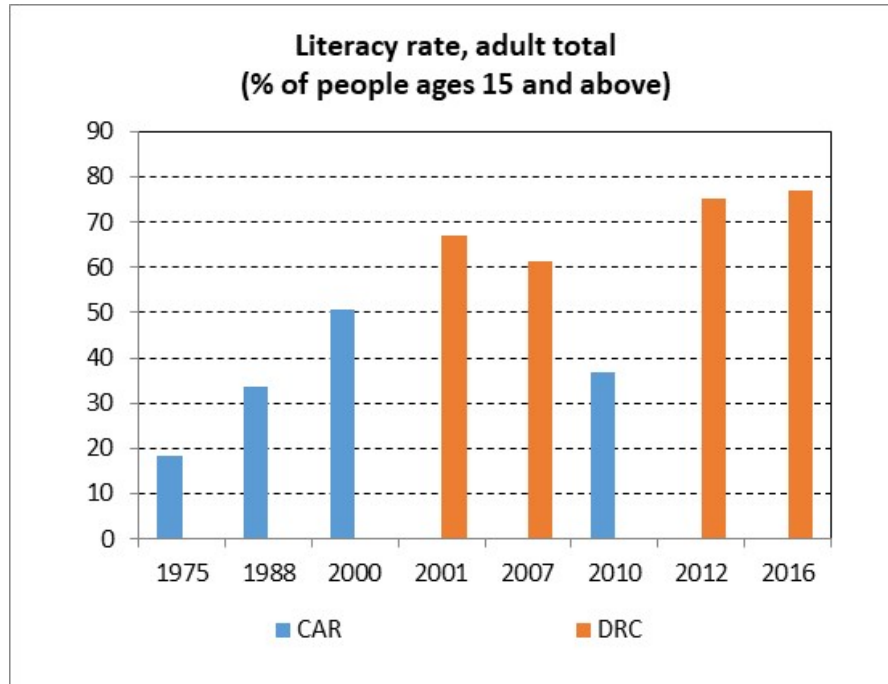
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Although data concerning the adult literacy rate is sparse and unevenly collected, there is a dramatic difference between the two countries as shown in Figure 3. Overall, the CAR has lower literacy rates than the DRC and based on comparing the data for 2000 and 2010 (the last two observations for the CAR), the CAR experienced a recent backslide in literacy rates. In 2000 literacy was around 50 percent and it declined to 37 percent in 2010. This could also be due to the deterioration of infrastructure surrounding the civil war. The DRC seemed to generally experience



an increase in literacy rates, the first available data collected suggested a 67 percent literacy rate in 2001 which increased to 77 percent by 2016. Although some general trends can be established, it would be difficult to draw firm conclusions without more recent data from the CAR.

**Figure 3: Adult Literacy (in percent)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

#### **IV. Ethical Origins and Existing Ethical Structures**

Women’s liberation movements in the developed world have led to an increased awareness of gender inequality issues in the developing world and the role of development projects to reinforce or redefine these norms. In addition to an increased consciousness of the gender inequality issues, there also has been a rise in the analysis of the approaches taken from an ethical perspective. Some of the prominent examples include the work of Caroline Moser (1989) in “Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs” and “Projects for Women in the Third World: Explaining their Misbehavior” by Mayra Buvinić (1986). Combined, Buvinić (1986) and Moser (1989) define five approaches towards development concerning women. These concepts include welfare, anti-poverty, equity, efficiency, and empowerment approaches.

Moser (1989) and Buvinić (1986) both view the welfare approach negatively due to the passive position in which women are placed and detrimental gender roles the approach reinforces. According to Moser (1989), this approach suggests “top-down handouts” while doing nothing for the lacking status, decision making power and education/skills of women. Despite the criticism of this approach Moser (1989) and Buvinić (1986) view the other approaches more favorably.

The anti-poverty approach describes women as economically subordinate due to social forces as they are “the poorest of the poor,” thus this approach suggests development built from lifting

women out of depravity.<sup>4</sup> A similar approach is the equity approach, which includes the provision of the antipoverty approach while also acknowledging the importance of active participation by women in the development process. An additional aspect of this approach is the effort to confront political, social, cultural and legal barriers holding women from full participation in society.

The efficiency approach suggests an economic investment in women, along with the idea that a greater investment in women will result in higher productivity. The final approach, though viewed by Moser (1989) as inherently part of the equity and anti-poverty approaches, is empowerment. This suggests that women with the ability to gain control in their own lives have the ability to change injustice in the structure in which they interact.

As will be analyzed further in the next section, women in both of these countries lack decision making power within their households. Given these conditions some of the more effective programs are those which follow the efficiency, empowerment and equity approaches. The result is that these programs help to transform communities through positively reshaping gender norms and increasing the self-sufficiency of women. Specific actions of NGOs and international organizations will be detailed in the next section.

## **V. Discussion**

The aim of this section is to examine the levels and aspects of gender inequality in the CAR and the DRC. Surveying broad inequality measures sets the background for analysis of specific measures. Family dynamics can be analyzed through child marriage, women's access to healthcare, domestic violence and the correlation between political instability and wartime crimes against women. Following the discussion of shared issues, the final sub-section discusses the female empowerment programs implemented and their relation to ethical development with respect to gender.

### **V.1. Background of Gender Inequality**

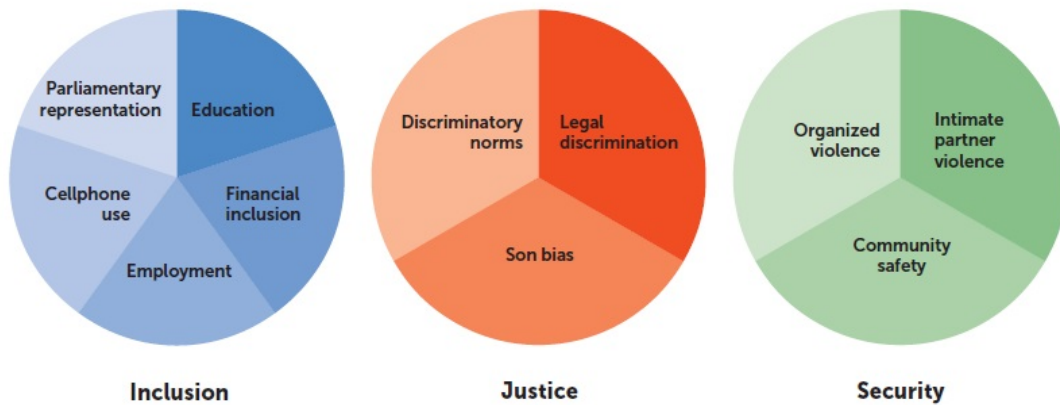
According to the Women, Peace and Security Index (WPSI), which is based on 11 indicators, grouped into three dimensions (see Figure 4), the CAR and the DRC are among the worst countries for women. Of the analysis of 153 countries, the 2017/18 index puts the CAR at rank 149 and the DRC at rank 148 for the combined factors of inclusion, justice, and security. Although the scores of both of these countries were similar to slightly higher-ranked countries in the dimensions of inclusion and justice, both of their scores were much worse in the dimension of security, of which one indicator is intimate partner violence. The other two indicators in the dimension of security are community safety and organized violence. The score for intimate partner violence in the DRC was 64.1 percent, which is among the highest in the world and over double that of the CAR at 29.8 percent. The CAR, on the other hand, has one of the highest deaths due to organized crime, with a score of 30.4 percent. This score is better than the score of Afghanistan and Syria, but high enough to elicit concern.

---

<sup>4</sup> Moser (1989).

**Figure 4: Indicators of the Women, Peace and Security Index**

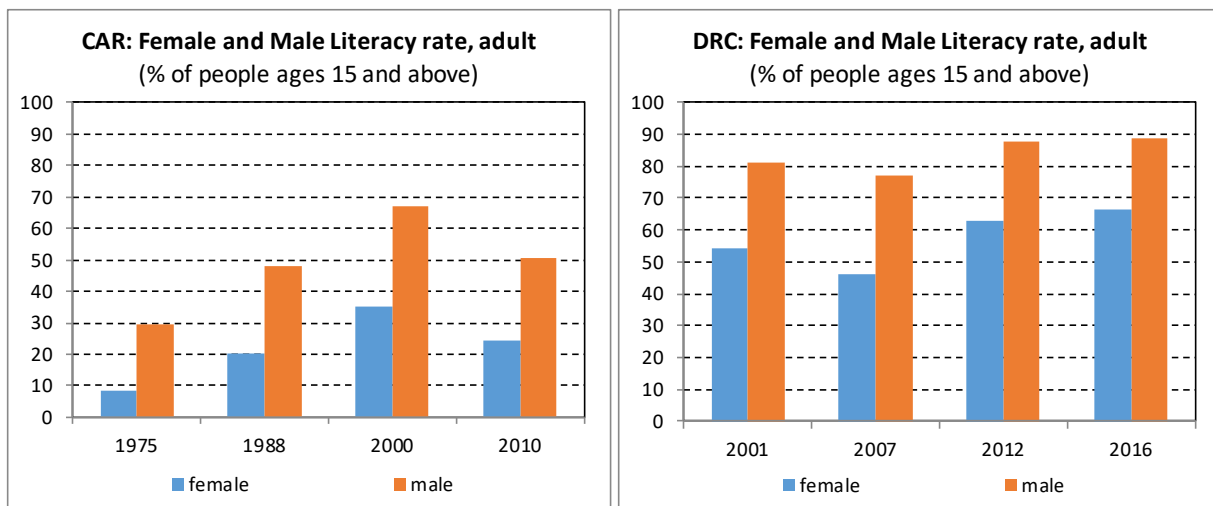
The Women, Peace, and Security Index captures 3 dimensions of women's well-being in 11 indicators



Source: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) (2017), Figure 1.1., p. 8.

One of the contributing factors to high amounts of violence against women is unequal status under the law and inequality in the education system. These institutions reinforce patriarchal norms which contribute to the vicious cycle. In analyzing education specifically, one of the ways to determine gender disparity in education is through the difference in literacy rates between males and females. In the CAR both males and females had increasing literacy rates, however, this percentage started to decrease around 2000. Figure 5 shows that there has been a considerable gender gap in literacy rates between men and women, with women having been about half as literate as men, even as recently as 2010.

**Figures 5 and 6: Literacy Rates by Gender in the CAR and the DRC**

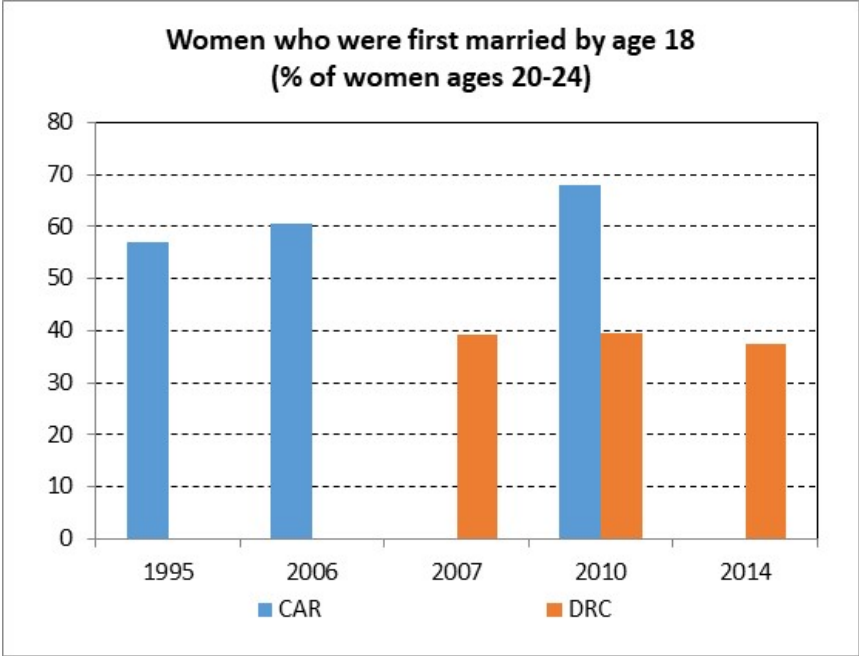


Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Comparing Figure 5 and Figure 6, the changes over the years have been smaller in the DRC than in the CAR, though the only available data for the DRC is from 2001 onward, while the CAR has data going back to 1975. The disparity between men and women in the DRC is less than in the CAR, yet there is still a gender gap of more than 20 percentage points. Overall literacy rates are much higher in the DRC than the CAR. Although literacy rates are higher in the DRC, the rate of intimate partner violence is also higher according to Figure 4. This is troubling especially since higher literacy and a smaller education disparity empowers women and is supposed to decrease domestic violence against women.

Often a high amount of violence correlates with inadequate education for women, which in turn lends itself to juvenile marriages. The prevalence of these types of marriages is a fair indicator of opportunities and status of women. One of the World Bank measures the percentage of women married by the age of 18. For the CAR, this percentage has been rising to the point that the most recent data indicates that almost 70 percent of women age 20-24 were married by age 18. These echo the declining literacy rates for women in that opportunities for women outside of the household are limited. The DRC has more static numbers than the CAR (though the years of measurement are closer together). The data suggests a young marriage rate of about 37.3 percent of women in the DRC, significantly lower than for the CAR. This is also consistent with the literacy rates for women in the two countries, which were much higher in the DRC than the CAR.

**Figure 7: Women who first married by age 18 (percent of women age 20-24)**

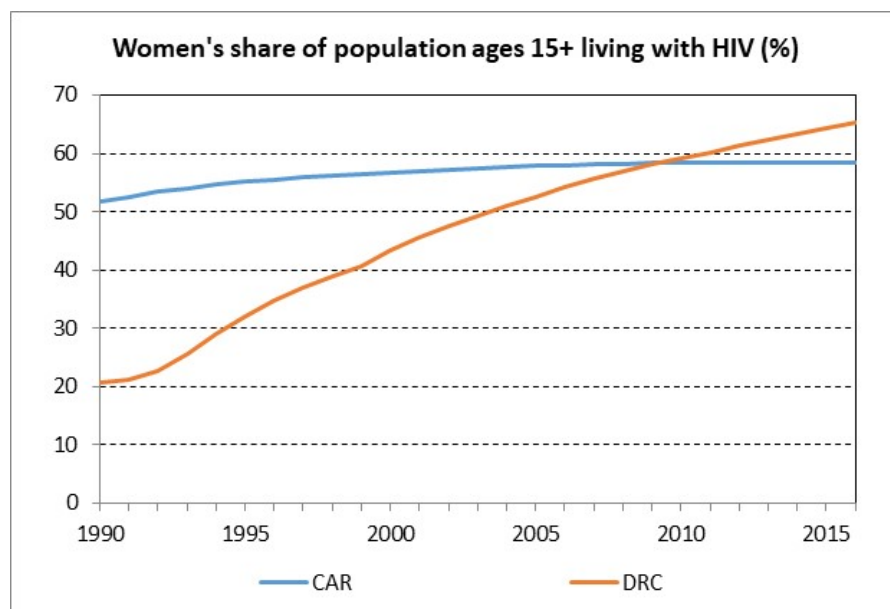


Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Another related measure is the attention or lack thereof to women’s health. This can be emphasized through the percentage of women living with HIV/AIDs and changes over time. The CAR started with higher rates of HIV for women, however over the past 20 years there has been a slight increase to just under 60 percent. The DRC had experienced a dramatic increase in the percentage of women

with HIV and has surpassed the CAR with women as over 60 percent of HIV affected population. These high percentages of women in the HIV affected population indicate a severe lack of attention towards women’s sexual and reproductive health.

**Figure 8: Women’s Share of the Population Ages 15+ Living with HIV (percent)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Low (and in some cases declining) literacy rates combined with young marriage and lacking attention on women’s sexual and reproductive health contribute to and exacerbate gender inequality in the CAR and the DRC. Some of the most severe manifestations of gender inequality are domestic violence and rape/ sexual assault by soldiers in wartime. If not death, the results are severe psychological and physical damage.<sup>5</sup> The following sections delved into the specifics of violence against women, some of their stories and finally the national and international actions to remedy the situation.

## V.2. Family Structure and Violence Against Women

As demonstrated with developed nations, strong political stability coupled with a present and active rule of law are prerequisites for both economic growth and women’s empowerment. Although laws in theory protect women, often cultural norms contradict supposed protection. One example of this is child marriage, which is rampant in both, the CAR and the DRC. The Family Code of 1998 passed in the CAR set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years old.<sup>6</sup> However, the main problem is that this family code is not enforced. According to recent statistics from 2017, 29 percent of women were married before the age of 15 and 68 percent are married by the age 18.<sup>7</sup> The DRC also faces this challenge, an act passed in 2009 increased the marriage age of females

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch (2017).

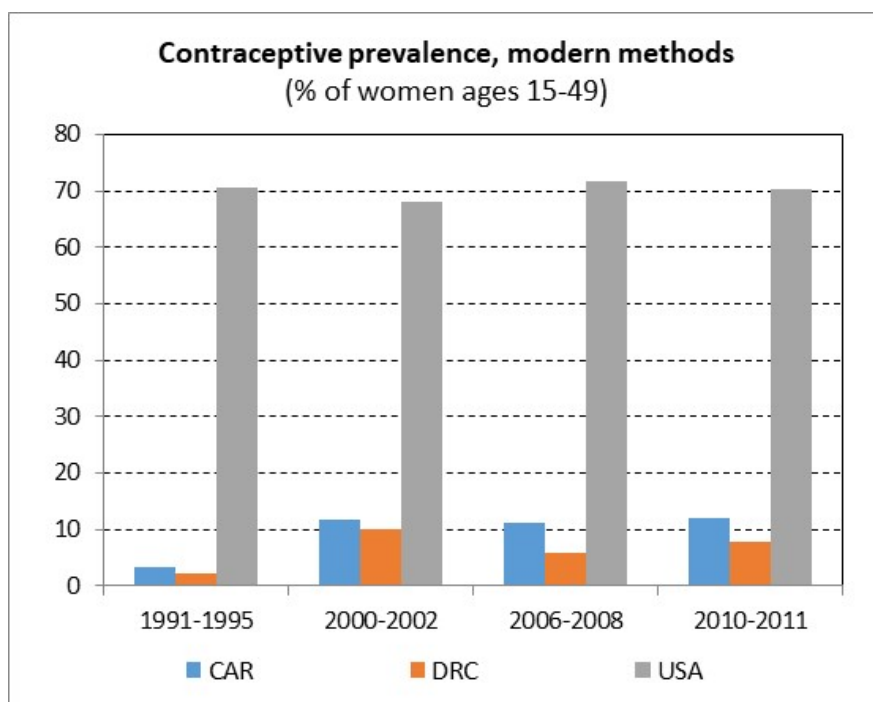
<sup>6</sup> Girls not Brides (undated).

<sup>7</sup> Girls not Brides (undated).

from 14 to 18 years old, to match the legal marriage age of males.<sup>8</sup> Yet despite this law, recent statistics show that 55 percent of girls are married before they are 18 years old. The implications of early marriage explain some of the factors of gender inequality from lacking education to violence and high population growth.<sup>9</sup>

Another factor to illustrate the family dynamic and power imbalance between men and women is the prevalence and use of birth control. In countries with higher female autonomy, the prevalence of contraceptive is higher making the unmet need much lower. Figure 9 illustrates the contraceptive prevalence for both countries in comparison with the United States. As demonstrated by the graph there is a dramatic difference between the CAR and the DRC and the more developed world like the United States. In the early 1990s, the contraceptive prevalence rate was 3.2 percent and 2.3 percent for the CAR and the DRC, respectively, while it was 70.5 percent in the United States. Two decades later, the prevalence rates have more than tripled in the CAR and the DRC, but the gap to the United States was still massive.

**Figure 9: Contraceptive Prevalence, Modern Methods (Percentage of women ages 15-49)**



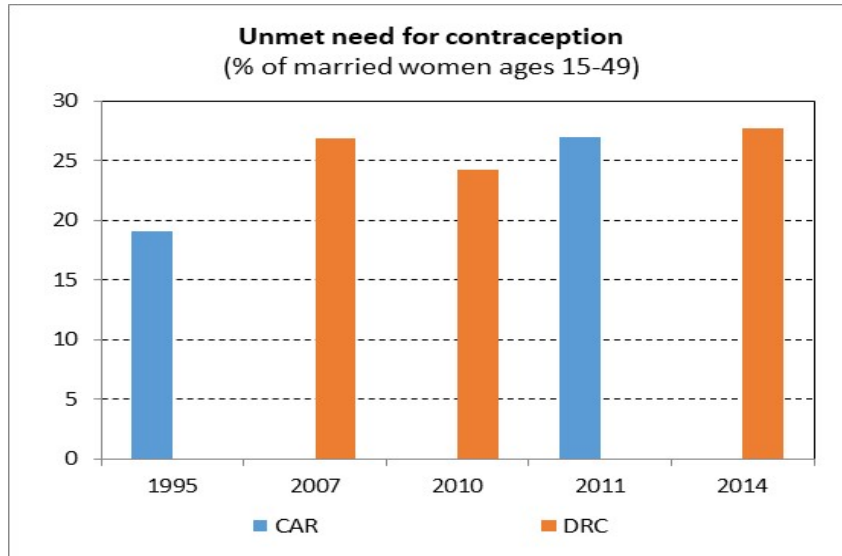
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

A common misconception is that cultural differences mean that women in developing countries like the CAR and the DRC do not have the same priorities and desire for access to contraception. This assumption is false, Figure 10 illustrates the percentage of women that would like access to contraception, yet it is unavailable to them due to lacking healthcare or controlling husbands.

<sup>8</sup> United Kingdom, Home Office (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Wodon (2017).

**Figure 10: Unmet Need for Contraception (percentage of married women ages 15-49)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Another dimension to gender inequality in family life for women is domestic violence. This factor is also tied with early marriage, studies indicate that child marriage increases the risk of domestic violence, among other negative consequences such as entrenched poverty and deficiency in basic education.<sup>10</sup> In the CAR, the most recent domestic violence statistic suggests that 26.3 percent of women aged 15-49 have experienced sexual and/or physical violence in the past twelve months.<sup>11</sup> Statistics from 2010 suggests that 79.6 percent of women in the CAR believe that a husband is justified in beating them for one of a few reasons, such as disagreeing with him, going out without permission or burning the food.<sup>12</sup>

Similar difficulties emerge for women in the DRC. Of married women ages 15-49, 27 percent have experienced sexual violence in the last twelve months and overall 57 percent have experienced spousal violence.<sup>13</sup> One of the legal barriers for women in this case is the lack of recognition of spousal rape under state law.<sup>14</sup> The percentage of women who believe a husband is justified for beating his wife for similar reasons is also very high at 75.6 percent.<sup>15</sup> Patriarchal norms and a lacking legal system helped to breed these attitudes that remain dangerous for women. Another threat to women in both of these countries is armed conflict which has increased the violence against women.<sup>16</sup>

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Missions in both of these countries have further investigated this issue with report periods over a few months. In the CAR the United Nations documented 308 incidents of conflict related sexual violence, which affected 138 girls and 155

<sup>10</sup> Wodon (2017).

<sup>11</sup> Jackson (2018).

<sup>12</sup> Jackson (2018).

<sup>13</sup> United Kingdom, Home Office (2018).

<sup>14</sup> United Kingdom, Home Office (2018).

<sup>15</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (2018b).

<sup>16</sup> Jackson (2018).

women. The cases included rapes, gang rapes, forced marriages, and sexual slavery. The highest proportion of the cases, 179, were attributed to the ex-Séléka rebel group, but a member of the state armed forces was also implicated. An additional barrier for women can also be illustrated through this report. Only 36 percent of registered victims were able to receive emergency medical care within three days following the incident. Another cultural threat is the stigma against girls and women released from armed groups. In 2017 the United Nations Children’s Fund managed to negotiate the release of 1090 girls, yet many were rejected by their communities due to pregnancy of bearing children as a result of sexual abuse.<sup>17</sup>

In the DRC, this mission found “804 cases of conflict related sexual violence” impacting 265 girls and 507 women. Additionally, during the same time, the United Nations Population Fund reported 5,783 cases in the Eastern part of the country, affecting 265 girls and 507 women. These cases were very similar to those of the CAR. Similarly, the highest proportion of cases, 72 percent, were attributed to non-State armed groups, notably the so-called Twa militia. Medical assistance through state systems is also limited, which led to the UN stepping in to aid over 5,200 sexual violence survivors.<sup>18</sup>

Rape and sexual slavery as a war tactic has a long history in Sub-Saharan Africa. Genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia illustrate the international reaction to rape and sexual slavery used as a war tactic. According to Goldstone Hon. (2002), in 1998, the Rwanda Tribunal delivered its judgment in the case Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu. Ultimately the ruling was that “Rape is a form of aggression. Rape is a violation of personal dignity” and “Rape and sexual violence constitute one of the worst ways of harming the victim as he or she suffers both bodily and mental harm.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Tribunal handed down “rape as a crime against humanity” and within the contents also a “crime of genocide,” further they decided that “[r]ape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault” violates Article 3 of the Geneva Convention.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, the Tribunal recognized these actions as a violation of human rights set out in the Geneva Convention, which was signed off by 196 countries and territories, including the CAR and the DRC. Although both countries technically were part of this agreement, neither have taken serious initiative to make changes to their legal systems.

Recently, the conviction for crimes against humanity and war crimes against Jean-Pierre Bemba (the former Congolese vice president), have been overturned.<sup>21</sup> In 2016, he was convicted for mass murder, rape and pillage in the CAR by the International Criminal Court (ICC).<sup>22</sup> The appeals court suggested that the actions of his troops were outside of his control. Prospects in the DRC are not much better, which can be illustrated by the Minova Rape Case. In 2012, army soldiers deployed in Minova looted and raped at least 76 women over a ten-day period of time.<sup>23</sup> Authorities of the DRC previously announced a “zero tolerance” policy towards sexual violence

---

<sup>17</sup> The data and information provided in this paragraph is based on United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (2019a).

<sup>18</sup> The data and information provided in this paragraph is based on United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (2019b).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (1998).

<sup>20</sup> Goldstone Hon. (2002).

<sup>21</sup> Bowcott (2018).

<sup>22</sup> The International Criminal Court is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal that sits in The Hague, Netherlands. The ICC has jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression.

<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Watch (2015).



as a result there was a “international pressure” to deliver justice.<sup>24</sup> As a result the Minova case went to the International Criminal Court for five months beginning in 2013. This was viewed as a test to whether the DRC would follow through with their word.

Despite the evidence only two of the 39 accused were convicted and at that it was of “one individual rape each”.<sup>25</sup> High-level commanders were never charged and only some soldiers were charged for the destruction of the village. These instances illustrate the influence and reinforcement of patriarchal cultural norms where women are barred from justice and are not allowed the expectation of safety, which is damaging to women in both of these countries.

### **V.3. Ethical Economic Empowerment for Women**

Although the justice system and cultural norms are not on the side of women, perceptions and conditions for women can be changed on the local level through economic empowerment. Yet this concept cannot be effectively applied without attention to ethical development strategies. Of the five ethical approaches to positive gender development discussed previously, the most prevalent approaches are equity and efficiency with an emphasis on empowerment through all projects. These approaches attempt to answer the continuing question of how to transform cultural norms that oppress women. The greater effort behind many of these development projects suggest that increased economic independence will foster professional and personal independence. Thus, women will have more opportunities beyond the home, greater access to education, later marriage and have a lower likelihood of being subject to domestic violence. This is the same idea as the Girl Effect which emphasizes the positive ripple effect of empowering young women.<sup>26</sup>

Currently, the CAR is amidst a civil war which severely limits the ability/ potential of nonprofits and aid organization to effectively organize in the country. Despite this, there are some international organizations working on gender issues in the region. One of these organizations is UN Women, whose goal is to alleviate the mounting crisis of Gender Based Violence (GBV) against women by soldiers.<sup>27</sup> This has taken the form of a three-day training workshop in November of 2018 for the highly ranked members of the defense and security forces (DSF), in which the focus was strategies to help victims. This program exemplifies the empowerment and equity approaches. Female advocates are breaking down the cultural taboo of speaking out against violence against women and breaking down some of the complicit state factors (the DSF) that could help to improve the issues through an initial recognition of the problem.

Another organization working in the CAR is the International Rescue Committee (IRC). With regards to the IRC’s work in the CAR, the IRC states: “Through our work, we put the needs of the most vulnerable, specifically women and girls, at the forefront of our efforts and to achieve measurable improvements in health, safety, economic wellbeing and empowerment”.<sup>28</sup> The IRC also deals with gender-based violence prevention and response. This work fits largely under the empowerment approach, as it seeks to help women to overcome the systems of structural and cultural discrimination (especially in the health, education and economic spheres).

---

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch (2015).

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch (2015).

<sup>26</sup> The Girl Effect (undated).

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Women (2018).

<sup>28</sup> International Rescue Committee (IRC) (undated).

Finally, the Mercy Corps Microfinance project seeks to provide loans to people as capital for business enterprises. The program launched in 2008 with 72 percent female membership and 979 loans, 97 percent which were repaid with a return of 32.7 percent. Since then there have been over 2,000 loans circulated with a 180 percent profit on the original capital and 48 percent business enterprise profit. Overall the project is on track to raise the “economic well-being on 3,300 households.”<sup>29</sup> In addition to providing loans, the program also carries out training modules to build business skills and guide participants through productive use of capital. The efficiency approach best sums up the aims and ideological backing for this program. An investment in women with the proper training results in higher productivity.

The DRC also has a variety of nongovernmental organizations and international organizations that have programs with similar goals as in the CAR. One example is Women for Women International, which has been active in the DRC since 2004. This yearlong program works with groups of women aged 31-40 and aims to teach skills in agribusiness, basket making, small business, and restaurant/catering. The result has been an increase from \$0.74 to \$1.22 average daily earnings of women since 2004.<sup>30</sup> Much like the Mercy Corps Microfinance project, this program follows the efficiency approach through the investment in women through skills building. The rise in daily earnings demonstrates that investment in women has resulted in increased productive and economic well-being.

Additionally, in the DRC, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) deals with the need for empowerment and action to help survivors of sexual violence. This includes economic/ social rehabilitation, medical care, legal assistance, etc. The aim of these efforts is to help women increase their status and participation in society. Another portion of this wide-reaching program is efforts to break down cultural and social barriers, especially for family planning and report sexual violence. An additional measure taken by UNFPA is the training of armed forces to care for sexual violence survivors. Since UNFPA arrived in the DRC more than 15,000 sexual violence survivors received basic medical care.<sup>31</sup>

Another organization with similar goals is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is working towards women’s empowerment. This is done through medical treatment, psychological support, and skills training to more than 9,000 sexual violence survivors. Also, economic programming is provided to 16,000 women with the intent of improving economic capabilities (“Sexual and Gender-Based Violence”).<sup>32</sup>

Much like the UN Women in the CAR, the UNFPA and USAID operate under the equity and empowerment approaches. The equity approach applies through the focus on the economic and legal barriers, while the empowerment approach is all encompassing of the goals of UNFPA and USAID for women to gain control in their communities and country.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Through focusing on the family dynamic and violence against women, this article aims to illustrate how women of the CAR and the DRC struggle with systemic oppression. The vicious cycle of violence and discrimination in both of these countries is confirmed at the governmental level which

---

<sup>29</sup> Mercy Corps (undated).

<sup>30</sup> Women for Women International (undated).

<sup>31</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2011).

<sup>32</sup> United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2018).

creates friction with the NGOs, international organizations and other empowerment organizations trying to overcome these reinforced barriers.

In sum, with the world watching, the CAR and the DRC have done little for victims of rape and sexual abuse. This reflects poorly on the prospects for gender equality and protection against intimate partner violence as not even the most brutal versions of intimate partner violence are punished. While norms inform the legal system, the lack of legal protection reinforces these practices. Further research is necessary to understand and develop ways to ensure justice for women in countries where governments do not protect women. Since norms are difficult to change the most success for women has occurred with economic empowerment initiatives.

## References

- Aurelie-Clemence, Moga-Kpely and Yang Zewei (2013). Gender-Based Violence in Central African Republic. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, Vol. 3 (January), pp. 13–16; available at: [www.ijssh.org/papers/183-G00017.pdf](http://www.ijssh.org/papers/183-G00017.pdf).
- Bowcott, Owen (2018). Jean-Pierre Bemba's War Crimes Conviction Overturned. *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media (of June 8, 2018); available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jun/08/former-congo-leader-jean-pierre-bemba-wins-war-crimes-appeal-international-criminal-court>.
- Buvinić, Mayra (1986). Projects for Women in the Third World: Explaining Their Misbehavior. *World Development*, Vol. 14, No. 5, pp. 653–664.
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2018a). The World Factbook: Central African Republic. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency; available at: [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ct.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ct.html).
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2018b). The World Factbook: Congo, Democratic Republic of The. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, available at: [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html).
- Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) (2017). Women, Peace and Security Index 2017/18: Tracking Sustainable Peace through Inclusion, Justice, and Security for Women. Washington, DC: GIWPS and PRIO; available at: <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WPS-Index-Report-2017-18.pdf>.
- Girl Effect (undated). Our Story. Internet Resource of the Girl Effect; available at: [www.girleffect.org/who-we-are/our-story/](http://www.girleffect.org/who-we-are/our-story/).
- Girls Not Brides (undated). Central African Republic - Child Marriage Around the World. Girls Not Brides, Internet Resource; available at: [www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/central-african-republic/](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/central-african-republic/).
- Goldstone Hon., Richard J. (2002). Prosecuting Rape as a War Crime. *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Article 2; available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1461&context=jil>.

- Human Rights Watch (2015). Justice on Trial: Lessons from the Minova Rape Case in the Democratic Republic of Congo. New York, United States: Human Rights Watch, Internet Resource of October 1, 2015; available at: [www.hrw.org/report/2015/10/01/justice-trial/lessons-minova-rape-case-democratic-republic-congo#](http://www.hrw.org/report/2015/10/01/justice-trial/lessons-minova-rape-case-democratic-republic-congo#).
- Human Rights Watch (2017). ‘They Said We Are Their Slaves’ — Sexual Violence by Armed Groups in the Central African Republic. New York, United States: Human Rights Watch, Internet Resource; available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/05/they-said-we-are-their-slaves/sexual-violence-armed-groups-central-african>.
- International Rescue Committee (IRC) (undated). Forgotten Crisis: Central African Republic, Section 4: What Still Needs to Be Done. New York, United States: International Rescue Committee (IRC), Internet Resource; available at: [www.rescue.org/country/central-african-republic#what-are-the-main-humanitarian-challenges-in-car](http://www.rescue.org/country/central-african-republic#what-are-the-main-humanitarian-challenges-in-car).
- Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) (2012). Bouar, Central African Republic. *Women's World (Journal of Isis-WICCE)*, No. 47 (January), pp. 8–10.
- Jackson, Olivia (2018). Central African Republic: Compound Structural Vulnerabilities Facing Christian Women under Pressure for Their Faith. Santa Ana, CA: Open Doors International / World Watch Research Unit (November); available at: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CAR-Compound-structural-vulnerabilities-facing-Christian-women-2018-FINAL-WITH-PREFACE-1.pdf>.
- Mercy Corps (undated). Central Africans Save Their Way to a Better Future. Portland, Oregon, United States: Mercy Corps; available at: [www.globalgiving.org/projects/central-african-republic-village-savings-and-loan-vsla/](http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/central-african-republic-village-savings-and-loan-vsla/).
- Moser, Caroline O. N. (1989). Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs. *World Development*, Vol. 17, No. 11, pp. 1799–1825.
- Sadie, Yolanda (2015). Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. *African Security Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 450–457.
- Sano, Yuji; Roger Antabe; Kilian Nasung Atuoye; Joseph A. Braimah; Sylvester Z. Galaa and Isaac Luginaah (2018). Married Women’s Autonomy and Post-Delivery Modern Contraceptive Use in the Democratic Republic of Congo. *BMC Women’s Health*, Vol. 18, Article No. 49; available at: <https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-018-0540-1>.
- Tiruneh, Fentanesh Nibret; Kun-Yang Chuang; Peter A. M. Ntenda; and Ying-Chih Chuang (2018). Unwanted Pregnancy, Pregnancy Loss, and Other Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Women & Health*, Vol. 58, No. 9, pp. 983–1000.
- United Kingdom, Home Office (2018). *Country Policy and Information Note Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Gender Based Violence* (London, United Kingdom: United Kingdom, Home Office, September, Version 2.0); available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ba8d7a44.html>.
- United Nations, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (1998). *The Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu (Trial Judgement)*, ICTR-96-4-T (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations:

- International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), 2 September 1998); available at: [www.refworld.org/cases,ICTR,40278fbb4.html](http://www.refworld.org/cases,ICTR,40278fbb4.html).
- United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (2019a). Central African Republic. New York, United States: United Nations; available at: [www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/central-african-republic/](http://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/central-african-republic/).
- United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (2019). Democratic Republic of the Congo. New York, United States: United Nations; available at: [www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/](http://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2011). Empowering Women and Girls in the Democratic Republic of Congo. New York, United States: United Nations Population Fund, Internet Resource of April 19, 2011; available at: [www.unfpa.org/news/empowering-women-and-girls-democratic-republic-congo](http://www.unfpa.org/news/empowering-women-and-girls-democratic-republic-congo).
- United Nations Women (2018). UN Women in Central African Republic Renews Its Commitment to Addressing and Preventing Gender Based Violence (GBV). UN Women, Africa, Internet Resource, available at: <http://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2018/12/un-women-in-central-african-republic-renews-addressing-and-preventing-gender-based-violence>.
- United States Agency for International Development (2018). Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Fact Sheet, Fact Sheet, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, Internet Resource of August 13, 2018; available at: [www.usaid.gov/democratic-republic-congo/fact-sheets/usaid-drc-fact-sheet-sexual-and-gender-based-violence](http://www.usaid.gov/democratic-republic-congo/fact-sheets/usaid-drc-fact-sheet-sexual-and-gender-based-violence).
- Wodon, Quentin (2017). Child Marriage and Education: Impacts, Costs, and Benefits. Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, Internet Resource; available at: [www.globalpartnership.org/blog/child-marriage-and-education-impacts-costs-and-benefits](http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/child-marriage-and-education-impacts-costs-and-benefits).
- Women for Women International (undated). Democratic Republic of the Congo: Start a Journey to Change Her Life, and Yours. Washington, DC: Women for Women International; Internet Resource; available at: [www.womenforwomen.org/where-we-work/democratic-republic-congo](http://www.womenforwomen.org/where-we-work/democratic-republic-congo).
- World Bank (2018). *World Development Indicators / International Debt Statistics database* (Washington, DC: The World Bank); as posted on the World Bank website: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/> (downloaded on April 19, 2018).
- World Health Organization (WHO) (2013). Violence against Women: a 'Global Health Problem of Epidemic Proportions'. *WHO News Release* of June 20, 2013; available at: [www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence\\_against\\_women\\_20130620/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence_against_women_20130620/en/).

# **Income Inequality in the Prosperous Economies of Tunisia and Namibia**

Thierry Gysler

## ***Abstract***

*This article looks at income inequality in Namibia and Tunisia. Both countries have a relatively high GDP per capita compared to other African countries. However, Namibia has very high income inequality, whereas Tunisia has relatively low income inequality. This article looks at how Namibia and Tunisia have ended up with very different levels of income inequality. It outlines some of the ethical origins and existing ethical structures related to inequality in these two countries and reviews the evolution and sources of income inequality. It also examines to what degree these countries' current governmental policies have affected income inequality in Namibia and Tunisia.*

## **I. Introduction**

We are living in an unequal world. At the turn of the millennium, the world's richest 1 percent received as much income as the poorest 57 percent.<sup>1</sup> This disparity continues to rise, some argue due to globalization, others argue due to industrialized countries taking advantage of developing countries' resources and cheap labor. In any case, the more advanced countries typically focus on developing countries that own specific goods and services of interest to them, like uranium mining in Namibia or investing in coastal businesses in Tunisia. While this may increase the gross domestic product (GDP) of these developing countries, it also makes them more vulnerable and increases income inequality within their economies.

This article focuses on income inequality in Namibia and Tunisia. It looks back in recent history and examines how these countries' experiences have shaped them and the challenges they are facing in inequality today. This article is organized into six sections. Following this introduction, the second provides a brief literature review. The third section will give some socio-economic background information about Namibia and Tunisia. The fourth section will look at ethical origins and existing ethical structures in Namibia and Tunisia regarding inequality. In the fifth section, this article will discuss further relevant facts about Namibia and Tunisia. Lastly, this article will conclude and give some final thoughts.

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2002), p. 2.

## II. Brief Literature Review

There is plenty of literature surrounding inequality, specifically income inequality in Tunisia and Namibia. Particularly within the past decade, inequality has been a heavily discussed issue in Tunisia (before and after the Arab Spring) and in Namibia, where society continues to face the challenges of institutional discrimination caused by Namibia's previous apartheid rule. Joyce (2013), Mbazia (2017) and Jouini et al. (2018) focus on Tunisia, while English (2016), a report by the Namibia Statistics Agency and the World Bank (2017), and Aiken (2018) focus on Namibia. In each case, the authors look at how inequality has been reduced and what steps need to be taken to reduce it further.

- Joyce (2013) looks at how the situation has changed in Tunisia after the Arab Spring Revolution, where regional inequality was one of Tunisia's main reasons in partaking in the revolution. Further the paper looks at how Tunisia failed to get much out of the revolution as unemployment and inflation are still very high. Although the paper emphasizes that there have been significant improvements along the coast of Tunisia, deeper in the country the same issues that were there before the revolution persist, such as lack of public services and infrastructure. This continues to show that high inequality is very present in Tunisia but gets hidden behind the touristy coastal area of Tunisia where most of the focus is held by political leaders.
- Mbazia (2017) focuses on how inequality affects economic growth and how economic growth affects inequality in Tunisia. Further it looks at how monetary policy affects inequality and economic growth by introducing money supply. The findings of the paper show that factors such as money supply and increased life expectancy create positive economic growth whereas factors like inflation, lack of education and unemployment negatively affect economic growth. Negative economic growth tends to increase inequality in Tunisia because the two are very dependent on one another as the paper uncovered.
- Jouini et al. (2018) examine the impact of Tunisia's tax and transfer system on inequality and poverty and assess the benefits from public spending on education and health. They conclude that Tunisia's redistributive fiscal policy reduces inequality and extreme poverty significantly. However, based on the national poverty line, the headcount ratio increases, implying that a large number of poor people pay more in taxes than they receive in cash transfers and subsidies. They contribute this outcome to a relatively high burden of personal income taxes and social security contributions for low-income households.
- English (2016) is a short but powerful blog that reviews the apparent imbalance between Namibia's high income and simultaneous extreme prevalence of poverty, which can be traced to enduring income inequalities. The blog points out that Namibia has the third highest levels of income inequality in the world and refers to a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, which showed that Namibia had the highest levels of wealth inequality in the world in 2000. English (2016) also states that the United Nations and other advocacy groups have pressured the Namibian government to do more to tackle the large wealth gap.
- A report by the Namibia Statistics Agency and the World Bank (2017) examines if the Namibian government policies are effective in reducing poverty and inequality, specifically analyzing the impact of budget deficits and high unemployment. Additionally,

the report looks at specific targets that were set by the government to reduce inequality and then examines in depth how poverty and inequality have slightly decreased through fiscal policy, direct transfers and social spending. It suggests that these factors did reduce poverty and inequality but that more could be achieved by being more efficient and by improving the reach and impact of fiscal policy.

- Aiken (2018) focuses on how Namibia has been able to decrease inequality, though it is still unacceptably high. The paper compares Gini-coefficients and unemployment rates from the past with those of the present and determines that some improvement can be seen. Furthermore, it examines geographical struggles like rural water supply, which heavily affect the health of Namibian citizens. It points out that most of the poor are still highly segregated from the wealth that is accumulated by a very few. Although HIV has decreased and life expectancy increased in recent years, Aiken (2018) concludes that the country still fails to address income inequality, which is heavily reliant on factors that can and need to be addressed through policy changes.

### III. Socio-economic Background

In 2016, Namibia's population was 2.5 million, while that of Tunisia was 11.4 million.<sup>2</sup> Namibia owes its low population density to being primarily a large desert and semi-desert plateau. Tunisia has mild rainy winters and hot summers in the north and the Sahara Desert in the south. As shown in Figure 1, Namibia's and Tunisia's GDP per capita, adjusted for differences in purchasing power, are relatively close to each other. In 1990, the two countries had nearly the same GDP per capita: Namibia's GDP per capita was \$5,719, while that of Tunisia was \$5,615. However, given that Namibia's GDP per capita stagnated from 1992 to 2001, due to droughts and limited fish stock,<sup>3</sup> Tunisia's GDP per capita exceeded that of Namibia's by \$1,724 in 2001.

Subsequently, there was higher growth in Namibia, due to an increase of diamond production, new and improved zinc mines and a greater amount of textile production.<sup>4</sup> This allowed Namibia to nearly catch up with Tunisia by 2016, when Namibia's GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power was \$9,852, while that of Tunisia was \$10,752. However, given that the World Bank's country classification is not corrected for differences in purchasing power, the World Bank (2018) classifies Namibia as an upper middle-income country, whereas Tunisia is classified as a lower middle-income country.

Tunisia's consistent growth in GDP per capita from 1990-2007 can be attributed to "a development model that combined prudent macroeconomic management and direct government involvement in productive decisions through a complex system of incentives and ad hoc interventions."<sup>5</sup> The small decrease and rather static growth in recent years is attributed to high unemployment rate, vulnerable economy and lack of competition in the service sector which has challenged the development model. These struggles were increased through the financial crisis in 2007 and the Arab spring revolution in 2010.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2018).

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth (n.d.).

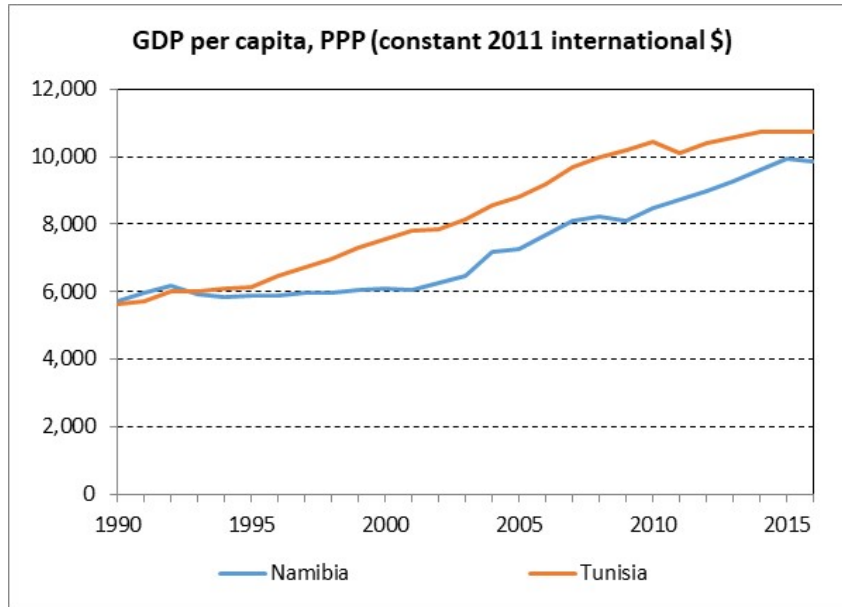
<sup>4</sup> The Commonwealth (n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> Chemingui and Sánchez (2011), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Chemingui and Sánchez (2011), p. 8.

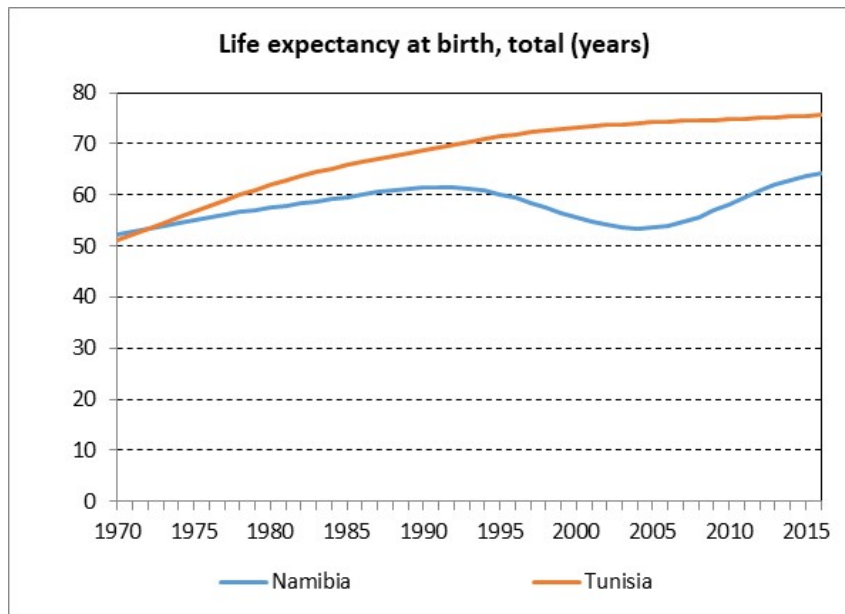


**Figure 1: GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2011 international \$)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

**Figure 2: Life expectancy at birth, total (years)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

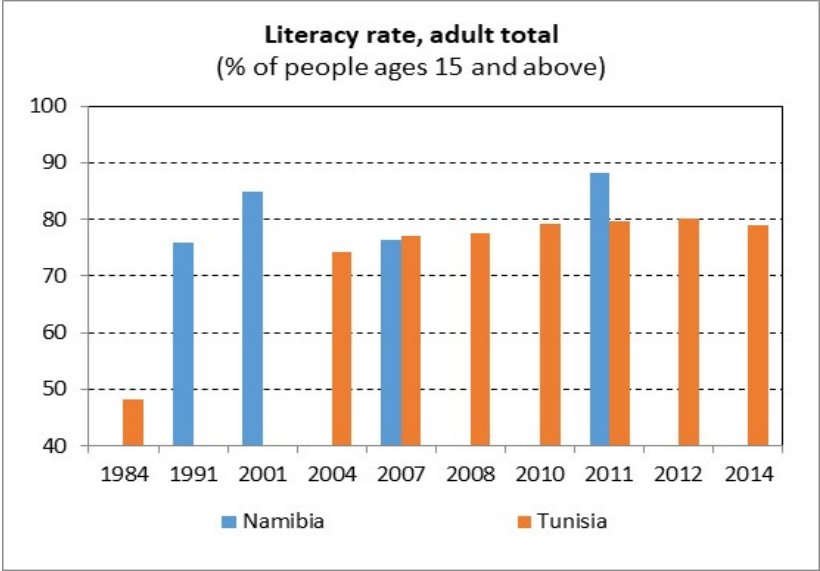
As shown in Figure 2, Namibia's and Tunisia's life expectancy were about the same during the early 1970s. However, Namibia's life expectancy increased little from 1970 to 1991, and then decreased from 1991 to 2004, after which it increased again, reaching an average of 64.4 years in 2016. According to the World Health Organization (2017), the past drop in Namibia's life expectancy has been due to the HIV epidemic that happened at the time in Namibia, while the more

recent increase was explained by the Ministry of Health and Social Services having focused on implementing Millennium Development Goal 4 (MDG4; reduce child mortality), MDG5 (improve maternal health), and MDG6 (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases).

Tunisia’s life expectancy grew consistently from 1970 to 2016, reaching 75.7 years in 2016, which is 12.4 years higher than that of Namibia. However, the growth rate of Tunisia’s life expectancy has been low in recent years. While Tunisia’s life expectancy increased by 19.4 years from 1970 to 1993, it increased by only 5.2 years from 1993 to 2016. While some moderation of life expectancy is normal as life expectancy reaches higher values, the slowdown in Tunisia has also been influenced by the Arab Spring’s political and civil unrest.

As illustrated in Figure 3, in 2011, Namibia’s adult literacy rate (88.3 percent) exceeded Tunisia’s (79.7 percent) by 8.7 percentage points. However, Namibia’s adult literacy rates have been fluctuating over time, decreasing from 84.9 percent in 2001 to 76.5 percent in 2007, but then substantially increasing again in 2011 to 88.3 percent. This is unlike Tunisia’s literacy rate, which has increased drastically from 48.2 percent in 1984 to 74.3 percent in 2004, after which the growth rate slowed down, reaching a high of 80.2 percent in 2012 (though it then declined marginally to 79.0 percent in 2014).

**Figure 3: Literacy rate, adult total ( percent of people ages 15 and above)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

**IV. Ethical Origins and Existing Ethical Structures**

According to Rousseau (1751), the ethical origins of inequality lie in two principles: one is the interest of our own wellbeing and safekeeping, and the second is how sensible we are to seeing others suffer or even die. Furthermore, he states that the moral rules of human society can be derived through the combination of these principles. In the instance of Namibia and Tunisia, both countries’ rich people are in power, especially in Namibia, where they display a high interest of their own wellbeing and low empathy for poor people’s suffering.

One of the main reasons for Namibia being one of the countries with the highest inequality is that Namibia has been part of South Africa from 1915-1989, which was during the time apartheid was exercised in South Africa (from 1948-1994).<sup>7</sup> Hence, this policy was also carried out in Namibia, which implied that the black people majority was segregated from the white German ex-colonizer minority.<sup>8</sup> Even though apartheid has been abolished after Namibia separated from South Africa in 1990, this imbalance of power is still reflected in Namibia today, with white people owning most of the land and having access to clean water and sanitation, while most black people are still landless and lack access to clean water and sanitation.<sup>9</sup>

This continued injustice causes inequality and poverty to thrive because poverty can only be eliminated if the rich people sacrifice a part of their power and resources, which would give poor people a chance to catch up.<sup>10</sup> As Lötter (2011) argues, mostly poor black people receive an unequal opportunity to escape poverty because mostly rich white people ignore the black people's needs. The rich people fail to invest into the potential of a whole population, which perpetuates inequality.<sup>11</sup> With this lack of help, the black population of Namibia cannot escape poverty and inequality. This is morally significant as the rich people in Namibia receive more possibilities to enrich themselves and thus continue to be in power.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it lies in the rich people's hands to act ethically and share their wealth.

Tunisia's low inequality can be attributed to Tunisia having taken advantage of its geographical location, being a Mediterranean nation close to Europe. Furthermore, Tunisia already became independent in 1956, unlike Namibia, which only gained independency in 1990. Hence, not only had Tunisia more time to decrease income inequality, it also did not have to deal with the effects of apartheid. Nevertheless, Tunisia had to deal with poverty (which stood at 23.1 percent in 2005) and relatively high levels of unemployment (which stood at 12.8 percent in 2005), and even higher youth unemployment, including university graduates struggling to find jobs.<sup>13</sup> According to Oxfam International (2014), this lack of investing into the growth and progress of future generations creates inequality between the younger and older generations. Additionally, Tunisia is plagued by geographical inequality, resulting from political corruption and an unequal share of power between the inland governorates and the coastal governorates, which implies that Tunisia has failed to invest into the potential of inland governorates and their people.<sup>14</sup> According to Mbazia (2017), this unequal ruling style eventually triggered the Arab Spring Revolution in 2011-2012, which addressed issues like authoritarianism, centralization and human rights violations.

## **V. Discussion**

### **V.1. Evolution of Income Shares**

As seen in Figure 4 and 5, income inequality is much higher in Namibia (left Figure) than in Tunisia (right Figure). In Namibia, for which we have data only for 2003 and 2009, the richest 20 percent of the population have nearly 70 percent of all income, while the poorest 20 percent have

---

<sup>7</sup> British Broadcasting Company (BBC) (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Redfish (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Redfish (2018).

<sup>10</sup> Lötter (2011).

<sup>11</sup> Oxfam International (2014).

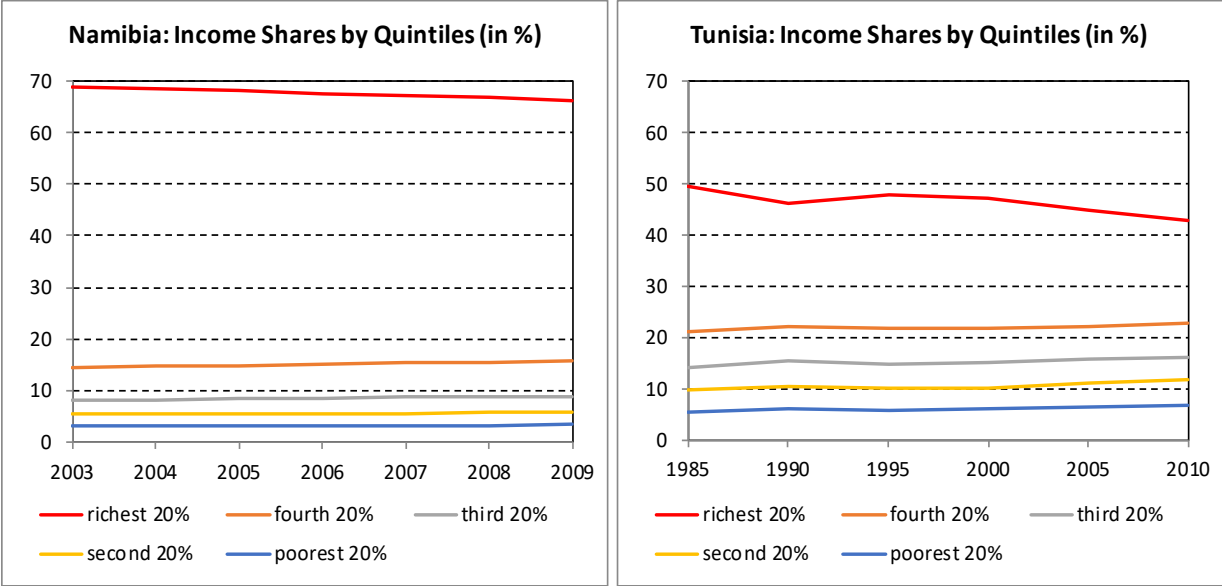
<sup>12</sup> Lötter (2011).

<sup>13</sup> Mbazia (2017).

<sup>14</sup> Oxfam International (2014).

only about 3 percent of total income. In Tunisia, the richest 20 percent of the population had 42.9 percent of total income in 2010 (about half of the rich’s percentage share in Namibia in 2009), while the poorest 20 percent had 6.7 percent of total income in 2010 (more than twice that of the poor’s income share in Namibia in 2009).

**Figures 4 and 5: Income Share Held by Quintiles in Namibia and Tunisia**

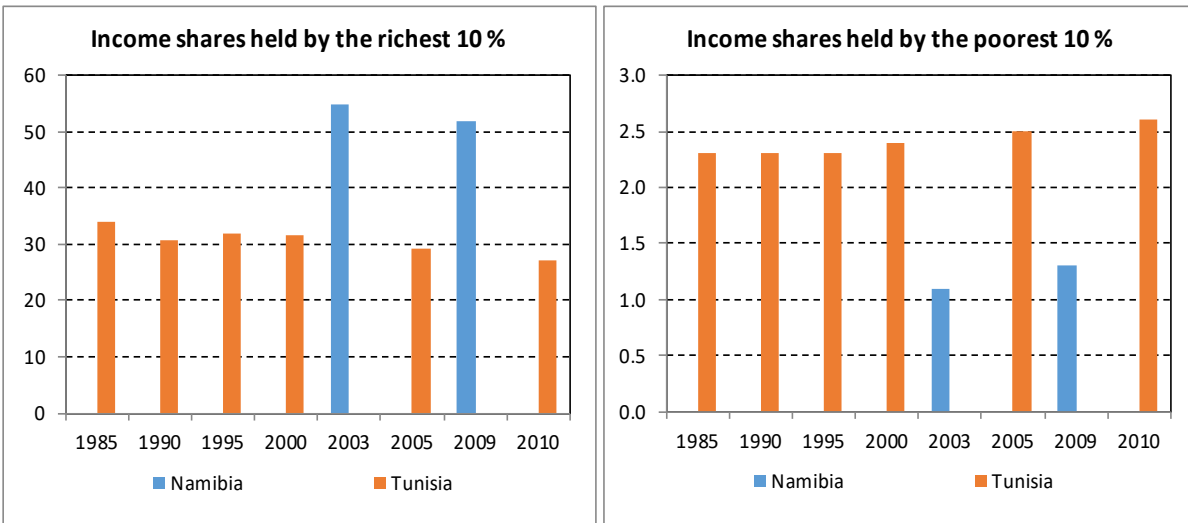


Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Figures 4 and 5 also show that both countries have made progress in reducing income inequality over time. In Namibia, the richest 20 percent lost on average 0.43 percentage points per year during 2003 and 2009, while the poorest 20 percent gained on average a marginal 0.05 percentage points per year during 2003 to 2009. In Namibia, the largest share of the loss by the richest 20 percent had been gained by the second richest quintile. In Tunisia, the percentage share of the richest 20 percent decreased from 1985 to 1990, then increased from 1990 to 1995, after which it fell again. The reverse is true for Tunisia’s poorest 20 percent, though the changes for the poorest 20 percent have been marginal. Comparing the 1985 data with the 2010 data, Tunisia’s richest 20 percent lost on average 0.27 percentage points per year (about half of that in Namibia), while the poorest 20 percent gained on average a marginal 0.05 percentage points per year (the same as in Namibia). In Tunisia, the largest share of the loss by the richest 20 percent had been gained by the third richest quintile.

The fact that the poorest people have not gained much even though the richest people lost in terms of their income share is broadly confirmed by looking at the changes in income share of the richest 10 percent (shown in Figure 6) and the poorest 10 percent (shown in Figure 7). For example, in Namibia, the richest 10 percent of the population lost 3 percentage points in their income share from 2003 to 2009; however, the poorest 10 percent of the population gained only a marginal 0.2 percentage points during the same period.

**Figures 6 and 7: Income Shares Held by the Poorest and Richest Ten Percent**

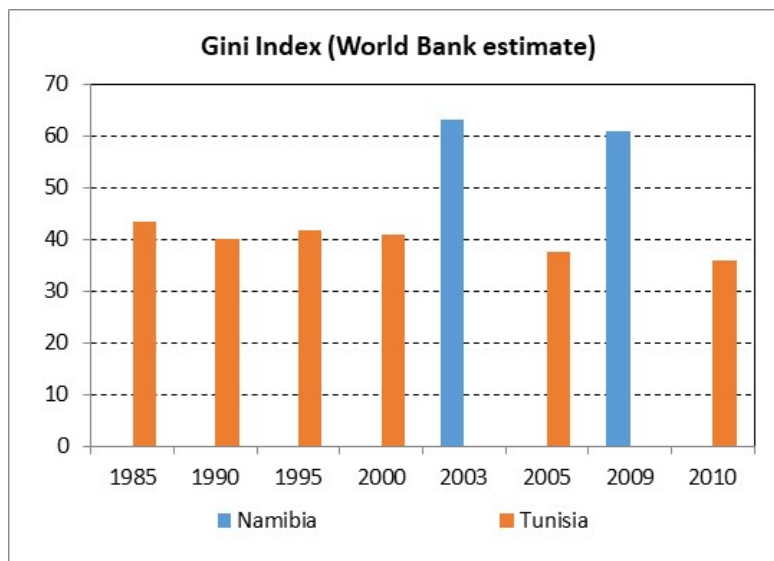


Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

## V.2. Evolution of the Gini Index

Figure 8 shows the available data for the Gini Index in Namibia and Tunisia. The Gini Index measures the distribution of income among individuals or households. A coefficient of 0 percent represents perfect equality where as a coefficient of 100 percent represents perfect inequality. Furthermore, the Gini Index reacts to transfers of income and thus satisfies the Pigou-Dalton principle.<sup>15</sup> This makes the Gini index a good tool to measure inequality within a country.

**Figure 8: Gini Index, in percent (World Bank estimate) of Namibia and Tunisia**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

<sup>15</sup> Stewart and Samman (2014).

Consistent with the previous income share figures, Figure 8 shows very clearly that Namibia has a far higher income inequality than Tunisia. Figure 8 also shows that income inequality has been reduced over time in both countries. Namibia's Gini Index decreased by 2.3 percentage points between 2003 and 2009, which is an average annual decrease of 0.38 percentage points. Tunisia's Gini Index decreased by 7.6 percentage points between 1985 and 2010, which is an average annual decrease of 0.30 percentage points. Hence, in terms of average annual decreases, Namibia has made only slightly more progress than Tunisia, even though Namibia is one of the most unequal countries in Africa, while Tunisia is one of the most equal countries in Africa.

### **V.3. Current Ethical and Moral Standings of Namibia and Tunisia**

One of the major moral issues in Namibia is the distribution of land that is highly unequal. Although Namibia held its second National Land Conference in October 2017 to discuss a change in land distribution, many Namibians think this process is not good enough and demand radical change due to new forms of inequality emerging. This is evident as from the 2.5 million population in Namibia only 5,000 individuals own land, 70 percent of them are white. On the other hand, 70 percent of Namibians make a living from communal land. Although programs were put in place such as the National Resettlement Programme or the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme, many people feel that the government's initiatives do not help.<sup>16</sup>

Further studies conducted by Chiripanhura, Niño-Zarazúa and Kalimbo (2012) evaluated Namibia's national development plans and concluded that poverty and inequality have been reduced but could be reduced more efficiently if Namibia would focus more on improving education, health and sanitation. This is despite the fact that Namibia has the second highest allocation (as a percentage share) of government spending on education in the world, which enables free secondary school for all students in Namibia and explains Namibia's high literacy rate.<sup>17</sup>

Due to the efforts of the Namibian government to really invest in its youth, one can conclude that the high inequality in Namibia is—unlike in Tunisia—not attributed to low literacy among the poor. Therefore, the issue of high inequality in Namibia can still be connected to the previous apartheid, that still causes a lack of work opportunity for the black Namibian population today.

Although the apartheid ended in 1990, it can be assumed that its structure is still institutionalized and engraved into the people in power in Namibia. Even if literacy rates are high in Namibia, they still do not affect enough the inequality that is present in Namibia. Furthermore, even when people who did not own land before now receive land through Namibia's National Development Plan (NDP), they cannot earn money from the land because they do not have the expertise to do so yet as they did not have the chance to learn the needed skills.<sup>18</sup>

Fortunately, Namibia is making progress more recently. Poverty and inequality have been reduced due to a progressive social benefits and tax system implemented in 2009/2010, a system that taxes the richer people more than the poor and where allocated money focuses on social spending that benefits the poor.<sup>19</sup> Such a tax is ethically correct as it takes away money from the rich, whose ancestors received the land and wealth unfairly due to the discrimination of the black population

---

<sup>16</sup> The information provided in this paragraph is based on Nghitevelekwa and Lenggenhager (2018).

<sup>17</sup> Lawson (2017).

<sup>18</sup> Nghitevelekwa and Lenggenhager (2018).

<sup>19</sup> Namibia Statistics Agency and World Bank (2017).

of Namibia during the apartheid. Additional NDPs need to be implemented, as they clearly help, as is evident from the reduction of extreme poverty from 15 percent in 2009/2010 to 10 percent in 2017.<sup>20</sup>

To address the centralization of power that was present in Tunisia before the Arab Spring Revolution, the Tunisian government adopted a new constitution in 2014, which was supposed to create a better balance of power and economic activity between the coastal and non-coastal regions in Tunisia.<sup>21</sup> Although this new constitution was highly praised especially by people outside of Tunisia to decrease centralization in Tunisia, some argue that it did not do much.<sup>22</sup> This may be because Tunisia is geographically a very politically separated country, which could be seen during Tunisia's 2014 parliamentary elections, where the regions closer to the coast of Tunisia voted for Nidaa Tounes (secularist political party) while the inner regions of Tunisia voted for Ennahdha (a self-defined Muslim democratic political party).<sup>23</sup>

We can look back at Rousseau's (1751) principles of inequality and see that the interest of our own wellbeing and safekeeping and how sensible we are to seeing others suffer or even die, decides the amount of inequality there is. Especially for Tunisia, it seems that the coastal areas are more interested in their own prosperity, as they much rather have other regions suffer from inequality and do not want to contribute to decentralize Tunisia's power, which would make them lose power. This can be seen in the inland region of Kasserine Governate, which still has a poverty rate of 32 percent, compared to 9 percent in Tunis.<sup>24</sup> According to Aboueldahab (2018), it does not seem like Tunisia's inequality will decrease much further in the near future, partly due to new laws such as the reconciliation law (which was passed in 2017) which gives certain people immunity against prosecution for corruption or economic crimes. Hence, Tunisia's remaining inequality is expected to persist as the elite class acts unethically and remains unwilling to give up power.

## VI. Conclusion

There are reasons why the economies of Namibia and Tunisia have been prosperous in the recent past. However, whether the way these two countries achieved this prosperity was ethical and of high moral standards is a different question. Furthermore, it appears that the ethical and moral wrongdoings of both countries are catching up with them, thereby hindering them to continue to grow economically. Whatever the moral standards were in the past, today's moral standards demand further action to a) help Namibia's black population prosper and catch up to Namibia's white population, and b) help Tunisia's poor inland regions catch up with Tunisia's rich coastal regions.

The research provided in this article indicates that if Namibia wants to continue to grow and further decrease inequality, it needs to focus more on health, develop education further, continue to redistribute land, and provide training to the new land owners on how to use the land to derive profits. In Tunisia, further progress to decrease inequality may stagnate as the country failed to fulfill its promise to decentralize power and empower the inland regions. The continuous lack of cooperation with the inland population of Tunisia results in ongoing unemployment among young

---

<sup>20</sup> Namibia Statistics Agency and World Bank (2017).

<sup>21</sup> Aldana and El Fassi (2016).

<sup>22</sup> Aldana and El Fassi (2016).

<sup>23</sup> Aldana and El Fassi (2016).

<sup>24</sup> Filitz (2018).

people, especially students and females, which causes inequality to be stagnant. Overall it seems that Namibia is on the right track to become a more equal country, but it still has a long way to go, whereas Tunisia is on a halt to continue decrease inequality and will likely need younger generations to create reforms to improve equality.

## References

- Aboueldahab, Noha (2018). Unrest in Tunisia: Another Turning Point in a Legacy of Economic Injustice. Internet Blog of the Brookings Institution (January 29, 2018); available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/29/unrest-in-tunisia-another-turning-point-in-a-legacy-of-economic-injustice/>.
- Aiken, Drew (2018). Inequality in Namibia: Decreasing but Still Significant. Internet Blog of the O'Neill Institute for National & Global Health Law, Georgetown University (May 28, 2018); available at: <http://oneill.law.georgetown.edu/inequality-in-namibia-decreasing-but-still-significant/>.
- Aldana, Alfonso Medinilla and Sahra El Fassi (2016). Tackling Regional Inequalities in Tunisia. European Centre for Development and Policy Management (ECDPM), Briefing Note, No. 84 (April); available at: <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/BN-84-Tackling-regional-inequalities-Tunisia-ECDPM-2016.pdf>.
- British Broadcast Company (BBC) (2018). Namibia Profile - Timeline. BBC Internet Resource (of May 8, 2018); available at: [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13891138](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13891138).
- Chemingui, Mohamed A. and Marco V. Sánchez (2011). *Assessing Development Strategies to Achieve the MDGs in The Republic of Tunisia* (New York, United States: United Nations Department for Social and Economic Affairs, Country Study (October); available at: [www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/capacity/output\\_studies/roa87\\_study\\_tun.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/capacity/output_studies/roa87_study_tun.pdf).
- Chiripanhura, Blessing; Miguel Niño-Zarazúa; and Hileni N. Kalimbo (2012). The Dynamics of Poverty and Inequality in Namibia: A Critical Evaluation of the Development Plans; United Nations University, Poster Presentation; available at: [www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Events/PDF/Slides/Chiripanhura-poster.pdf](http://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Events/PDF/Slides/Chiripanhura-poster.pdf).
- English, John (2016). Inequality and Poverty in Namibia: A Gaping Wealth Gap. Internet Blog of The Borgen Project (November 5, 2016); available at: <https://borgenproject.org/inequality-and-poverty-in-namibia/>.
- Filitz, John (2018). Why Tunisians are Back on the Streets Seven Years after the Jasmine Revolution. The Conversation, Internet Resource (of January 18, 2018); available at: <http://theconversation.com/why-tunisians-are-back-on-the-streets-seven-years-after-the-jasmine-revolution-90163>.
- Jouini, Nizar; Nora Lustig; Ahmed Moumami; and Abebe Shimeles (2018). Fiscal Policy, Income Redistribution, and Poverty Reduction: Evidence from Tunisia. *Review of Income and Wealth*, Vol. 64, pp. S225-S248.
- Joyce, Robert (2013). The Regional Inequality Behind Tunisia's Revolution. Atlantic Council, Internet Resource (of December 17, 2013); available at: [www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-regional-inequality-behind-tunisia-s-revolution](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-regional-inequality-behind-tunisia-s-revolution).



- Lawson, Max (2017). Inequality is Not Inevitable, It's a Policy Choice. For Proof, Look at Namibia. *The Guardian*, News Story (of July 19, 2017); available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jul/19/inequality-not-inevitable-policy-choice-namibia-commitment-reducing-inequality-index-oxfam>.
- Lötter, Hennie (2011). Why the Inequality of Poverty is Morally Wrong. In: Henie Lötter (ed.) *Poverty, Ethics and Justice* (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press), Chapter 3.
- Mbazia, Nadia (2017). Inequality and Growth in Tunisia: Empirical Evidence on the Role of Macroeconomic Factors. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive (MPRE)* (September 4, 2017); available at: [https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/81127/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_81127.pdf](https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/81127/1/MPRA_paper_81127.pdf).
- Namibia Statistics Agency and World Bank. (2017). *Does Fiscal Policy Benefit the Poor and Reduce Inequality in Namibia?* (Windhoek, Namibia: Namibia Statistics Agency, and Washington, DC: World Bank); available at: <https://doi.org/10.1596/27538>.
- Nghitevelekwa, Romie Vonkie and Luregn Lenggenhager (2018). Why Namibians Want Fresh Impetus Behind Land Reform. Quartz Africa, Internet News Story (September 28, 2018); available at: <https://qz.com/africa/1405922/like-south-africa-namibia-wants-to-reform-race-based-land-ownership/>.
- Oxfam International (2014). *Even It Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality* (London, UK: Oxfam International); available at: <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/even-it-up-inequality-oxfam.pdf>.
- Redfish (2018). Germans in Namibia: Apartheid Continued (Part 1), Redfish, Internet Video Resource; available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U2g5K8JaJk>
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques (1751). What is the Origin of Inequality among Mankind and is it Justified by Natural Law? Translated by G. D. H. Cole, excerpted and adapted by A. C. Kibel; available at: <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/literature/211-449-end-of-nature-spring-2002/readings/lecture10.pdf>.
- Stewart, Francis and Emma Samman (2014). Inequality and Development: An Overview. In: Currie-Alder, Kanbur, Malone and Medhora (eds.) *International Development: Ideas, Experience, and Prospects* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press); pp. 98-115.
- The Commonwealth (n.d.). Namibia : Economy. Retrieved March 30, 2019, from <http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/namibia/economy>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2002). *Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press for United Nations Development Program (UNDP); available at: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/263/hdr\\_2002\\_en\\_complete.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/263/hdr_2002_en_complete.pdf).
- World Bank (2018). *World Development Indicators / International Debt Statistics database* (Washington, DC: The World Bank); as posted on the World Bank website: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/> (downloaded on April 19, 2018).
- World Health Organization (WHO) (2017). Country Cooperation Strategy at a Glance. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO, Document No. WHO/CCU/17.01/Namibia (May 2017); available at: [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/136953/ccsbrief\\_nam\\_en.pdf;jsessionid=3D66B7D672A5AE419F283454EDA1CE15?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/136953/ccsbrief_nam_en.pdf;jsessionid=3D66B7D672A5AE419F283454EDA1CE15?sequence=1).

# **Education is Power: Reducing Child Marriages in Egypt and Sudan**

Amanda Robic

## ***Abstract***

*This article looks at the effects of child marriage and lack of education on young girls in Egypt and Sudan. Though both countries have made improvements, child marriage is still a prevalent issue. This article investigates causalities for child marriage and its negative impacts on young girls. It also addresses the ethical faults of child marriage and concludes looking towards education as a potential source to prevent and reduce the number of these marriages in Egypt and Sudan.*

## **I. Introduction**

Girls Not Brides (2002) states that “12 million girls are married [every year] before the age of 18. That is 23 girls every minute. Nearly 1 every 2 seconds.” While they may seem like a thing of the past in the industrialized world, child marriages are surprisingly prevalent in the developing world today. It is estimated that as many as 650 million women alive today were married before the age of eighteen.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, the United Nations passed several conventions coming out against gender inequality and sexual violence. Moreover, it has become illegal to marry a girl before the age of eighteen in most nations worldwide. Regardless of these initiatives, child marriage has not ceased to be an issue.

The Arab Republic of Egypt (henceforth Egypt) and the Republic of Sudan (henceforth Sudan) are currently combating the issue of child marriage, as well as gender discrimination within the education sector. While they are making some progress, both countries still have too many girls that marry too young and leave school too early.

This article explores the causal factors that contribute to the high rates of child marriage in Egypt and Sudan. It also investigates the preventative measures these countries are taking while exploring areas for growth in the future. The research focuses on the prevalence of child marriage, contributing factors, and potential solutions. The article is structured into six sections. After the introduction, there is a brief review of relevant literature (Section II). Section III provides a socio-economic background on the countries. Section IV explores the ethical arguments against child marriage and related issues. The discussion section (Section V) examines the evolution of child

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2019), Fact 1.

marriage over time with particular attention to its predominance today in Egypt and Sudan. It also explores how laws and cultures in these two countries encourage and sustain this practice. The section also examines the closely related issue of female genital mutilation and then addresses the discrimination against girls in the education sector. Both of which prevent that more progress is made on child marriages. Finally, it provides some conclusions.

## **II. Brief Literature Review**

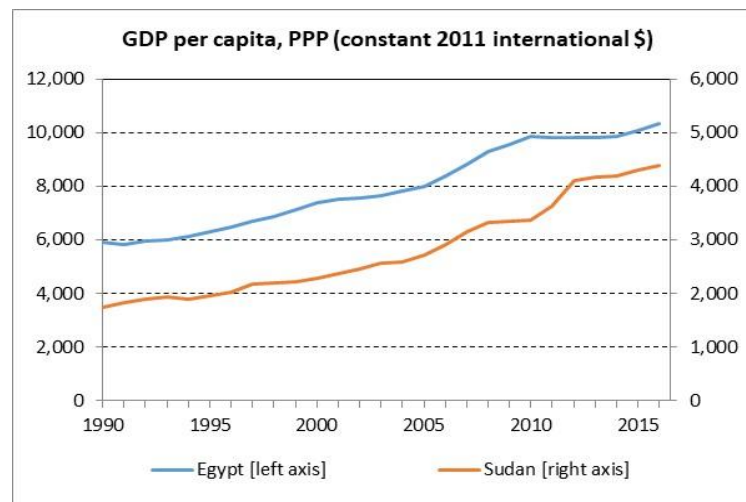
There is extensive research on the issue of girl's education in both Egypt and Sudan. While more work is being done on the subject, within these two countries, there is limited information on child marriages. There are two reports by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), one by Sultana (2008) and another one by UNICEF Sudan (2009), that provide overviews into the problems surrounding the education of girls within, respectively, Egypt and Sudan. Malé and Wodon (2016) and El Nagar, Bamkar and Tønnessen (2017) provide more specific insight into the issues of child marriage, respectively in Egypt and Sudan. The following paragraphs contain summaries of these publications.

- Sultana (2008) provides an overview of girl's education in Egypt and specifically discusses the Girls' Education Initiative (GEI) in Egypt. The paper outlines the importance of girl's education, programs being implemented, and areas for improvement when looking towards the future. It highlights the positive impacts on the individual and the community; such as lower maternal mortality rates and support for development. Sultana also addresses factors that complicate the success of these programs. For example, there is a cultural fear that education makes girls less desirable for marriage. Sultana also acknowledges some organizational problems with implementing the GEI full scale.
- An education fact sheet by UNICEF Sudan (2009) provides detailed information about the education of women and children in Sudan. It addresses the main issues affecting access to education in Sudan. It lists factors such as limited learning spaces, shortage of qualified teachers, high costs of education, and societal views of educating girls. It also provides an overview of UNICEF's approaches to combating these issues. UNICEF is active in a large number of issues, including among others the promotion of girl's education initiatives, supporting early childhood development, the creation of safe school environments, and the production of resources to help educate the educators.
- Malé and Wodon (2016) provide an outline regarding child marriage in Egypt. They explain that while child marriage is still prevalent in Egypt, it has been declining over time. Although it has declined, it is still important to take preventative measures and inform policy, to avoid further child marriages. They describe the increased likelihood of women married young to be uneducated, have health risks, and have more children. They also conclude that child marriage is associated with lower wealth and higher labor force participation, which are however only correlations, not necessarily causal effects.
- El Nagar, Bamkar, and Tønnessen (2017) discuss child marriage, its drivers, and interventions with Sudan. They highlight key issues that allow for child marriage such as gender discrimination, laws that make it legal, education, and poverty. They also describe the lasting impacts of child marriage on the labor force, women's healthcare, and the safety of children. Finally, they discuss solutions such as by the group "Girls Not Brides" and organizations aiming to change marriage laws in Sudan.

### III. Socio-economic Background

Figure 1 shows GDP per capita, adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP), for Egypt and Sudan from 1990-2016. GDP per capita has been rising in both countries. Though Egypt's GDP per capita has been increasing much more in absolute values, Sudan's GDP per capita has been growing at a much faster rate (i.e., in relative terms). In 1990, Sudan had an average GDP per capita of \$1,743, which increased to an average of \$4,386 in 2016. Hence Sudan's GDP per capita more than doubled within the last 26 years. By contrast, Egypt's GDP per capita was at an average of \$5,909 in 1990 and increased to \$10,319 in 2016, which is slightly less than twice its 1990 value.

**Figure 1: PPP-adjusted GDP per Capita (Constant 2011 International \$), 1990-2016**



Source: Created by the author based on World Bank (2018).

Despite Egypt's relatively high PPP-adjusted GDP per capita, Egypt and Sudan are currently both classified by the World Bank (2018) as a lower-middle-income country as the World Bank's classification does not adjust income for differences in purchasing power. Egypt has a population estimated at 99 million in 2016, while Sudan, directly bordering Egypt to the South, has an estimated population of 43 million in 2016, i.e., about half that of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

Poor living conditions and lack of employment in Egypt contributed to the 2011 revolution that overthrew then-President Hosni Mubarak. An additional series of violent protests in 2013 led to the ousting of then-President Mohamed Mursi. Currently, Egypt's President is Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Due to the uncertain political standing and security of the country, the economy has failed to grow. High unemployment persists. Currently, Egypt has an unemployment rate of 12.2 percent, with 27.8 percent of the population living below the national poverty line. Another major economic issue that Egypt faces, rising inflation, which stood at 23.5 percent in 2017.<sup>3</sup>

Sudan has been plagued with decades of conflict and civil war. When South Sudan seceded in 2011, the country lost three-quarters of its oil production, which had been sustaining Sudan's economy. Between the loss of oil and continued conflict with South Sudan, close to half of Sudan's

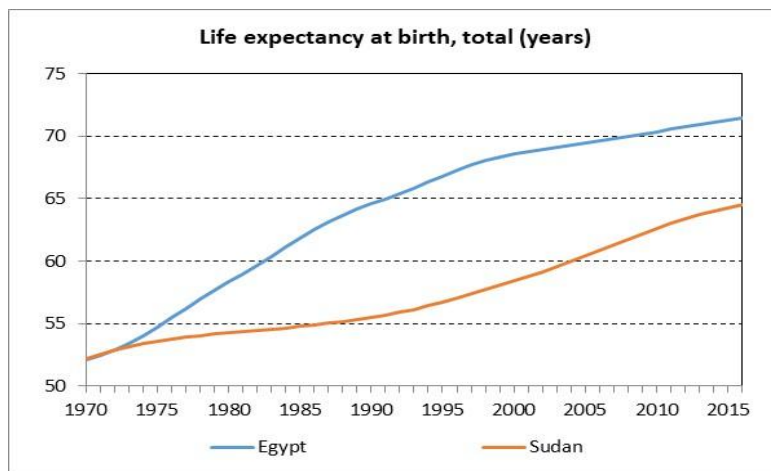
<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2018).

<sup>3</sup> This paragraph draws on the CIA (2018a).

population struggles with poverty. There have been efforts to create non-oil economic growth in the areas of gold mining and agriculture, the latter of which employs 80 percent of the workforce. Despite these efforts, unemployment persists, standing at 19.6 percent. Sudan is also struggling with the issue of inflation, which was at 35 percent in 2017.<sup>4</sup>

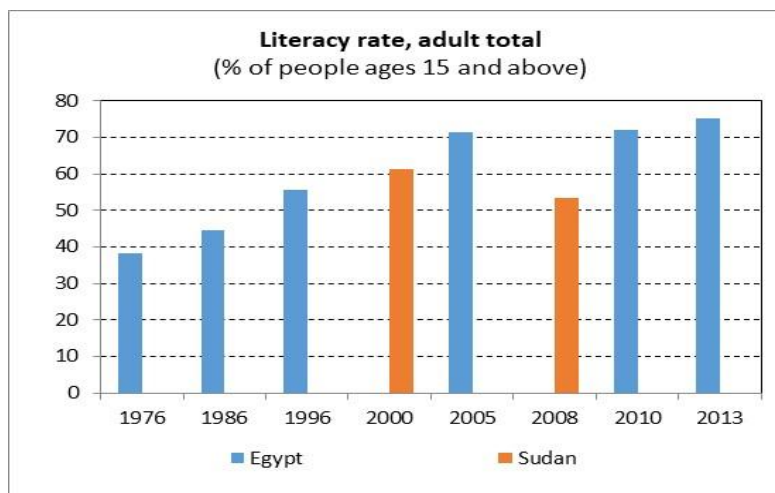
Figure 2 shows life expectancy at birth in both Sudan and Egypt from 1970 to 2016. The countries started with nearly the same life expectancy, but over time, Egypt pulled ahead and was rising at a faster rate than Sudan. That being said, Sudan has recently started to close the gap, though it has a lot to do to catch up with Egypt. In 1970, Sudan had an average life expectancy of 52.23 years, but they have since raised it to 64.5 years. Egypt’s average life expectancy was 52.16 years in 1970, but by 2016 it rose to 71.5 years.

**Figure 2: Life Expectancy at Birth (in years), 1970-2015**



Source: Created by the author based on World Bank (2018).

**Figure 3: Adult Literacy Rates (all available years)**



Source: Created by the author based on World Bank (2018).

<sup>4</sup> This paragraph draws on the CIA (2018b).

Figure 3 shows the adult literacy rates for Egypt and Sudan for all the years the World Bank (2018) has such data. The very limited Sudanese data indicate that adult literacy has recently decreased, from 61.3 percent in 2000 to 53.5 percent in 2008. Egypt's literacy rates have generally moved up, though relatively little progress has been made from 2005-2010. Starting at just 38.2 percent in 1976, Egypt's literacy rate has increased progressively until 2005 (increasing by 6.2 percentage points from 1976 to 1986, then by 11.2 percentage points from 1986-1996, and finally jumped up by 15.8 percentage points in the next nine years (1996-2005), which is an average annual increase of 1.8 percentage points). However, from 2005 to 2010, the average annual increase was only 0.13 percentage points. Fortunately, from 2010 to 2013, the average annual increase was with 1.0 percentage points once again showing some more progress and hope.

#### **IV. Ethical Origins and Existing Ethical Structures**

There are two ethical approaches of particular significance for the issue of child marriage. The first being the rights approach, which the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University defines as “the belief that humans have a dignity based on their human nature per se or on their ability to choose freely what they do with their lives.”<sup>5</sup> This is of the utmost importance when trying to understand the ethical violations of child marriage. Most evident of these violations is the inability of children to have a voice in this issue or to make choices for their future when they are married off at such a young age.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, provides further support for this assessment. Article 16 of the UDHR states: “Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.”<sup>6</sup> Child marriage is once more an ethical violation of this right as children are unable to give free and full consent to anything, let alone a life-long commitment to another human being.

Furthermore, in 1962, the United Nations passed a Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, which states: “Reaffirming that all States... should take all appropriate measures with a view to abolishing such customs, ancient laws and practices by ensuring, inter alia, complete freedom in the choice of a spouse, eliminating completely child marriages and the betrothal of young girls before the age of puberty.”<sup>7</sup> Additionally, goal number five of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), “aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” This once more shows an international acknowledgment of the severity of the issue. However, acknowledgment is not enough and more needs to be done to achieve these goals.

Child marriages place serious restrictions on the ability of young girls to improve upon their lives and to live in safety. They are unlikely to be educated, face higher maternal mortality rates, and are likely to have more children. The fact remains, that this is a completely unnecessary issue that should not exist. When women are not married off, they can have a choice as to the course of their lives and can become contributing members to society. Moreover, if they are educated and enter the workforce, they have the means to help themselves and their countries grow economically. Justifications for marriage, whether legal or cultural, fall short when the lack of ethics becomes evident. Logically, there is no sound reason to continue to marry off young girls.

---

<sup>5</sup> Markkula Center (2009), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations (1948).

<sup>7</sup> United Nations (1964).

Another ethical approach that is relevant to the issue of child marriage is the fairness or justice approach. According to the Markkula Center, the fairness or justice approach is one where “ethical actions treat all human beings equally-or if unequally, then fairly based on some standard that is defensible.”<sup>8</sup> This article aims to propose education as a means to avoid child marriage and enhance the lives of children, though it also considers child marriages (which typically involve underage girls) preventing girls from getting an education. Given that child marriage typically pulls young girls out of school, child marriage is an ethical violation based on the Fairness or Justice approach, as child marriage discriminates unfairly against girls.

## V. Discussion

This discussion section will first look at the continued history and prominence of child marriages in Egypt and Sudan, which will include a review of how legal and cultural factors influence child marriage. Additionally, it will shortly review the closely related and even more ethically wrong tradition of female genital mutilation. Finally, it will discuss the development of women and examine the preventative power and role that education can play in preserving the lives of girls and young women.

### V.1. Prevalence and History of Child Marriage

#### V.1.a. Legal influence

To get an overview, Figure 4 provides a world map that color-codes the countries based on the legal age minimums for girls to get married. It shows that there are four countries (Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen) that have no age minimum for girls to get married. About a dozen countries, including Sudan, have the legal minimum for girls to get married at or below 16 years. For example, in Sudan, the minimum legal age for girls to get married is age 10.<sup>9</sup> Some five countries have set the minimum legal age for girls at 17 years, while the large majority of countries have set the minimum legal age for girls at 18 years. In about ten countries, the minimum legal age for girls to get married is 19 years or older.

Given the very low legal limit for girls to get married in Sudan (10 years), Figure 5 shows that child marriage is very high in Sudan and child marriages have become more frequent in Sudan from 1990 to 2006. In 1990, 26.9 percent of women (ages 20-24) in Sudan were married by the age of 18. By 2010 this number had risen to 32.9 percent. Even though it decreased slightly from 2006 to 2010, it is clear that the lack of legal ramifications has resulted in a lack of incentive to abstain from marrying children. This resulted in sustained high levels of child marriages with more than 30 percent of women (ages 20-24) being married before the age of 18.

In Egypt, the minimum legal age of marriage is 18 years old. Unfortunately, this law is often circumvented through the use of an unofficial marriage custom (known as *urfi*), which allows for the marriage of underage girls. As shown in Figure 5, in 1988, 30.5 percent of women in Egypt (ages 20-24) were married by age 18. In 2008, the Egyptian Child Law was enacted, which raised the legal age of marriage to 18.<sup>10</sup> And as shown in Figure 5, the percentage of Egyptian women married by age 18 decreased to 16.6 percent in 2008. However, the percentage has since climbed

---

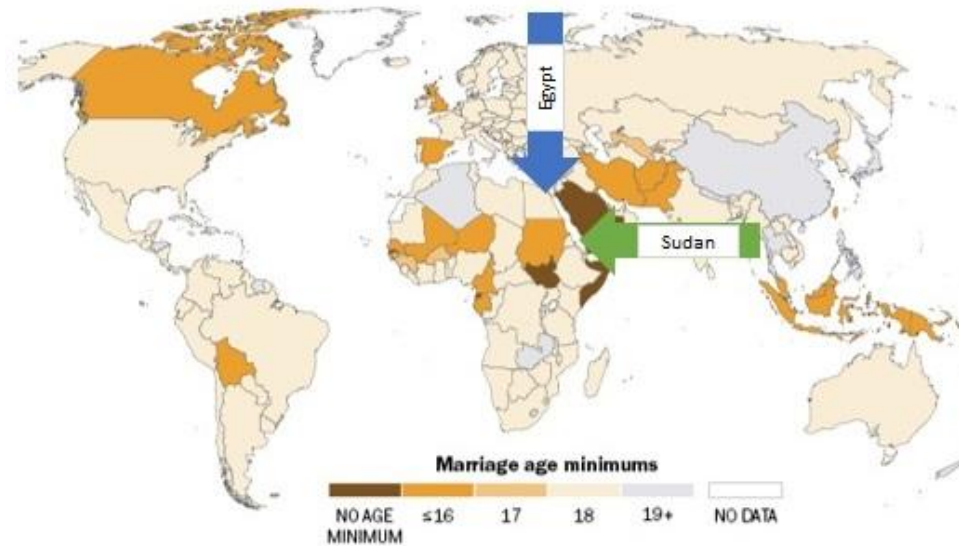
<sup>8</sup> Markkula Center (2009), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Migiros (2013).

<sup>10</sup> The National Council for Childhood & Motherhood Child Rights Observatory (2018).

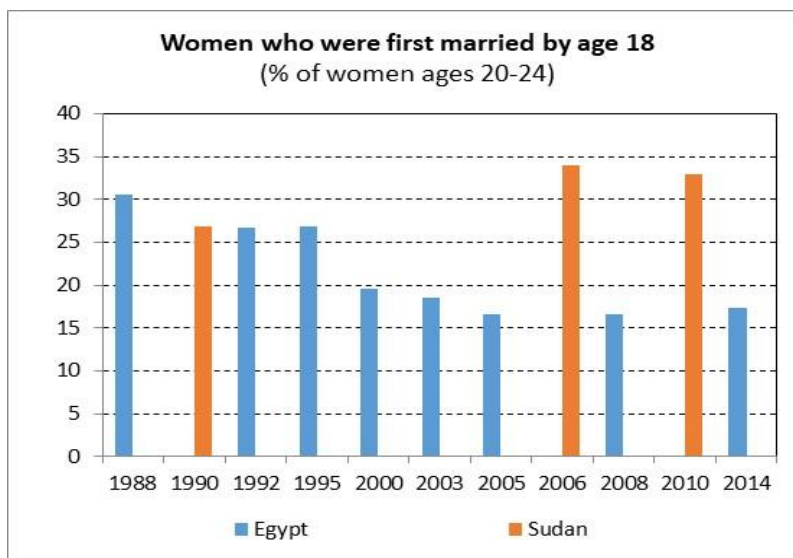
back up to 17.4 percent in 2014, which raises concerns about the execution of these laws. Still, the overall decline in the percentage of child marriages in Egypt is indicative of the success of adopting the law. Comparing Egypt with Sudan, it appears that Sudan struggles more in preventing child marriage. That being said, in absolute numbers (not as a percent of the population), Egypt has the 13<sup>th</sup> highest number of child brides in the world, Sudan has the 16<sup>th</sup> highest number.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 4: Minimum Legal Age for Girls to Get Married around the World**



Source: Pew Research Center (2015), arrows added by author.

**Figure 5: Women Who Were First Married by Age 18 (all available years)**



Source: Created by the author based on World Bank (2018).

<sup>11</sup> This section draws from Girls Not Brides (2002) Egypt and Sudan.



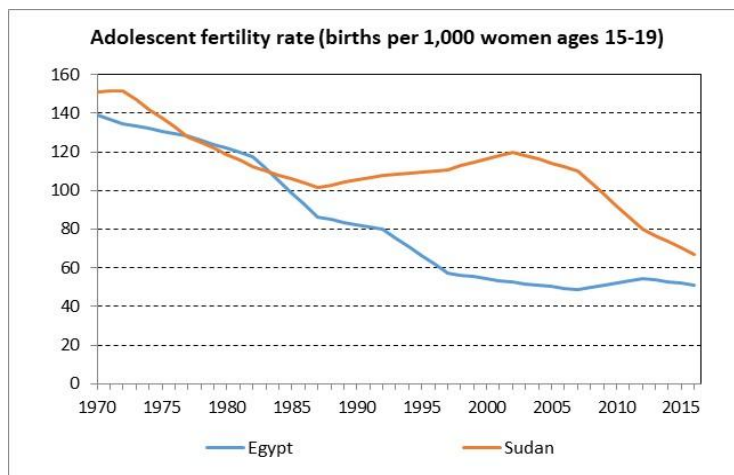
Each nation has taken different preventative measures to proactively address the problem of child marriage. Sudan has done less because child marriage is permitted by law and is therefore not seen as a pressing issue. Internationally, Sudan’s response to legal initiatives has been mixed. Sudan did not ratify the *African Chart on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* due, nor did it ratify the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. However, in 2015, it launched the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa, and the year before it signed a Charter Committing to End Child Marriage by 2020 at the Girl Summit. Due to Sudan’s inconsistent response, it is unclear if real efforts to end child marriage will be incorporated into Sudanese law or if it is solely an international cooperation front by Sudan.<sup>12</sup>

Egypt ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, which set the minimum age for marriage at 18 years. However, as was already mentioned, Egypt only raised the legal age of marriage with the enactment of the Egyptian Child Law in 2008, that is 18 years after ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Egypt also co-sponsored the Human Rights Council *Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage* in 2013.<sup>13</sup> However, as stated above, many families in Egypt continue to circumvent the law, which limits its effectiveness. The question remains, as to whether or not they will put these laws into practice and enforce them.<sup>14</sup>

**V.1.b. Cultural influence**

Cultural norms are common and powerful drivers of child marriage in both Egypt and Sudan. Cultural norms of Egypt and Sudan encourage girls to marry young and stigmatize those who try to delay it. Moreover, many customs hold that a girl is ready to marry once she has hit puberty, regardless of her age. There is also a cultural misconception that education is not necessary for girls, because their place is in the home, with the children and the housework, not in society. This leads to a push for them to marry young and learn their household chores rather than “wasting time” being educated.

**Figure 6: Adolescent Fertility Rate, 1970-2016**



Source: Created by the author based on World Bank (2018).

<sup>12</sup> Draws on *Girls Not Brides* (2002), Sudan.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Draws on *Girls Not Brides* (2002), Egypt.

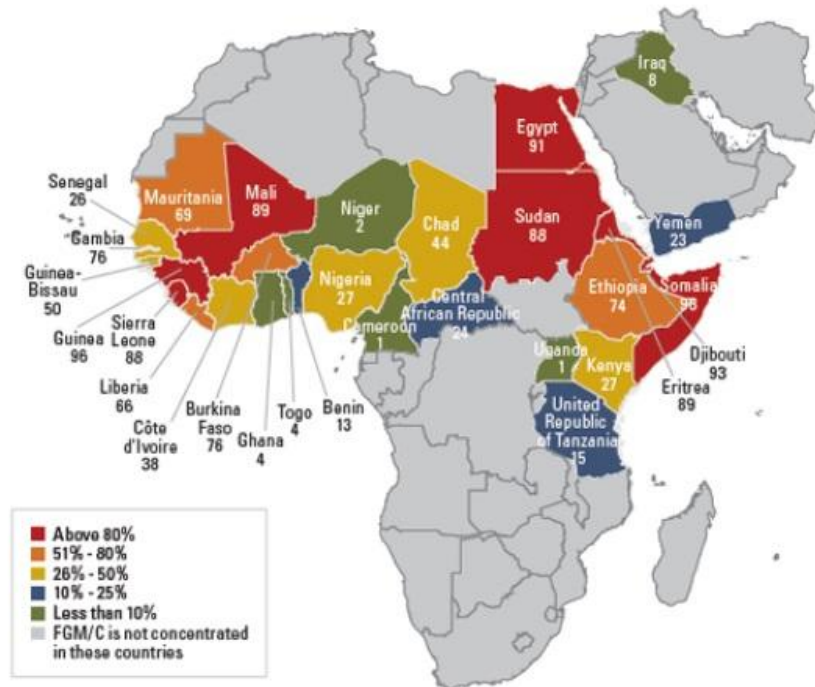
Following the cultural norm to get married early not only raises the rate of child marriages, but also the adolescent fertility rate. Figure 6 shows the adolescent fertility rate in Egypt and Sudan from 1970 to 2016. In 1970, Sudan had an adolescent fertility rate of 151 births per 1,000 women ages 15-19. By 2016, this number had fallen to roughly 67. Egypt started with an adolescent fertility rate of 139 in 1970, which fell to about 51 in 2016. Interestingly, for a brief period between 1977 and 1983, Sudan had a lower rate than Egypt, before it began to climb again.

## V.2. Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting

Another cultural custom that is closely linked to child marriage is female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C). As stated by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2016, p. 1):

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a human rights issue that affects girls and women worldwide. As such, its elimination is a global concern. In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a milestone resolution calling on the international community to intensify efforts to end the practice. More recently, in September 2015, the global community agreed to a new set of development goals – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which includes a target under Goal 5 to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and FGM/C, by the year 2030.

**Figure 7: Percentage of Women (ages 15-49) Who Have Undergone Female Genital Mutilation in Africa**



Source: UNICEF (2013); cited by World Health Organization (undated).

Figure 7 displays the percentage of women ages 15 to 49, who have experienced FGM/C in African countries. Based on Figure 7, the percentage of women aged 15-49, who have undergone female genital mutilation is 91 percent in Egypt and 88 percent in Sudan. More recent data indicates that

in Egypt, the prevalence of FGM/C among girls aged 15 to 19 has decreased from 97 percent in 1985 to 70 percent in 2015.<sup>15</sup> However, the latest data for Sudan indicates that a staggering 89 percent of women have been subjected to the harmful practice of FGM/C in the name of tradition and culture.<sup>16</sup>

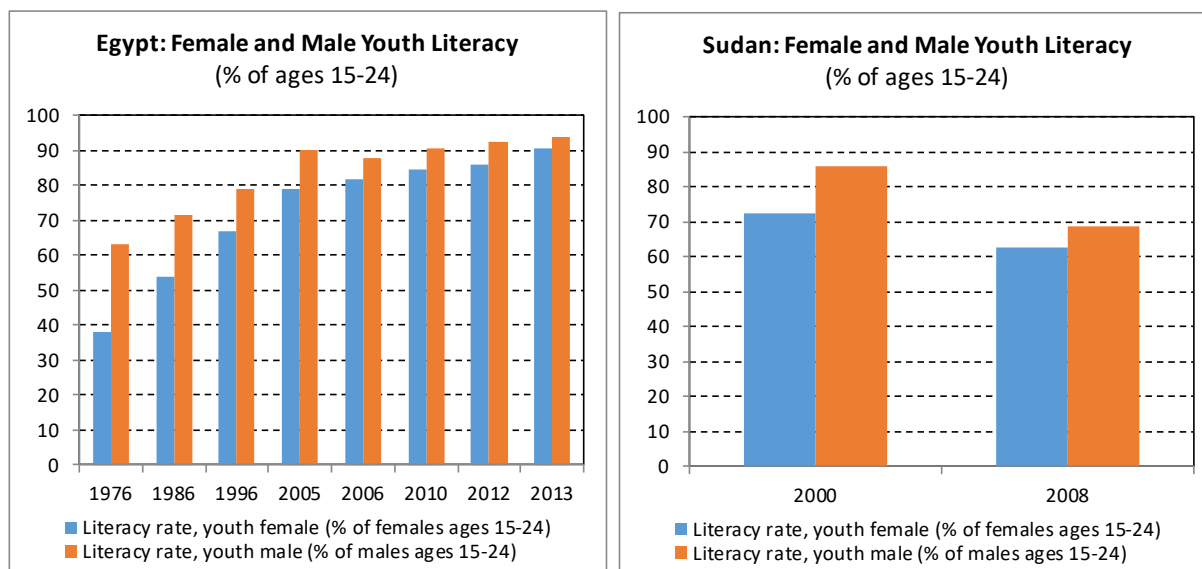
There is a high correlation between the practice of child marriage and FGM/C because the parents who marry off their girls early are typically also the ones who are worried about their girls being sexually active. The correlation between FGM/C and child marriage is a concerning factor, but one that is hard to control, because it is embedded in the culture. For FGM/C to decrease, the people would have to be convinced to stop FGM/C. Legal prosecution might also reduce the official incidence, though may also push the practice to the underground, with more unqualified persons performing it and hence, potentially harming the girls even more.

### V.3. Education and Women’s Development

Figures 8 and 9 represent the female and male youth literacy rate, respectively in Egypt (left figure) and Sudan (right figure). In Egypt, both male and female youth literacy rates have been growing and the gender gap continues to close. In 1976, the male rate was around 63 percent and the female rate 38 percent. By 2013, however, this number rose to almost 94 percent for male youths and a little over 90 percent for female youths. This is encouraging progress, as increased literacy decreases many barriers for women.

Sudan lacks extensive data on literacy rates, but what it does show is concerning. Sudan has begun to close the gender gap, but unfortunately, in the process, both male and female literacy rates fell. In 2000, the rate was roughly 86 percent for males and 72 percent for females. By 2008, however, this had dropped to around 67 percent for males and 63 percent for females.

**Figures 8 and 9: Male and Female Youth Literacy Rate in Egypt and Sudan**



Source: Created by the author based on World Bank (2018).

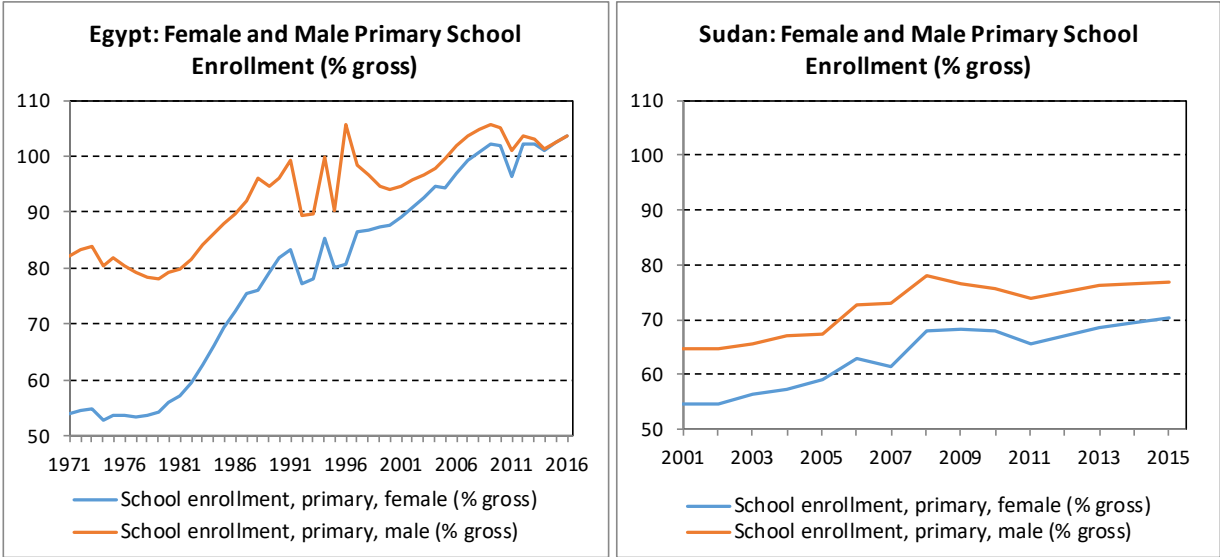
<sup>15</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2016).

<sup>16</sup> El Nagar, Bamkar and Tønnessen (2017), p. 7.

Figures 10 and 11 show gross primary school enrollment by gender, respectively for Egypt and Sudan. Bridging the gender gap here is crucial as it is likely the place where literacy improvements will occur. In Egypt, there was a substantial gender gap in primary enrollment in 1971, with 82 percent of males enrolled in primary school, while only 54 percent of females were enrolled. In 2015, however, this gap is gone completely, with females having reached the same rate (103 percent, gross).

Sudan has a limited data set in comparison to Egypt, only spanning from 2001 to 2015, but it still provides insight into the country’s progress. In 2001, Sudan had a primary gross school enrollment rate of almost 65 percent for males and 55 percent for females, which implies a gender gap of 10 percentage points. By 2015, this number had risen to roughly 77 percent for males and 70 percent for females. While there is still a noticeable gap between genders, it is decreasing. More importantly, despite the gap, the female rate is growing, which will help to increase literacy rates in the future.

**Figures 10 and 11: Female and Male Primary School Enrollment in Egypt and Sudan**



Source: Created by the author based on World Bank (2018).

The implications for the development of women tie very closely to the ethical aspect of child marriage. Given the understanding that education is a right, child marriage is unethical on these grounds. Furthermore, if child marriages increase, literacy rates and educational enrollment will go down, as girls will be unable to educate themselves while married, which is unethical based on the fairness or justice approach. That being said, if education rates continue to increase, they could mean a reduction of child marriage all on their own.

**VI. Conclusion**

This article highlights some of the deep causalities and complications of child marriage in Egypt and Sudan. While both Egypt and Sudan still have high rates of child marriage, there is hope. Egypt’s percentage is decreasing as an increasing number of laws and regulations are being put

into place. Although Sudan's percentage did go up, as the country continues to adopt conventions that support a legal age limit for marriage, there is hope that it will follow Egypt's path.

Nevertheless, child marriage remains a multi-faceted issue that cannot be easily eradicated. That being said, just because it is not easy, does not mean it is not worth combating. The more work that is done to understand the reasons behind child marriage, the more that can be done to end child marriage. More importantly, however, with increased awareness, there is a greater chance of giving young girls agency in their lives and freedom to grow and thrive. The elimination of child marriages will improve the lives of millions of young girls and will have cascading positive effects on society as a whole.

Looking forward, the increasing number of girls that are educated and literate poses the greatest hope for the eradication of child marriage and the development of women. If Sudan and Egypt can continue to bridge the gender gap in education and literacy rates, then these girls are already on the step towards a brighter future. With these tools, they will be enabled to play a greater part in their own lives, enter the workforce, and put off marriage until they are ready. Future projects by these nations should supplement this and focus on the empowerment of the youth. Empowering girls today will dictate how they live their lives, which will change the way marriage is looked at for generations to come.

## References

- Central Intelligence Agency (2018a). The World Factbook: Egypt. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Internet Resource; available at: [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html).
- Central Intelligence Agency (2018b). The World Factbook: Sudan. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Internet Resource; available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html>.
- El Nagar, Samia; Sharifa Bamkar; and Liv Tønnessen (2017). Girls, Child Marriage, and Education in Red Sea State, Sudan: Perspectives on Girls' Freedom to Choose. Bergen, Norway: Chr. Michelsen Institute, *Sudan Report (SR)*, SR 2017:3; available at: <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/6326-girls-child-marriage.pdf>.
- Girls Not Brides (2002). Why Does Child Marriage Happen? Internet Resource of Girls Not Brides; available at: [www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/).
- Malé, Chata and Quentin Wodon (2016). Basic Profile of Child Marriage in Egypt. Washington, DC: The World Bank, Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice, *Knowledge Brief* (March); available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25467/105920-BRI-ADD-SERIES-PUBLIC-HNP-Brief-Egypt-Profile-CM.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2009). *A Framework for Ethical Decision Making*. Santa Clara, CA: Santa Clara University, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics; available at: [www.sciepub.com/reference/125256](http://www.sciepub.com/reference/125256).
- Migiro, Katy (2013). Sudan Worst in Africa with Legal Marriage at Age 10. Thomson Reuters Foundation, *News Report* (of November 18, 2013); available at: <http://news.trust.org/item/20131118080551-ikgwx/>.

- National Council for Childhood & Motherhood Child Rights Observatory (2018). *Policy for Action: Ending Child Marriage* (New York, United States: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) June); available at: <https://www.unicef.org/egypt/sites/unicef.org.egypt/files/2018-06/Child%20Marriage%20Policy%20Brief%20EN%20FINAL.PDF>.
- Pew Research Center (2015). Marriage Age Minimums for Girls. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, Internet Resource; available at: [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/12/many-countries-allow-child-marriage/marriage\\_girls/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/12/many-countries-allow-child-marriage/marriage_girls/).
- Sultana, Ronald G. (2008). The Girls' Education Initiative in Egypt. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *UNICEF MENA-RO Learning Series*, Vol. 1 (January); available at: [www.um.edu.mt/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/39504/GEI-Egypt\\_Sultana.pdf](http://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/39504/GEI-Egypt_Sultana.pdf).
- United Nations (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York, United States: United Nations); available at: [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/).
- United Nations (1964). *Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages* (New York, United States: United Nations); available at: [treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1964/12/19641223%2002-15%20AM/Ch\\_XVI\\_3p.pdf](http://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1964/12/19641223%2002-15%20AM/Ch_XVI_3p.pdf).
- United Nations (2013). *Resolution 68/148: Child, Early and Forced Marriage*. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, December 18, 2013; available at: [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/148](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/148).
- United Nations (2018). Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls. New York, United States: Sustainable Development Goals, Knowledge Platform, Internet Resource; available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2016). *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Global Concern* (New York, United States: UNICEF Brochure); available at: [www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC\\_2016\\_brochure\\_final\\_UNICEF\\_SPREAD.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf).
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2019). Fast Facts: 10 Facts Illustrating Why We Must #EndChildMarriage. New York, United States: UNICEF, Internet Resource (of February 10, 2019); available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fast-facts-10-facts-illustrating-why-we-must-endchildmarriage>.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2009). Women and Children in Sudan: Education. New York, United States: UNICEF, Internet Resource (March); available at: [https://www.unicef.org/sudan/UNICEF\\_Sudan\\_education\\_fact\\_sheet\\_2009.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/sudan/UNICEF_Sudan_education_fact_sheet_2009.pdf).
- World Bank (2018). *World Development Indicators / International Debt Statistics database* (Washington, DC: The World Bank); as posted on the World Bank website: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/> (downloaded on April 19, 2018).
- World Health Organization (WHO) (undated). Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, Internet Source on Sexual and Reproductive Health; available at: [www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/prevalence/en/](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/prevalence/en/).

# **An Analysis of the Determinants of Poverty in India and South Africa**

Karl Usuka

## **Abstract**

*This article provides an analysis of poverty in India and South Africa. Despite being middle-income countries, both nations still have relatively high levels of poverty among their populations. The social structures of their societies have allowed poverty to grow and maintain a strong hold over these nations. This article analyzes the extent and determinants of poverty. It also examines the impact of education, health, and economic opportunity on poverty as well as the steps taken by both India and South Africa to mitigate poverty. This article also discusses ethical considerations of poverty and poverty alleviation in India and South Africa.*

## **I. Introduction**

Poverty is an immense issue that has vast impacts on our world. Poverty still affects all nations, though the degree of poverty varies across countries. Several different measures are used for poverty analysis, including quantitative and qualitative measures. The most common measurement of poverty is the poverty line, which is defined as the percentage of people living below a certain daily income. Currently, the World Bank has set the extreme poverty line at \$1.90 per day. In 2011, 13.7 percent of the world's population lived below this poverty line, and consequently, in extreme poverty.<sup>1</sup>

India and South Africa are two very different nations, however both experience sizeable issues with poverty. In 2011, 21.2 percent of India's population lived below the \$1.90 per day poverty line. In the same year, 16.6 percent of South Africa's population lived below \$1.90 per day.<sup>2</sup> This article focuses on poverty within India and South Africa. Both nations had social structures in their pasts that discriminated against particular groups of people. In the case of South Africa, this structure was apartheid; in the case of India, it was the caste system. This article analyzes the role these social systems played in creating poverty and the role they continue to play in keeping people in poverty, despite having been legally abolished for decades. This article also considers other factors that affect people's social status and the likelihood that they will live in poverty. These factors include education, healthcare, and economic opportunity. Both India and South Africa have

---

<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2019).

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2018).

taken actions to mitigate poverty. This article will consider these attempts and analyze their successes and failures.

This article is structured as follows. This introduction and a brief literature review are followed by a socioeconomic analysis of India and South Africa to provide an understanding of the two countries' stages of development. This is followed by a section covering ethical origins and existing ethical structures that focuses on the social and societal divisions mentioned earlier in relation to ethical concepts. The main discussion of the article will analyze facets of poverty: prevalence and incidence, the influence of education, health, and economic opportunity, and steps taken to reduce poverty. The conclusion will summarize the main points and include recommendations for how both India and South Africa should proceed with poverty reduction.

## **II. Brief Literature Review**

There is an extensive number of sources that examine poverty in both India and South Africa. A great deal of them examine the distribution and determinants of poverty throughout the populations as well as its implications. Most sources provide differing data sets on the extremes of poverty. They often examine different years and have produced their own statistical analyses. That being said, most sources show the same trends in their data.

- Barrientos et al. (2016) examine ethics in relation to poverty reduction. They discuss the role of ethics in the decision-making process when reducing poverty as well as several ethical perspectives that are considered in poverty reduction. These perspectives are applied to the design and implementation of poverty reduction programs. The article offers several examples and case studies from the development of anti-poverty programs in Ghana, Brazil, and South Africa. The section considering South Africa pays particular attention to the shift in beliefs and legal applications after the fall of apartheid.
- Davie (2015) discusses the measurement and analysis of poverty in South Africa. The author outlines the historical background behind the perception and study of poverty. She explains that for many years, South Africa's government prevented data collection on the extent of poverty. This practice continued under apartheid rule. The government wished to conceal the extent of poverty in the nation. The author also covers public perception regarding economic and anti-poverty actions taken by the government. The book details the changes South Africa underwent at the end of apartheid. Many plans circulated intending to eradicate poverty and alter the social dynamic of the nation. The author then examines the impact of the plans that were enacted.
- MacDonald (2006) examines the significance of race in South Africa. The author considers the aspects of racism. The book covers the historical social dynamic regarding race within the nation. The sections covering poverty discuss the economic divisions between whites and blacks in South Africa's economy. This analysis includes data on social programs, the human development index (HDI), mean income, unemployment, and basic poverty statistics. It also considers how these figures have changed since the end of apartheid.
- Datt and Ravallion (2002) consider whether India's economic growth leaves the poor behind. Their own estimates and their review of alternative estimates in recent literature have suggested that India maintained its 1980s rate of poverty reduction into the 1990s. Their results suggest that the incidence of poverty has been falling at slightly less than one



percentage point per year over the main postreform period. They emphasize the considerable diversity in performance between states, referring to large differences across states in the impact on poverty made by any given rate of growth in nonagricultural output. “States with relatively low levels of initial rural development and human capital development were not well suited to reduce poverty in response to economic growth.”<sup>3</sup>

- Radhakrishna and Ray (2005) provide a comprehensive analysis of poverty in India. The authors cover poverty trends within India. These trends include higher poverty rates among rural people and scheduled tribes. They look in depth at the discrimination faced by scheduled tribes and how it reflects in their impoverished state. The authors go on to look at many different programs and solutions implemented in India to alleviate poverty. They provide statistical data showing the effectiveness of many of these programs. They also consider the relative impact of government spending on poverty.
- Thorat et al. (2017) examine statistics pertaining to shifts in and out of poverty within India as poverty has fallen in the nation. They pay particular attention to the disadvantages faced by some marginalized groups, like the Dalits, and compare the level of poverty faced by these marginalized groups to the nation’s level of poverty. They cover the amount of people who have risen above poverty as well as those who have fallen backwards into poverty. They also provide a statistical analysis of some factors that prevent and cause movements into poverty.

### **III. Socio-economic Background**

Figure 1 displays the purchasing power parity (PPP)-adjusted GDP per capita of India and South Africa from 1990 to 2016 in constant 2011 dollar. Over that time period, South Africa has enjoyed a substantially higher GDP per capita than India. In 2016, South Africa had a GDP per capita of \$12,237, while India had a GDP per capita of \$6,093. Consequently, South Africa’s GDP per capita was slightly more than double India’s GDP per capita.

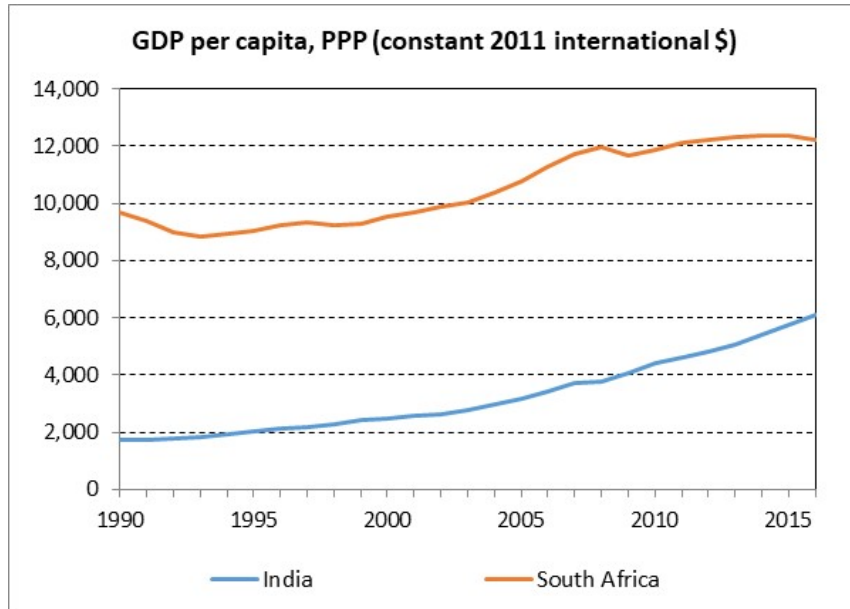
Both nations have seen growth since 1990, especially India. In 1990, South Africa had a GDP per capita of \$9,696 and India stood at \$1,755. India’s GDP per capita is now over three times what it was in 1990. However, South Africa’s GDP per capita has increased by only slightly over half of its 1990 value. In recent years, India has seen a much steadier climb in GDP per capita than South Africa, which has experienced a slight decrease since 2014.

Figure 2 shows the life expectancy at birth in years in India and South Africa between 1970 and 2016. Both nations have seen progress in life expectancy since 1970. India’s improvement has been much more drastic and stable than that in South Africa. India went from a life expectancy of 47.7 years in 1970 to 68.6 years in 2016, an increase of over 20 years. South Africa, on the other hand, went from 55.9 years in 1970 to 62.8 years in 2016, a much less impressive increase than India.

---

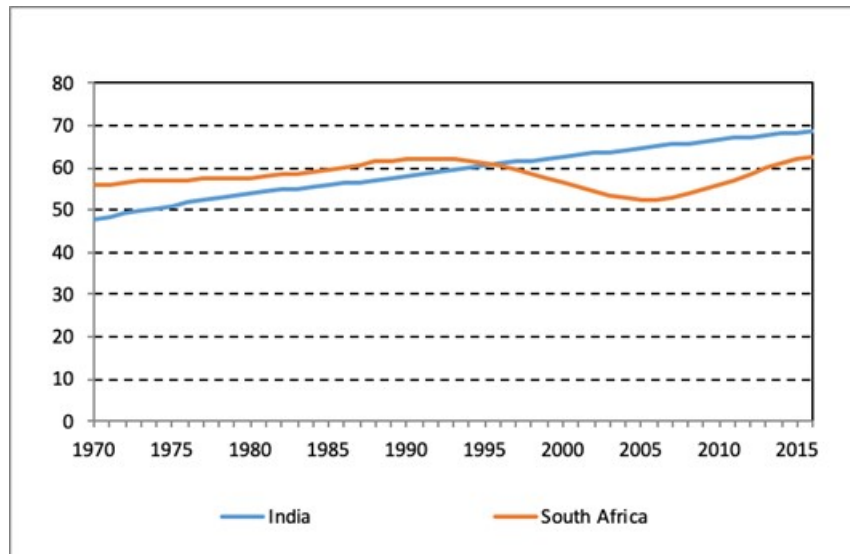
<sup>3</sup> Datt and Ravallion (2002), p. 106.

**Figure 1: GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2011 international dollar), 1990-2016**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

**Figure 2: Life expectancy at birth, total (years), 1970-2016**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

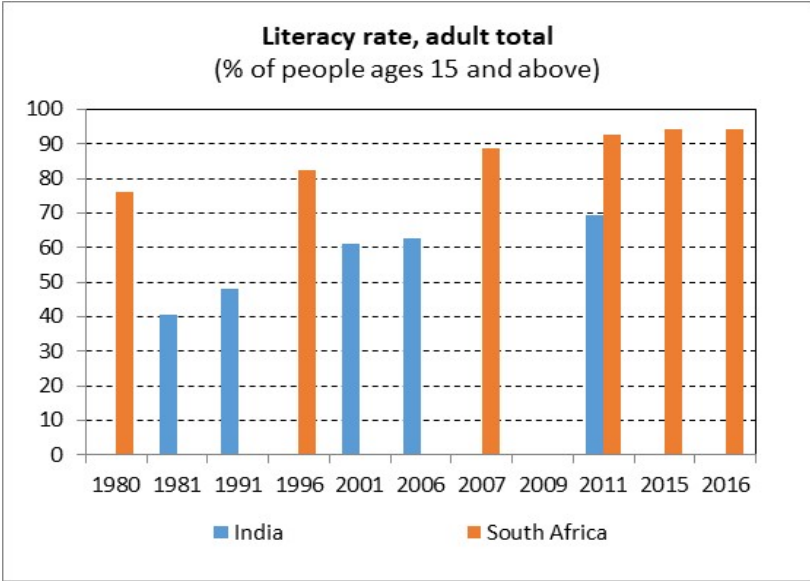
Unlike India, South Africa experienced a major setback in their life expectancy between 1992 and 2005 due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.<sup>4</sup> Their life expectancy peaked in 1992 at 62.3 years, before falling and eventually bottoming out at 52.6 years in 2005. Since that point, it has risen every subsequent year, though only surpassing the 1992 high in 2016 by half a year.

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald (2006).

The data represents the average life expectancy for both men and women. However, it should be noted that while women tend to live longer than men in both nations, the disparity between men and women is much more extreme in South Africa than in India. In 2016, South African men had a life expectancy of 59.2 years, while women had a life expectancy of 66.4 years. This is a difference of 7.2 years, compared to India, where women lived only 3.1 years longer than men in 2016. In South Africa, the gap in life expectancies between genders has not changed dramatically since 1970, varying between a minimum of 4.9 years in 2006 and a maximum of 7.5 years in 1991. On the other hand, the gender gap in life expectancy has changed over time in India, with men living 1.1 years longer than women in 1970, reaching gender parity in 1979, and women living progressively longer than men ever since.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 3 shows the literacy rate of the adult populations (defined as 15 years and older) in India and South Africa for all available years. Both nations have seen improvements in their adult literacy rates, though the improvements have been more limited in South Africa than in India. In 1980, South Africa had a literacy rate of 76.2 percent and ended at 94.4 percent in 2015. India's literacy rates have been substantially lower than South Africa's throughout this time period. However, they have seen more considerable improvement. India's literacy rate was 40.8 percent in 1981 and increased to 69.3 percent in 2011, a gain of 28.5 percentage points.

**Figure 3: Literacy rate, adult total ( percent of people 15 and above), 1980-2015**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

**IV. Ethical Origins and Existing Ethical Structures**

Major social factors in both India and South Africa have shaped their present societies. These factors have contributed to poverty in these two nations and have also shaped how both have responded to reduce their poverty levels. Past events in both nations have made large segments of the populations susceptible to poverty.

<sup>5</sup> This paragraph is based on data provided in World Bank (2018).

The British established apartheid rule (forced segregation between whites and non-whites) in colonial South Africa. The nation maintained the policy for decades after gaining independence (nominally in 1910, full sovereignty in 1931). Non-whites lacked political representation and were subject to policies like forced migration. Though apartheid laws were removed in the early 1990s, non-whites remain disproportionately affected as a result of these policies. During apartheid, 3.5 million people lost their homes from forced relocation to areas known as homelands.<sup>6</sup> These homelands were established for non-whites who were forced out of their land and had very little opportunity to offer. Areas that were once homelands still demonstrate some of the highest levels of poverty in South Africa.<sup>7</sup> When apartheid ended in the early 1990s, the black unemployment rate was between 30 and 70 percent, significantly higher than white unemployment.<sup>8</sup> In 2000, less than a decade after apartheid ended, per capita black income was only 12 percent of per capita white income.<sup>9</sup>

Hinduism is deeply rooted within India and its social implications have in some ways furthered poverty. A main facet of Hinduism is its caste system. Castes are essentially a hierarchy of social groups. Every Hindu is born into a particular caste in which they remain for the entirety of their life. There are stigmas within the caste system that alienate certain groups. Untouchables, or Dalits, are considered to be at the very bottom of the social hierarchy and encounter regular and systematic discrimination. This is still a regular occurrence despite the outlawing of caste discrimination by the Constitution of India in 1950. In 2004, only 12 percent of Indians from the upper castes lived in poverty while 32 percent of Dalits lived in poverty.<sup>10</sup>

According to Barrientos et al. (2016), ethical perspectives, or different ways of approaching ethical decision-making, impact social norms, which create a political process and policy. The examples of societal issues from both India and South Africa mentioned above have contributed to a reexamination of their ethical perspectives and consequently, leading to these countries' poverty reduction policies. For example, South Africa's new constitution of 1996 presented a new social contract made to citizens, expanding their social and economic rights. This demonstrated a substantial change of pace for the ethical process in South Africa.<sup>11</sup> Because both nations have moved beyond their past systems to aid those who were once disadvantaged, they required ethical decision-making processes to determine the best courses of action and the beneficiaries of aid.

Clearly the past actions of apartheid and the caste system are considered unethical due to their exclusion of large segments in society. The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2009) at Santa Clara University highlights that ethics is not based on religion or following laws. However, these processes influence ethical decision-making. Indeed, religion made the discrimination of the caste system acceptable just as laws legitimated the atrocities of apartheid. Over time, ethical perspectives began to show through the deeply entrenched social processes, and social norms began to change as a result. In attempting to right these wrongs, both nations have employed a variety of approaches. These approaches include the fairness approach, which according to the Markkula Center states that ethical actions should treat all humans equally, and the common good

---

<sup>6</sup> Davie (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Alexander (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Davie (2015).

<sup>9</sup> MacDonald (2006).

<sup>10</sup> Thorat et al. (2017).

<sup>11</sup> Barrientos et al. (2016).

approach, which states that ethical actions should benefit the wellbeing of everyone. The application of these approaches is further analyzed in Section V.3. below.

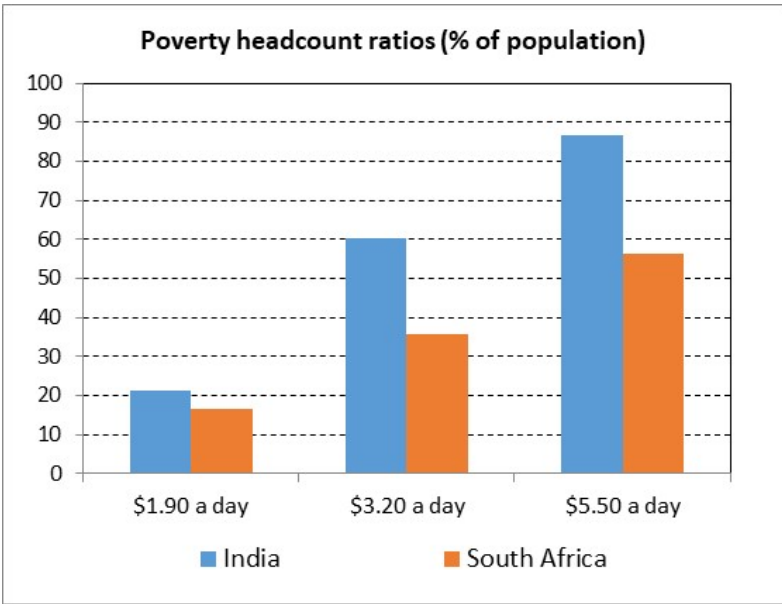
## V. Discussion

Poverty is pervasive and has far-reaching effects in societies. However, poverty does not spread like a disease. Those who are poor are most often born into it. The social structures of both India and South Africa have been constructed over hundreds of years in ways that disproportionately harm certain groups and make them more susceptible to high levels of poverty. Poverty is also impacted by restrictions on access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunity. Both South Africa and India have recently taken large steps to alleviate poverty, but the success of these actions have varied. This section will consider the widespread nature of poverty, some of its most impactful factors, and steps taken to reduce it.

### V.1. Incidence and Prevalence of Poverty

Figure 4 displays the percentage of the populations of India and South Africa living below three major poverty lines in 2011: the \$1.90 per day extreme poverty line, the \$3.20 per day poverty line, and the \$5.50 per day poverty line. In 2011, 21.2 percent of India and 16.6 percent of South Africa lived on less than \$1.90 per day in extreme poverty.

**Figure 4: Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$1.90, \$3.20, and \$5.50 a day (2011 PPP) ( percent of population), 2011**



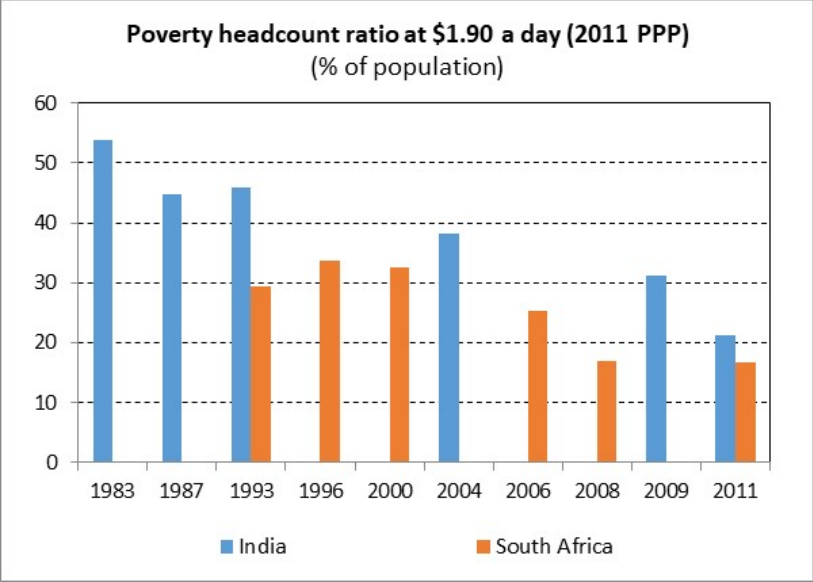
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Figure 4 also shows that slightly more than 60 percent of India’s population lived below \$3.20 per day in 2011, while this was the case for 35.9 percent of South Africa’s population. A majority of both nations’ populations lived below the \$5.50 per day poverty line, with 86.8 percent of India’s population and 56.3 percent of South Africa’s population living on less than \$5.50 per day. For

comparison, in 2010, less than 2 percent of the United States’ population fell below the \$5.50 per day poverty line.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. federal minimum wage for covered nonexempt employees is currently \$7.25 per hour.<sup>13</sup> In other words, more than 90 percent of India’s population and more than 60 percent of South Africa’s population currently live on less than the United States minimum hourly wage every day.

Figure 5 shows the evolution of the share of both nations’ populations living below the extreme poverty line between 1983 and 2011. Both nations have encountered a significant decline over this time period. India’s improvement has been much greater, and it has nearly matched South Africa.

**Figure 5: Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) ( percent of population), all available years**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

Poverty is worsened by the relatively high level of income inequality in both nations. While income inequality is a separate issue in both India and especially South Africa, extreme levels of income inequality can contribute to poverty by influencing social, spatial, and political factors. Increased inequality influences what people view as the qualities of success, separates the wealthy from the poor (making them unaware of poverty issues and denying the poor access to capital and services), and draws political influence toward the elites.<sup>14</sup> One of the key measures of inequality is the Gini coefficient. The GINI coefficient ranges from 0 to 100 percent, 0 being no inequality and 100 being complete inequality. In 2011, India had a Gini coefficient of 35.2 percent (which is relatively low by world standards); South Africa on the other hand had a Gini coefficient of 63.4 percent, giving it one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> World Bank (2019).

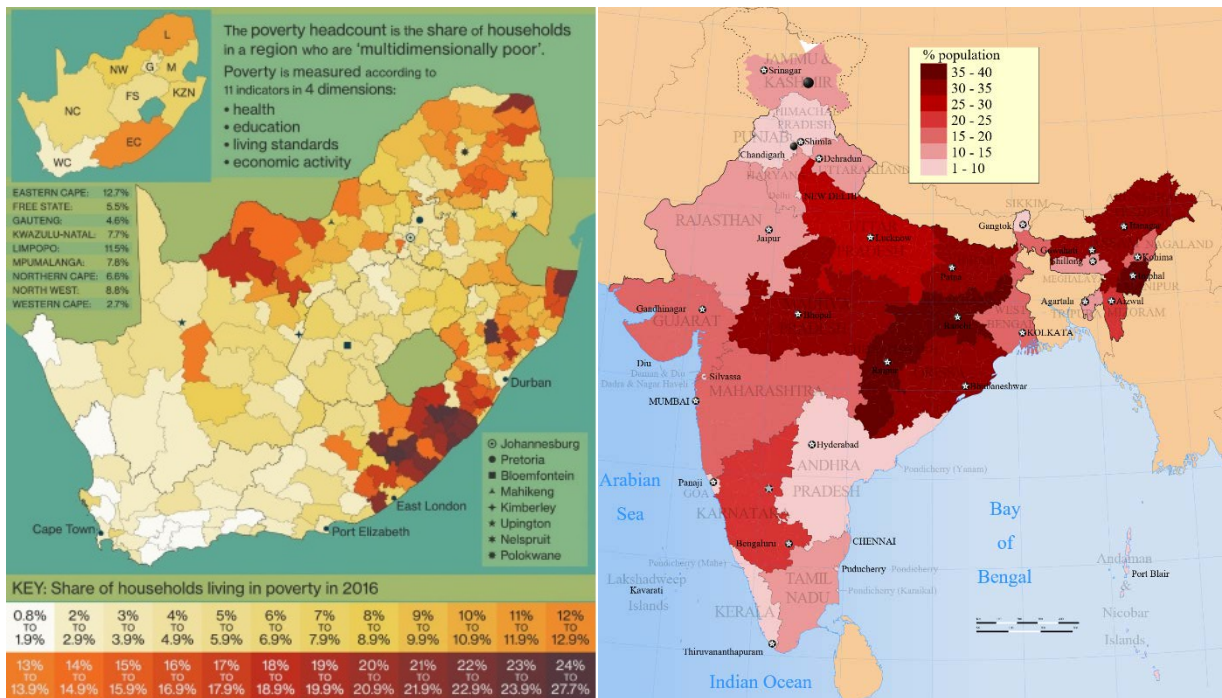
<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Labor (2019).

<sup>14</sup> McKnight (2018).

<sup>15</sup> World Bank (2018).

Poverty is also disproportionately rural in both India and South Africa. According to World Bank (2018) data, the percent of the rural population in India that lived below the national poverty line (not the \$1.90 extreme poverty line) was 25.7 percent in 2011. In contrast, the percentage of the urban population living below the line was 13.7 percent. In 2005, 87.6 percent of South Africa’s rural population lived below the national poverty line while 52 percent of the urban population lived below the line.<sup>16</sup> Clearly a much larger section of South Africa’s population is considered to live below the poverty line. However, the disparity between the prevalence of poverty between urban and rural areas in both nations is evident. In addition to the rural-urban differences, Figures 6 and 7 show the different levels of poverty, respectively between Indian states and South African municipalities.

**Figures 6 and 7: Poverty Maps of India and South Africa**



Source: Left Figure for India: Hunter (2014), referring to Table 162 of the Reserve Bank of India (2013); right figure for South Africa: Alexander (2016), Infographic 1, referring to data from the South Africa Community Survey 2016.

## V.2. Impact of Education, Health, and Economic Opportunity

Education, health, and economic opportunity are major areas that can suffer as a result of poverty. However, poor services and low access in these categories can also be major contributors to poverty.

### V.2.a. Education

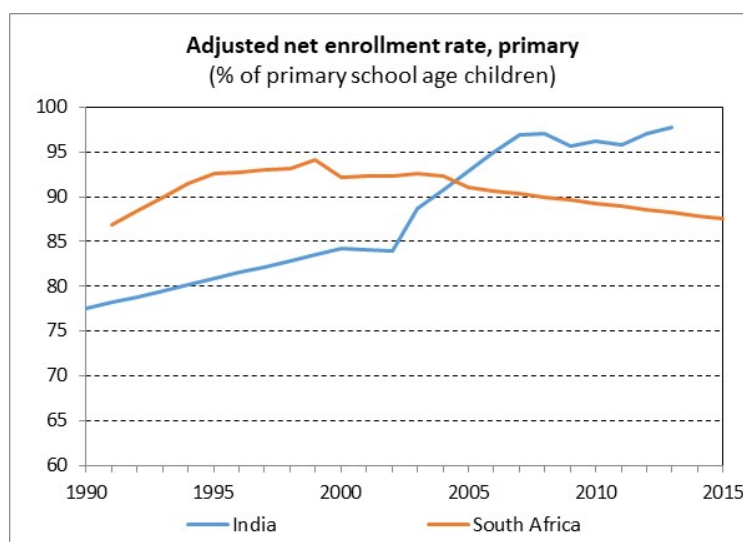
Education has the capability to raise people out of poverty. Done correctly, education and schooling provide children with assets they can use to join the workforce, earn a living, and

<sup>16</sup> World Bank (2018).

improve their quality of life. Both India and South Africa invest a fair amount into their education systems. Figure 6 shows the adjusted net enrollment rate in primary education for school age children from 1990 to 2015.<sup>17</sup> South Africa had a higher enrollment ratio than India until 2005, after which India overtook South Africa due to sharp increases in India's enrollment rate from 2002 to 2007. During that time, India's enrollment rate increased by 13 percentage points. India's enrollment rate stabilized at around 96.6 percent during the period from 2007 to 2013, while South Africa's reached its all-time high in 1999 with 94.1 percent, and then decreased moderately during the subsequent 16 years, ending up at 87.6 percent in 2015.

Improved education has been statistically proven as the third most significant factor in raising people out of poverty within India.<sup>18</sup> Although it occurs in both nations, teacher absenteeism is a significant contributing factor to poor education in India with some of the highest rates in the world.<sup>19</sup> This absenteeism hinders education in both nations, robbing many of the needed experience to escape poverty. Primary education and literacy have been proven to reduce the risk of falling into poverty.<sup>20</sup> Those with better access are less likely to suffer from extreme poverty.

**Figure 6: Adjusted Net Primary School Enrollment Rate (percent), 1990-2016**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

### V.2.b. Health

Health can also have a major impact on poverty. Those who are not healthy enough to work and earn a living are likely to remain in poverty. If affordable healthcare services are not readily available, the cost of healthcare can easily force people into poverty. The quality of healthcare impacts life expectancy and the quality of life people experience. As covered earlier, both India

<sup>17</sup> As provided by World Bank (2018), which is defined as the number of pupils of the school-age group for primary education, enrolled either in primary or secondary education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. We gap filled the years with missing data by linear approximations.

<sup>18</sup> Fan, Hazell and Thorat (1999).

<sup>19</sup> Weede (2010).

<sup>20</sup> Thorat et al. (2017).

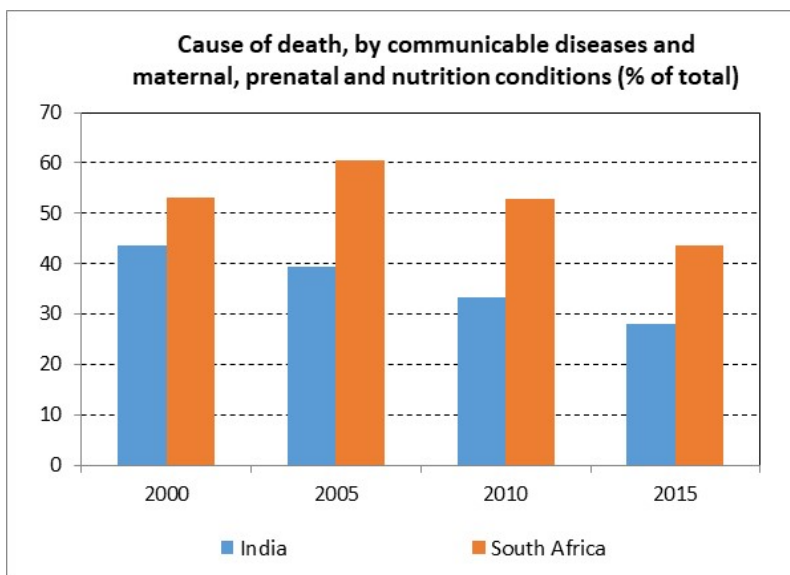


and South Africa have seen major improvements in their life expectancies. However, both still suffer from major issues regarding disease and malnutrition.

Figure 7 shows the percentage of deaths in both nations that were a result of communicable diseases, maternal conditions, prenatal conditions, or nutrition conditions. Strides have been made in both nations to reduce the percentage of deaths, though the percentage increased in South Africa from 2000 to 2005 due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In 2015, 43.7 percent of South Africa’s deaths fell into this category, which is still excessively high and damages both their productivity and their people.

The cost of medical care can also be a factor that forces people to live in poverty. In 2011, the expense of healthcare in India forced 51.9 million people (4.2 percent of India’s total population) to fall under the \$1.90 poverty line.<sup>21</sup> Healthcare is a necessary service, and in this instance its high costs are keeping people in poverty. This problem also exists in South Africa but is much less severe. In 2010, 229,000 people (0.4 percent of South Africa’s total population) were forced below the poverty line by the costs of healthcare.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 7: Cause of death by communicable diseases and maternal, prenatal and nutrition conditions ( percent of total), 2000-2015**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

### ***V.2.c. Economic opportunity***

Economic opportunity, influenced heavily by the state of the economy, also influences the ability of people to escape poverty. As discussed earlier, India and South Africa have both seen rising levels of GDP per capita. A rise in GDP per capita typically translates into an improvement in quality of life. The main source of economic opportunity in any nation is jobs. The availability, conditions, and pay of jobs often determines the well-being of its citizens and their level of poverty.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank (2018).

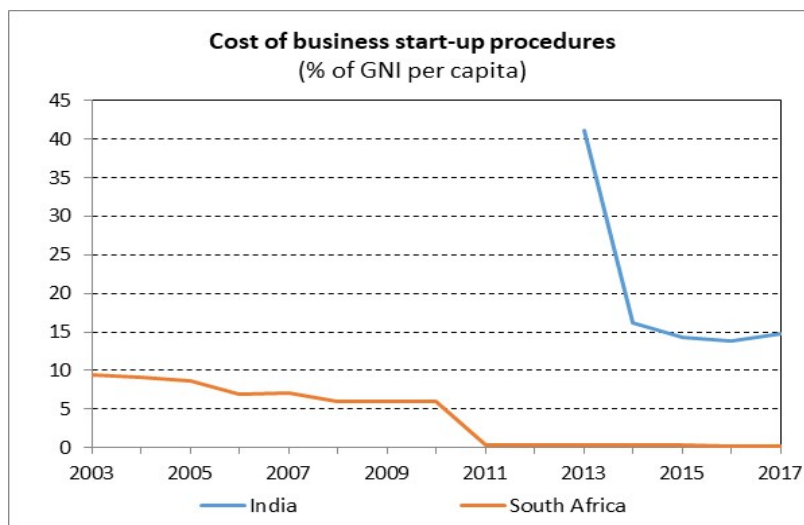
<sup>22</sup> World Bank (2018).

India and South Africa see two very different situations in terms of unemployment. In 2012, the unemployment rate in India was actually quite low at 2.7 percent. In contrast, South Africa had an unemployment rate of 24.7 percent in the same year.<sup>23</sup> This is a stark difference, but the contrast does not end there.

In India, employment is much more common for those with a basic education over those with an advanced education. In 2012, 16.6 percent of those with an advanced education were unemployed, while only 4.2 percent of those with a basic education were unemployed.<sup>24</sup> This suggests that most of the work available is low-skilled and completing an advanced education does not help secure a job, though the wages for those with advanced education are much higher than low-skilled workers. The opposite situation is true in South Africa. In 2012, 10.1 percent of those with an advanced education were unemployed while 33.4 percent of those with a basic education were unemployed.<sup>25</sup> This demonstrates a general lack of jobs and opportunity, failing to offer people any way out of poverty. Access to jobs is statistically proven to prevent poverty. In 2005, only 20 percent of those with salaried jobs in India were considered poor, a much lower rate than the rest of the country.<sup>26</sup>

Another analysis of economic opportunity is the cost involved in starting a business. Both India and South Africa have made great progress in this area. Figure 8 shows the expense of starting a business as a percent of the Gross National Product per capita of that country between 2003 and 2017. Both nations have seen tremendous decreases in this figure. This suggests that people now have much more opportunity to start a business or join a business venture to pull themselves out of poverty and boost the economy to the aid of others. A study conducted in 2017 proved that entrepreneurial development reduced poverty in India, specifically in rural areas.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 8: Cost of Business Start-up Procedures (% of GNI per capita), all available years**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2018).

<sup>23</sup> World Bank (2018).

<sup>24</sup> World Bank (2018).

<sup>25</sup> World Bank (2018).

<sup>26</sup> Thorat et al. (2017).

<sup>27</sup> Katekhaye and Magda (2017).

### V.3. Attempted Poverty Reduction Measures

India and South Africa have both attempted a plethora of poverty reduction measures, each with varying results. The programs that both have utilized represent different forms of anti-poverty programs and intersect with several ethical concepts. Barrientos et al. (2016) describes three types of anti-poverty programs. The two most commonly used in South Africa and India are income transfers, which involve the direct exchange of cash or goods, and integrated poverty reduction programs, which attempt to address social exclusion. This section will analyze anti-poverty programs specific to India and South Africa that fall into these groups, considering both their effectiveness and ethical context.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is a major income transfer program used in India. The PDS has existed since the 1970s and has been expanded over time. The aim of the program is to improve food security. Beneficiaries are offered wheat, rice, sugar, edible oils, kerosene, and soft cake below market prices to ensure their necessary caloric intake is met.<sup>28</sup> The PDS does not operate flawlessly. It sometimes forces the poor to pay prices higher than the market rate and its provisions only aid the poor marginally.

Despite these issues, in a 1998 study, many impoverished Indians stated that the PDS was essential to their wellbeing.<sup>29</sup> While not a monetary exchange, the PDS represents poverty reduction via income transfers because of the basic and uncomprehensive service it offers. This program follows the fairness approach to ethical standards by attempting to level the playing field for its beneficiaries to obtain necessary food products. Integrated poverty reduction programs are much more common in both nations than income transfers. There is a large debate regarding the effectiveness of income transfer programs because of beneficiaries' abilities to squander their aid.

A major integrated poverty reduction program instituted in India in recent years was the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). Implemented in 2005, the program guaranteed everyone at least 100 days of work per year. Provisions of the program include public employment and a statutory wage rate.<sup>30</sup> The program has employed 45.5 million households in India, making it the world's largest public works scheme. NREGS has a budget of over \$7.5 billion, over 1 percent of India's GDP.

Despite the size and efforts of the program, the benefits are often lost through corruption at the local levels and failure to reach all areas of the nation.<sup>31</sup> This program can be considered an integrated poverty reduction program through its attempt to address the societal failure to provide access to employment. One could interpret NREGS as embodying the fairness approach of ethical standards through its guarantee to at least 100 days of employment, attempting to make employment universal.

South Africa's most notable integrated poverty reduction program is known as the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Program (GEAR). GEAR was implemented shortly after the end of apartheid in 1996. It was intended to use a surge in economic growth to reduce poverty and inequality. This surge of economic growth was to be spurred through a spike in private sector

---

<sup>28</sup> Radhakrishna and Ray (2005).

<sup>29</sup> Radhakrishna and Ray (2005).

<sup>30</sup> Marcesse (2018).

<sup>31</sup> Marcesse (2018).

investment. To encourage this, the government sought lower interest rates and a smaller government deficit.<sup>32</sup>

The program yielded poor results with 40.6 percent of the nation still in poverty by the late 1990s and an increase in childhood poverty from 58.8 percent to 59.2 percent between 1996 and 1999. Despite these clear setbacks, many defended the implementation of GEAR by arguing that the economic failures were caused by outside factors in the global economy and that growth could have potentially been much worse without it.<sup>33</sup> GEAR is no longer policy in South Africa, but subsequent programs have been modeled after it. GEAR is an example of an integrated poverty reduction program because of its intention to address the economic factors that would allow poverty reduction. It follows the common good approach to ethical standards by attempting to produce conditions that would benefit South Africa as a whole.

A second integrated poverty reduction program being utilized in South Africa is the Expanded Public Works program (EPW). EPW was created in 2003 to spur job creation, develop local infrastructure, and provide basic services. In its first three years, EPW created 716,400 public jobs.<sup>34</sup> However, these jobs were short-term, and the pay was minimal. The program also failed to offer the same opportunities to all people and areas of the country. It was found that members of the African National Congress, the ruling political party in South Africa, received benefits more often than those who were not party members.<sup>35</sup> This program is also an integrated poverty reduction program by attempting to directly influence the employment and services in the nation. EPW follows the common good approach to ethical standards because of its aim to aid the nation as a whole by using the provided labor to improve infrastructure.

While both South Africa and India have taken measures to reduce poverty, they have gone about it in different ways. India tends to utilize a large number of separate programs, while South Africa sides with more comprehensive programs. The programs of both nations tend to employ either the fairness or common good approaches to ethical reasoning. India's NREGS can be compared to South Africa's EPW in that both attempt to encourage public employment. In contrast, India's PDS and South Africa's GEAR are unique to each nation. A common element in both nations' programs is that they fail to fully achieve their aims and are riddled with corruption. Data regarding the success of poverty reduction programs as a whole in both nations is inconclusive. While some have certainly aided the poor, economic growth and increased GDP can be more directly linked to reductions in poverty.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This article has taken an in-depth look at poverty in India and South Africa. It has provided a socioeconomic background of both nations, considering their improvements in GDP per capita, life expectancy, and literacy. In terms of ethics the article considered the effects apartheid in South Africa and the caste system in India had on poverty and the ethical development of both nations. Both were forced to reexamine their ethical structures after the removal of these systems.

The bulk of this article has considered the extent of poverty in India and South Africa, discussing its prevalence, determinants, and attempted solutions. Poverty goes beyond extreme poverty. Many

---

<sup>32</sup> Streak (2004).

<sup>33</sup> Streak (2004).

<sup>34</sup> Hlatshwayo (2017).

<sup>35</sup> Hlatshwayo (2017).

people in both nations live on relatively little, but do not fall under the extreme poverty line. Poverty is worsened by the high inequality experienced in both nations, and those in rural areas are disproportionately affected. This article has outlined the importance education, health, and economic opportunity play in determining poverty as well as bringing people out of poverty. It also covered the actions India and South Africa have taken to reduce poverty, looking at their ethical implications and relative success.

Though the issue of poverty in India and South Africa has improved over time, both nations still have a long way to go. Anti-poverty measures taken by both nations are riddled with issues and have failed to drastically alter their level of poverty. They cannot count on economic growth alone to alleviate poverty, as the benefits of economic growth are not shared equally and often miss those who are in the most precarious situations. Both nations must use appropriate ethical decision-making processes to improve education, health, and economic opportunity, as well as implementing meaningful poverty reduction programs that do not fall victim to corruption and misuse. India and South Africa have a golden opportunity to utilize their growing economic power to reduce their extreme poverty. However, it is ultimately up to them to do so. As influential world leaders, it is their duty to make poverty reduction their primary goal for the sake of their citizens.

## References

- Alexander, Mary (2018). *Mapping Poverty in South Africa* (South Africa Gateway, Infographic (last updated July 17, 2018); available at: <https://southafrica-info.com/people/mapping-poverty-in-south-africa/>).
- Barrientos, Armando; Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai; Daisy Demirag; Richard de Groot; and Luigi Peter Rago (2016). Why Assist People Living in Poverty? The Ethics of Poverty Reduction. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Office of Research, *Innocenti Working Paper*, No. 2016-27 (November); available at: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/871-why-assist-people-living-in-poverty-the-ethics-of-poverty-reduction.html>.
- Datt, Gaurav and Martin Ravallion (2002). Is India's Economic Growth Leaving the Poor Behind? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer), pp. 89–108; available at: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPGI/Resources/13504\\_GD1.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPGI/Resources/13504_GD1.pdf).
- Davie, Grace (2005). *Poverty Knowledge in South Africa* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, February).
- Fan, Shenggen; Peter Hazell; and Sukhadeo Thorat (1999). *Linkages between Government Spending, Growth, and Poverty in Rural India* (Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute).
- Hlatshwayo, Mondli (2017). The Expanded Public Works Programme: Perspectives of Direct Beneficiaries. *Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 1–8.
- Hunter, M. Tracy (2014). Poverty Distribution Map in India by Its States and Union Territories; available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2012\\_Poverty\\_distribution\\_map\\_in\\_India\\_by\\_its\\_states\\_and\\_union\\_territories.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2012_Poverty_distribution_map_in_India_by_its_states_and_union_territories.svg).

- Katekhaye, Dhanashree and Robert Magda (2017). Impact of Rural Entrepreneurship on Poverty Alleviation-study of Rural India. *Albania Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 101–107.
- MacDonald, Michael (2006). *Why Race Matters in South Africa* (Cambridge, MA, United States: Harvard University Press).
- Marcesse, Thibaud (2018). Public Policy Reform and Informal Institutions: The Political Articulation of the Demand for Work in Rural India. *World Development*, Vol. 103 (March), pp. 284–296.
- Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (ed.) (2009). *A Framework for Ethical Decision Making*; available at: <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/a-framework-for-ethical-decision-making/>.
- McKnight, Abigail (2018). How are Inequality and Poverty Linked? Presentation prepared for the UN expert meeting: *New Research on Inequality and Its Impacts*, New York (September 12-13, 2018); available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/09/McKnight2.pdf>.
- Radhakrishna, Rokkam and Shovan Ray (2005). *Handbook of Poverty in India: Perspectives, Policies, and Programmes* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press).
- Streak, Judith Christine (2004). The Gear Legacy: Did Gear Fail or Move South Africa Forward in Development? *Development Southern Africa*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (June), pp. 271–288.
- Thorat, Amit; Reeve Vanneman; Sonalde Desai; and Amaresh Dubey (2017). Escaping and Falling into Poverty in India Today. *World Development*, Vol. 93 (May), pp. 413–426.
- U.S. Department of Labor (2019). Minimum Wage. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Internet Resource; available at: <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/wages/minimumwage>.
- Weede, Erich (2010). The Rise of India: Overcoming Caste Society and Permit-License-Quota Raj, Implementing Some Economic Freedom. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (August), pp. 129–153.
- World Bank (2018). *World Development Indicators / International Debt Statistics database* (Washington, DC: The World Bank); as posted on the World Bank website: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/> (downloaded on April 19, 2018).
- World Bank (2019). Poverty. Washington, DC: The World Bank; Internet Resource; available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/topic/poverty>.