



April 5, 2013

Ms. Gloria Hector
c/o Ms. Cindy Diamond
Wilton Manor Elementary School
2401 N.E. 3rd Avenue
Wilton Manors, FL 33305

Dear Gloria,

I received your letter last week and I was happy to hear from you. I feel very strongly that every girl should be allowed to go to school, and that every girl should use that opportunity. I think it is the best thing we can do for this world, because when girls grow up to be educated women, they can take better care of their families and contribute to the community around them. Also, it is very important, I feel, for women to earn money—not just for their families but for themselves. There are many ways to earn a living, but there are more choices for educated women. A woman who can support herself believes in herself and has self-confidence.

A child who grows up with a strong, self-confident mother has a great role model. My grandmother was a strong, intelligent woman and a great role model, but she grew up in Yugoslavia at a time when most girls were not sent to school because their families thought it wasn't important. The boys were sent to school, though. My grandmother always encouraged me to study hard and to go as far as I could in school.

I do try to help in at least one country where it is difficult for girls to go to school. The country is Pakistan. Do you know where it is (can you find it on a map)? I started a foundation to raise money so I could take it to Pakistan and help in small villages where the people wanted a school but did not have one.

We have 5-6 schools that we help support by hiring teachers, sending books, and maintaining the facilities. The government in most countries promises to do this, but they often fail because they run out of money. When a government is short of money, it makes choices about where to spend what they have. In Pakistan, usually they choose to spend it on other things than girls' education. Boys and girls aren't allowed to study together in Pakistan after 5th grade, so when the small amount of money available goes to boys' schools, girls have to drop out and stay at home. Then their families arrange for them to get married at an early age, and usually this restricts what they can do with their lives.

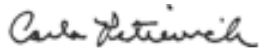
We have some friends in Pakistan who are very dedicated to educating girls, and they are the ones who work with the government. Each time they succeed and get the Education Office in their district to take over a school that we have been running, we can stop supporting that school and open up a new school. That way we can keep on going in a small way, little by little. This year we are starting classes that are sort of like junior college classes in two villages in the mountains of northern Pakistan. After the girls complete these courses, they can train to become teachers or nurses and help their communities. Can you find Mansehra District, Pakistan, on a map? That's where the schools are.

You asked me how many countries in the world don't let girls go to school, and it's a great question. I don't really know the answer, Gloria, but I think the number is very high. Usually it is because school is considered a luxury and most of the world is poor, so families can't afford to send their girls to school. In these countries the government doesn't provide education for the people.

In some societies people don't think girls should go out in public. If they can't leave the house, they can't go to school. This happened in Afghanistan and Iran in the 1980s and 1990s. I think it is changing now. More families realize that they need to educate the girls so that the whole country prospers. That's why we need to tell our own government how important it is to keep public education as a priority.

Thanks again for writing, Gloria. I hope I have answered your questions, but if I have not, please write back and let me know. I would love to hear from you again. You can also write to me by e-mail if you use e-mail. Then you would get a faster reply!

Sincerely,



Carla Petievich
Executive Director

HOSHYAR FOUNDATION