

Honorable Chair, Esteemed delegates, and fellow advocates

Often, during CPD we talk about numbers, or concepts; but today I am going to tell you the story of Mrs B. In her early years she experienced multiple Female Genital Mutilations and was accused of being sexually active when she got her first period. She was married off at 14 and became a mother of 4 by the age of 20. She was financially dependent on an abusive husband. These were just the first 20 years of her life.

However, despite all odds, Mrs B went back to school and received her degree at 20, with her fourth child still breastfeeding.

I am Mrs B's 6th and youngest child...

Mrs B raised all of us as a single mother in Ethiopia. All her children attended university, chose our own partners, chased and pursued our own careers and became economically independent.

The generational benefit of educating one woman is evident in the lives that my siblings and I lead. It is thanks to my mother that I stand before you today.

According to "The power of education" research series by UNICEF, girls who complete secondary school are 66% less likely to be child brides. If they continue to higher education, that number would go to a staggering 80%. Girls and women who complete secondary school are also 70% more likely to oppose Female Genital Mutilation. The same group is less likely to experience Gender Based Violence through a rights based approach, in addition to the socio-economic empowerment education provides. Through family planning information, maternal mortality would decrease, along with child mortality rates.

This will change the health and well-being of families, communities and our countries in the long run. The importance of access to good quality education is crucial.

I would like to thank you for giving me the space to speak as I stand before you, an economically independent, educated young woman, free of all the trauma Mrs B had experienced. But this is not the reality of so many others.

The power to bring about true change for these adolescent girls and young women lies with you, their trusted representatives, who expect you to bring the generational wealth of education to them.