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Cohort: 4  
Assignment: 3

Choose two or three of the Sustainable Development Goals and discuss, based on observations you've made during your internship and other experience/knowledge, how they interconnect with one another, and how this impacts how the goals should be addressed.

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The quality of education in South Africa depends strongly on the amount of the fees that are charged by the school. Although a secondary school may be public, its fees make it exclusive to a certain class. Considering that government subsidy for educational institutions is minimal, higher fees guarantee better teachers, facilities and extracurricular activities. This causes an inequitable quality of education for the overall population of South Africa where the families with better resources get access to better quality education for their children from an early age. For those who view the chance to a better life through education, the actual process of obtaining an education is a continuous struggle as the students try to receive sponsorship or exhaust their family's life long savings to complete their degrees. Often they have to survive on one meal a day or less and are forced to sleep on campus unable to afford accommodation, which can lead to safety and health concerns and general human right considerations. The correlation between class and level of education is obvious and the ones most affected by it are those who live in poverty. This is true not only in South Africa, but most countries around the world.

Let's not forget that the most economically vulnerable population is comprised of women and children. From conversing with Zulus in South Africa I have gathered that in a family where the parents are able to provide secondary or post secondary education to only one child, it is more likely that they will support the male child, as the belief that a woman's main role is to raise children still prevails. Also, when a woman gets married, her family will receive a bride price; while when a man gets married he or his family has to provide a bride service. Therefore, there is an understanding that investing into the education of the male may be more profitable in the long run.

Furthermore, youth pregnancy is on the rise and it appears that higher level of education does not necessarily decrease teenage pregnancy. This poses significant challenges on the female students especially as they often end up single mothers and do not always have family support. Not to mention the increased risk of HIV/AIDS infection among females

under 24. Understandably, such a situation may be followed by school drop out or inability to attend post secondary education, therefore increasing further gender inequality and inequitable access to education for the most economically and socially vulnerable individuals. In South Africa, depending on the school, the students who are pregnant are allowed a forced leave for a month before the birth and up to 6 weeks after the birth. However the young mothers can return to school as early as 3 weeks after birth in order to complete the year. Furthermore the mothers are eligible for a minimal monthly benefit for their child, which rarely covers even the most basic expenses. There are educational programs in place and basic government supports, but these are not enough to deal effectively with such complex and interrelated issues.

It is evident that the matters regarding gender, education and poverty are interrelated and there is a need for extended government assistance and collaboration to target all three aspect simultaneously. It is not feasible to successfully examine and target these issues separately and any program or policy put in place must consider all factors of the perpetual cycle of poverty.