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Topic One. Goal Five: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The SDGs are meant to apply to developed and developing countries alike, understanding that countries will be addressing them in different contexts.

1. What do you think are the entry points for addressing this goal:

a) In your host country;

The host country that I am located in for my International Youth Internship is Zambia, within the town Kitwe. Working as a Crisis Support Worker at the YWCA in Zambia I believe that I am able to see many cases and projects in relation to gender equality, the fight for it, and the communication that is taking place about empowering women and girls.

I think that one of the entry points for working with women and girls about gender equality and empowerment is to work with the youth in the area. The youth are at a time where they are still learning and making large decisions in their lives, as well as beginning to be romantically and sexually involved, entering into career paths, and involved in education. This is a key time in their lives to help educate and work with individuals for any change that we might want to experience.

There have been a few projects with the YWCA that reflect possibilities of some of these changes. One of the first projects that I was able to experience was attending two separate meetings for youth and sexual health education. The first meeting involved the parents of the area in order to discuss how they can help communicate with their children about sexual health, and educate both their boys and girls on the matter. This meeting also brought discussions in challenging the beliefs around rape from the girl's way of dressing and behaviour. The second meeting was with a group of youths themselves and was based on specific education around sexual health, behaviours, and learning how to become leaders with confidence. This meeting showed great respect for the equality of both the boys and girls in all positions and decision making opportunities; giving the girls confidence for deciding what is right for their bodies as well.

The YWCA has also worked on educating girls about contraception, reproductive health, abortion options, clinics available, financial education and savings, and leadership skills. This

leadership skills education became evident through a workshop with educating women about the skills and practices needed for becoming councillors in Zambia.

Some of the discussions that have arisen within the YWCA, is that it is also important to educate the boys and men as well and not to just focus on educating the girls and women. I believe this to also be a key entry point which is still being built on within Canada as well.

b) in Canada.

Canada appears to be at a different stage than Zambia in gender equality, while further involved in land ownership, technology, equal opportunities and elimination of harmful practices with women, Canada still has work to do with discrimination, sexualized violence, and equal pay and opportunity.

A large issue that has been addressed recently is the rape culture and the beliefs behind gender. There have been statements about the way women dress and behave influencing sexualized violence against them, when such activities should not occur no matter what state the women is in. This is an area where the entry point of working with boys and men could be applied, in order to educate both genders about equality and compassion equally.

Though Canada may have more opportunities for women participating in careers and leadership roles such as engineering and politics, there is still a much lower ratio of women in these positions and a shift of equal gender participation is still possible. These opportunities apply to both women and men becoming involved in positions outside of the common gender roles, such as with nursing, engineering, politics, and stay at home parenting.

2. What recommendations would you make for achieving this goal?

Some of the recommendations that I might be able to present for achieving the goal of gender equality involve education, community involvement, role models, and equal laws. These recommendations can be applied to both Zambia and Canada and still have room for growth in both.

It is important to educate both girls and boys, men and women and to provide equal education and opportunities. The laws enforced within the country should also be able to provide equal opportunities for any gender to achieve ownership, financial, career, and relational goals. Providing and encouraging accepted, strong role models for individuals identifying as any gender could assist in the acceptance of positions and roles within the community.

