*Culture* is defined as the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions; the shared beliefs and values of a group of people.

The environment in which a girl grows up will influence every area of her life. cultural beliefs surrounding the value and role of women, as well as the value placed on education, have a huge impact. cultural influences shape our thoughts, beliefs, judgments, and tolerances. Behavior that is seen as intolerable in one community will seem perfectly normal in another. challenging these deeply held cultural beliefs is often one of the biggest obstacles facing girls.

A community’s expectations for girls revolve around its expectations for women. When it is assumed that a woman’s role in society doesn’t require an education, there seems to be little reason to educate her. however, when a culture values women as individuals and contributing members to a community, investing in their education has value.

Practices such as bonded labor are often deeply ingrained in cultures. Girls, and their families, who are willing to break cultural expectations often risk harsh judgment. Ending practices that perpetuate the cycle of poverty, lack of education, oppression and violence isn’t easy, and taking a pioneering stance can be difficult and isolating for families, especially in small villages. yet beating the odds requires

A family’s love and support. once communities begin to experience the benefits of an educated population – such as higher income, better business practices, and healthier children – the road becomes easier to travel. one group of girls can pave the way for the next, increasing education and reducing poverty.

Cultural beliefs about educated girls vary greatly around the world. in some communities it is common for girls to finish high school and attend college. in other communities, school is severely limited and girls are discouraged, or banned, from attending. the reasons why girls are not

In school vary as well. For some it is cultural oppression such as early or forced marriage, or the need to work to care for younger siblings or sick relatives; for some it is extreme poverty; and for others, safety is a concern. When cultures place a high value on education, specifically the education of girls, they tend to invest in education. these cultures invest in schools and provide means of access. however, when cultures value the education of boys only, or when they value women merely in their ability to serve men, educating girls is not viewed as a valid investment.

These cultures are less likely to build schools, hire and train teachers, or make the schools they do have easily accessible.

1. How do cultural beliefs influence a girl’s life?
2. How are educational opportunities for girls tied to these  beliefs?
3. What can be done to help communities understand and accept social change?