WRITE AN OP-ED

Opinion submissions, or op-eds, are a great way to get published in your local newspaper and raise awareness on global poverty issues. Op-Eds are usually 600-750 words in length and express your view on a specific issue, making a specific call to action(s). Try to make your point clear, accurate and approach it with the understanding that average readers probably are not very familiar with the issue. Be sure to save any clippings that appear in your local newspapers and send copies to your members of Congress and Regional Advocacy Coordinator.

SAMPLE OP-ED

Why 13-Years-Olds Shouldn’t Be Married
By Kiran Kochar McCabe
May 11, 2015
Huffington Post

Today is Mother’s Day, the day of the year when we celebrate our mothers. But in so many countries, mothers are far too young. In fact, in many places in the developing world, girls are more likely to become mothers than to finish school.

I am a 13-year-old girl who loves to read the Hunger Games and sing songs by Taylor Swift. On weekends, I like to go to the movies with my friends. It’s hard for me to imagine being a 13-year-old married mother. Did you know that by the time you finish reading this article, about 52 girls under the age of 18 will have just been married?

Consider these facts. One-third of girls in the developing world are married before they turn 18. In Niger, a country in West Africa, more than half of girls under 18 are married. If I lived there, I would likely be married with children celebrating me on Mother’s Day, rather than me thinking about what gift to give my mom.

I started learning about the difficulties girls face around the world at a young age when I became involved with the global poverty fighting organization CARE. Since the age of 7, I’ve attended CARE’s advocacy conference each year in our nation’s capital, along with hundreds of other passionate volunteers. During the conference, I visit my members of Congress to tell them why investing in a girl’s education and empowerment is important. I know that compared to many others girls my age, I am very fortunate. I want to use my voice to help improve the lives of others around the world.

Through my work with CARE, I know that girls and societies will not grow and prosper if girls are married early. Girls need to get an education so they can lead empowered lives. Studies show that girls with at least eight years of education are four times less likely to be married as children. A girl with an extra year of education can also earn 20
percent more as an adult. U.S. foreign aid has an incredibly positive impact on girl’s empowerment and education around the world, and this delivers lasting change within a community. Studies show that the majority of girls who are married early come from poor families. In many countries, foreign aid helps provide those families with tools, knowledge and services to help their daughters go to school.

Many people who oppose U.S. foreign aid believe that it takes away from resources to solve our domestic issues. Most people believe that the U.S. foreign aid budget is 25 percent of our government’s budget when in reality it is less than 1 percent. Cutting a budget this small won’t fix our other problems. More importantly, the U.S. foreign aid budget creates a huge impact on the lives of people around the world. Programs funded by this budget help girls, women and many other disadvantaged groups get an education, become economically independent, move up in their communities, and break the cycle of child marriage.

We need to protect our foreign aid budget so we can continue to prevent child marriage. We shouldn’t have 13-year-old brides and mothers in this world. As a 13-year-old girl, I am not ready to be married and have children. So this Mother’s Day, while you are celebrating with your mother, think about all the child marriages and teenage mothers around the world. Join me and tell your members of Congress to keep funding the foreign aid budget so that Mother’s Day is not a celebration for 13-year-old mothers.

*Kiran Kochar McCabe is in the 8th grade at Takoma Park Middle School. She lives in Takoma Park, Md. with her mom, dad, little sister, and three cats.*