



What Works in Girls' Education

Although women and girls are completing more years of school now than ever before, more than 60 million girls are still out of school. We think that's unacceptable and that's why we are calling on our political leaders to prioritize girls' education.



Recent decisions by world leaders — specifically the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Partnership for Education's decisions to expand their mandates from 9 to 12 years — have helped shine a light on the urgent need to address the issue of girls' secondary education.

Though significant improvements have been made in girls' access to education over the last fifteen years, millions of girls remain shut out of secondary education or are forced to drop out of school too young due to poverty, conflict or threats of violence. Recent commitments by world leaders — specifically the UN Sustainable Development Goals — have helped raise the ambition for girls and shine a light on the urgent need to address the issue of girls' secondary education.

THE BENEFITS OF 12 YEARS OF EDUCATION

Increases economic growth

- The increase in women's access to education accounted for nearly **50% of economic growth** (2.1% per year on average for the 30 countries from 1960 to 2008), of which over half was due to increased female educational attainment.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2012. *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Leads to better wages and jobs for women

- **Education increases women's access to jobs in the formal sector**, which is crucial because women in low-income countries are largely employed in vulnerable, informal employment that does not provide wages, stability, or benefits.

ILO. 2012. *Global Employment Trends for Women*. Geneva: ILO. ILO. 2014. *Promoting Equality and Addressing Discrimination*. ILO Policy Brief. Geneva: ILO.

Saves the lives of children and mothers

Increasing girls' education reduces infant and maternal mortality, primarily because educated mothers have fewer pregnancies, are less likely to give birth as teenagers, and are better able to seek and negotiate life-saving health care for themselves and their young children.

- A study of child mortality in 175 countries from 1970 to 2009 found that increases in women's education are responsible for more than **half the reduction in under-five child mortality**.

Gakidou, Emmanuela, et al. 2010. "Increased Educational Attainment and Its Effect on Child Mortality in 175 Countries Between 1970 and 2009: A Systematic Analysis." *The Lancet* 376, no. 9745: 959-74.



Reduces rates of child marriage

- Across eighteen of the twenty countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage, girls with no education are up to **six times more likely to marry as children** than girls with a secondary education.

ICRW (International Center for Research on Women). 2006. *Too Young to Wed: Education and Action toward Ending Child Marriage, Brief on Child Marriage and Domestic Violence*. Washington: ICRW.

Increases women's political leadership

- **Education for all girls is critical to their leadership potential**. The evidence shows that women leaders are educated women, and particularly so beyond the community level. Women need an education to access power, but they also need further education and professional training to be credible and have influence once they are in leadership positions, within civic associations, business, and formal political positions.

O'Neil, T., G. Plank, and P. Domingo. 2015. *Support to Women and Girls' Leadership: A Rapid Review of the Evidence*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

THE CHALLENGE

Getting into school

- There are more than **60 million girls who should be in primary and lower secondary school but are not**. The majority of girls who are not enrolled in school live in Africa and Asia: In Sub-Saharan Africa, 16.6 million school-age girls are not enrolled in primary school and 11.3 million school-age girls are not enrolled in secondary school. In Asia, 8.1 million school-age girls are not enrolled in primary school and 16.3 million school-age girls are not enrolled in secondary school. In Arab states, 2.6 million school-age girls are not enrolled in primary school and 1.7 million school-age girls are not enrolled in secondary school.

UNESCO. 2015b. *Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges—Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015*. Paris: UNESCO.

Staying in school

- In Sub-Saharan Africa, 75 percent of girls start primary school but **only 8 percent finish secondary school**.

Winthrop, Rebecca, and Eileen McGivney. 2014. “Top 10 List You Don’t Want to Be One: Dangerous Places for Girls’ Education,” blog post, Center for Universal Education, Brookings Institution. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/education-plus-development/posts/2014/09/23-dangerous-places-girls-education-winthrop-mcgivney>.

There are more than 60 million girls who should be in primary and lower secondary school but are not.

Violence and humanitarian crises

- Within the 35 countries that are affected by humanitarian emergencies, approximately **37 million primary and lower secondary school-age girls and boys are out of school**. These children make up approximately one-third of all the school-age children out of primary and lower secondary schools in the world.

Nicolai, Susan, S. Hine, and J Wales. 2015. *Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises: Towards a Strengthened Response*. Background paper for the Oslo Summit on Education for Development. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Most marginalized

- **Being a poor, rural girl is a triple disadvantage**. “In 2010, the poorest women in rural areas in both low- and lower-middle-income countries had spent less than three years in school, compared with the richest urban young men, who spent 9.5 and 12 years, respectively.”

Clinton Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Economist Intelligence Unit, and WORLD Policy Analysis Center. 2015. *The Full Participation Report: No Ceilings. Full Participation Project*. New York: Clinton Foundation.

THE SOLUTION

Make schools affordable

Eliminating school fees and offsetting the indirect and opportunity costs of girls' schooling with financial resources has been an effective strategy for enrolling girls in school.

- **After school fees were abolished in Uganda in 1997, primary school enrollment immediately doubled, from 3.4 million to 5.7 million children, and rose to 6.5 million by 1999.** Total girls' enrollment went from 63 percent to 83 percent, while enrollment among the poorest fifth of girls went from 46 percent to 82 percent.

Deiningner, Klaus. 2003. "Does the Cost of Schooling Affect Enrollment by the Poor? Universal Primary Education in Uganda." *Economics of Education Review* 22, no. 3: 291–305.

Tomasevski, Katarina. 2003. *Education Denied: Costs and Remedies*. New York: Zed Books.

Reduce the time and distance to school

- **In Afghanistan, placing a school in a village dramatically improves girls' enrollment by 52 percentage points and their average test scores by 0.65 standard deviations.**

Burde, Dana, and Leigh L. Linden. 2013. "Bringing Education to Afghan Girls: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Village-Based Schools." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 5, no. 3: 27–40.

Make schools girl-friendly

Making schools girl-friendly have typically included interventions targeted at transforming the school climate and school culture, including providing preschool and child care programs; improving water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure; and eliminating school-related gender-based violence.

- **A village preschool program in India helped to boost enrollments.** These programs help substitute for the child care that may keep girls from attending primary school.

Rugh, Andrea. 2000. *Starting Now: Strategies for Helping Girls Complete Primary*. SAGE Project. Washington: Academy for Educational Development.

Sustain education during emergencies and violence

Restoring education is crucial for helping children adjust and adapt to the difficult conditions of crises and emergencies.

- **In East Timor, parents and community members played a crucial role in sustaining education during the war for independence.** This initiative from parents and community members to find ways to support the continued schooling of their children during the height of the emergency was also crucial in laying the foundations for rebuilding the education system after the conflict was over.

Nicolai, Susan. 2004. *Learning Independence: Education in Emergency and Transition in Timor-Leste since 1999*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.

Strategies for out-of-school and marginalized adolescent girls

In the push for a full course of schooling for girls, we want to start with those girls who have dropped out, been forced into child labor, trafficked, or never had the chance to start an education with their age group—especially as there are increasingly evidence-based strategies that have been shown to provide alternative paths for such adolescent girls.

- › For schoolgirls who become pregnant, **changes in school policies that allow them to return to school after childbirth** is a policy mechanism that should be pursued to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable girls can complete secondary school.

UNESCO. 2012b. *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work—EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012*. Paris: UNESCO.

Hire good teachers who attend school and engage students

- › Researchers have found in the US that having a good teacher is equivalent to an average gain in learning of one school year; **having a great teacher is equivalent to 1.5 years of learning**; but having a weak teacher means mastering less than half of the expected subject content.

Hanushek, Eric A., Steven G. Rivkin. 2010. "Generalizations about Using Value-Added Measures of Teacher Quality." *The American Economic Review* 100, no. 2: 267-71.

King, Elizabeth, and Rebecca Winthrop. 2015. *Today's Challenges for Girls' Education*. Washington: Brookings Institution.

Ensure schooling reflects gender equality

Textbooks, curricula, and teacher/student interactions matter for what perceptions they create about girls and women and their roles. When teachers explicitly teach issues of gender equality, girls gain tremendously.

- › The Prerna Girls School in India serves some of the country's poorest girls and **incorporates critical dialogues throughout its lessons**, creating a space where girls can think about issues of gender equality and talk through and understand the oppression they face every day. Gender equality is built into the school's

curriculum and taught like other subjects with the goal of developing girls' ability to challenge and resist discrimination while rising above it.

Sahni, Urvashi. 2012. *From Learning Outcomes to Life Outcomes: What Can You Do and Who Can You Be? A Case Study in Girls' Education in India*. Working Paper 4. Washington: Brookings Institution.

Lloyd, Cynthia B. 2013. "Education for Girls: Alternative Pathways to Girls' Empowerment." Integrated Approaches to Improving the Lives of Adolescent Girls Issue Paper Series. [GirlEffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org).

Provide girls with female mentors and role models

- › In India, in villages with a female leader for two election cycles, **the gender gap in parent's aspirations for their daughters and sons closes by 20 percent** and the gender gap in an adolescent's aspirations closes by 32 percent. Furthermore, adolescent girls in these villages were 8.3 percentage points more likely to not want to be a housewife or have their occupation determined by their in-laws, 8.8 percentage points more likely to want to marry after eighteen, and 8.6 percentage points more likely to want a job that requires an education.

Beaman, Lori, Esther Duflo, Rohindi Pande, and Petra Topalova. 2012. "Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India." *Science* 335, no. 6068: 582-86.

Jameel, Abdul L. 2012. *Raising Female Leaders*. Policy Brief. Cambridge, Mass.: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.

For the full Brookings Institution Report: What Works in Girls' Education, you can find it here: <https://www.malala.org/brookings-report>