

Context

Girls' education is more than just about getting girls into school. It is also about ensuring that girls feel safe and learn while in school, complete all levels of education with the skills and competencies to secure jobs, make decisions about their own lives, and contribute to their communities and the world.

Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be healthier than uneducated women, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and enable better health care and education for their children. All these factors combined can help lift households out of poverty.

In many countries today, primary and secondary school enrollment rates are the same for girls and boys. Two-thirds of all countries have reached gender parity in primary enrollment. Globally, however, 62 million girls between the ages of six and 15 are not in school, and girls continue to lag substantially behind boys in secondary school completion rates.

Sixteen million girls between the ages six and 11 will never enter school compared to eight million boys. In South and West Asia, for example, 80 percent of out-of-school girls will never start compared to 16 percent of out-of-school boys. This means that approximately four million girls across the region will remain excluded from education.

Poverty remains the most important factor for determining whether a girl will access an education. Recent research looking at data from 24 low-income countries shows that, on average, only 34 percent of girls in the poorest-quintile households in these countries complete primary school, compared with 72 percent of girls in the richest-quintile households. Studies consistently reinforce that girls who face multiple sources of disadvantage such as low family income level, living in remote or underserved locations, disability and/or minority ethno-linguistic backgrounds are farthest behind.

Violence also negatively impacts access to education and a safe environment for learning. For example, in Afghanistan, studies have shown that parents are afraid to send their daughters to school because of the violence directed against girls.

Worldwide, girls overcome barriers to education caused by poverty, cultural norms and practices, substandard service delivery, poor infrastructure and fragility. In recent years, governments, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, bilateral and multilateral donors, and girls and women as agents of change and their own empowerment, have advanced multi-sectoral approaches to overcome these challenges including, though not limited to:

- Providing conditional cash transfers, stipends or scholarships;
- Reducing distance to school;
- Launching media campaigns and awareness building initiatives;
- Targeting boys and men to be a part of discussions about cultural and societal practices;
- Ensuring gender-sensitive curricula and pedagogies;
- Hiring and training qualified female teachers;
- Building safe and inclusive learning environments for girls and young women;
- Ending child/early marriage; and
- Addressing violence against girls and women.

Strategy

Girls' education and promoting gender equality is part of a broader, holistic effort by the World Bank Group. It includes ensuring that girls do not suffer disproportionately in poor and vulnerable households—especially during times of crisis—and advancing skills and job opportunities for adolescent girls and young women. In addition, it covers financing and analytical work in support of ending child marriage, removing financial barriers that keep girls out of school, improving access to reproductive health services, and preventing gender-based violence.

Gender equality is central to the World Bank Group's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity in a sustainable manner. No society can develop sustainably without transforming the distribution of opportunities, resources, and choices for men and women so that they have equal power to shape their own lives and contribute to their families, communities, and countries.

In September 2015, with the adoption of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), United Nations member states committed to a renewed framework for development. The achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (SDG 5) is central to the SDG agenda.

The World Bank Group is a partner and one of many stakeholders in the international drive, reinforced by adoption of the SDGs, to improve gender equality and empower girls and women. This commitment to action is captured in the World Bank Group's [Gender Strategy 2016 - 2023: Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth](#) and [Education Strategy 2020: Learning for All](#).

The World Bank Group recognizes that a systems-driven, evidence-based approach to address the multiple sources of disadvantage that many girls and women face—whether in terms of employability, income, health, or the education of their children—is required to fully realize the many benefits of educating girls and women. This approach has been taken up within country programs and addressed through analytical work to further the global evidence base of “what works” to improve gender equality.

The World Bank Group's Global Education Practice is leading and contributing to country engagements and global knowledge. These include projects across the world in countries such as Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

Across regions new research is increasing the global understanding regarding constraints to girls' education, such as the [economic impacts of child marriage](#), a joint, ground-breaking research project with the [International Center for Research on Women](#).

Reports across the World Bank Group are also informing girls' education activities and engagement including: [Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity](#), and [Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal](#).

Results

The World Bank commits significant portions of education lending each year to activities promoting girls' education through the International Development Association (IDA) – the World Bank's fund for the poorest countries – and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The World Bank supports girls' education through a variety of interventions. These include stipends to improve primary and secondary school completion for girls and young women, skills development programs, gender-inclusive and -responsive teaching and learning, recruitment and training of female teachers, and building safe and inclusive schools for girls.

Recent World Bank Group projects have supported the following results:

- **Bangladesh:** 1.24 million girls in 6,700 secondary schools have benefitted from the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project
- **Ghana:** approximately 2,000 of a targeted 6,000 girls have already received scholarships under the ongoing Secondary Education Improvement Project
- **Pakistan:** as a result of the Promoting Girls' Education in Balochistan Project, almost 39,000 children are now attending school, including 33,414 girls across Balochistan province
- **Nigeria:** in Kaduna State, Junior Secondary School completion rates for girls increased from 7 percent in 2007 to 34 percent in 2011, the lifetime of the State Education Sector Project
- **Yemen:** the Secondary Education Development for Girls Access Project implemented in 5 governorates contributed to the Gender Parity Index in secondary gross enrollment increasing from 0.43 to 0.63; and an increase in the retention rate of girls in Grade 10-12 from 78 percent to 85 percent

Between 2008 to 2015, the World Bank Group supported the [Adolescent Girls Initiative](#), a public-private partnership to promote the transition of adolescent girls from school to productive employment through innovative interventions that are piloted, and then scaled-up or replicated if successful.

The eight country pilot included Afghanistan, Jordan, Lao PDR, Liberia, Haiti, Nepal, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Program results include:

- **Haiti:** over 1,000 young women benefited from technical and soft-skills training
- **Liberia:** 2,500 young women were trained for either wage employment or self-employment plus life skills, with an emphasis on job placement and follow-up support as a result of the Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Project

Partners

The World Bank Group works closely with governments and other development organizations on girls' education issues to identify and advance interventions that improve girls' education outcomes and provide resources to support countries implementing such initiatives.

It is a member of the [United Nations Girls' Education Initiative](#), which is comprised of [over 20 partners](#) representing multilateral, bilateral, civil society, and non-governmental organizations.

Since 2002, the World Bank Group has also worked closely with the [Global Partnership for Education](#) (GPE). The WBG supports the partnership in general, as a Board Member, host of the GPE Secretariat, trustee and grant agent for the vast majority of GPE grants.