



COUNT ME IN!

World Bank Education Global Practice
Improving Education Outcomes
for Girls and Young Women



Ensuring that all girls and young women receive a quality education is their human right, a global development priority, and a strategic priority for the World Bank.

Achieving gender equality is central to the World Bank Group twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. As the largest financing development partner in education globally, the World Bank ensures that all of its education projects are gender-sensitive, and works to overcome barriers that are preventing girls and boys from equally benefiting from countries' investments in education.

Girls' education goes beyond getting girls into school. It is also about ensuring that girls learn and feel safe while in school; have the opportunity to complete all levels of education, acquiring the knowledge and skills to compete in the labor market; gain socio-emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; make decisions about their own lives; and contribute to their communities and the world.



WHY IS IT CRITICAL TO INVEST IN GIRLS' EDUCATION?

Both individuals and countries benefit from girls' education. Better-educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and healthcare, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and their children are usually healthier, should they choose to become mothers. They are more likely to participate in the formal labor market and earn higher incomes. A recent World Bank [study](#) estimates that the "limited educational opportunities for girls, and barriers to completing 12 years of education, cost countries between US\$15 trillion¹ and \$30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings." All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

The World Bank is strongly committed to addressing the barriers girls face in trying to obtain an education. More than 150 million girls and young women worldwide are benefiting from World Bank projects and initiatives.

The World Bank's support for girls' education has grown significantly in recent years. Our work includes lending operations and grants, data collection and analytical work, as well as strategic partnerships with organizations and partners worldwide. The World Bank supports girls' and young women's education through the [Education Global Practice](#) and through projects that leverage education, health, social protection, water, and infrastructure interventions, among others.

Over the past few decades, there has been steady and significant improvement in education outcomes, including increasing access and improving learning, for girls and young women globally. Despite these improvements, progress is still lagging on some key indicators for girls' education, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and in contexts affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV).

¹ All dollars are in US\$ unless otherwise indicated.

Removing Barriers to Girls' Schooling

The **Third Punjab Education Sector Reform Program** in **Pakistan** is supporting retention and transition of girls in public schools through: (1) conditional cash transfers for girls; (2) better representation of female teachers in schools; (3) improved continuous professional development targeting quality of learning; and (4) voucher programs under Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) to target out-of-school children, including girls. The initial positive impact of this program—a 9 percent increase in female enrollment after two years—has been sustained. In 2016, the female enrollment in stipend districts had increased by 61 percent since 2004, compared with a 25 percent increase in male enrollment. **The School Education Department program has continued to implement the strengthened program in 16 disadvantaged districts, and the stipend has benefited more than 370,000 female students.**

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CHALLENGES IN GIRLS' EDUCATION: THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

129+ million

GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL WORLDWIDE

32 million

of primary-school age

97 million

secondary-school age

In South Asia, approximately **46 million** primary and secondary school-age girls are out of school. In Sub-Saharan Africa, that number is **52 million**.

In FCV contexts, **girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys at the secondary level.**

GIRLS IN FCV CONTEXTS ARE 90% MORE LIKELY TO BE OUT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL THAN GIRLS IN NON-FCV CONTEXTS.

There is a **large gender gap**

in labor force participation which is especially stark in South Asia, which has one of the **lowest female labor force participation rates at 24%**.

While there are similar rates for primary completion globally (90% male, 89% female), **school completion for both is much lower for the completion of secondary school in low income countries, with the discrepancy between girls and boys even sharper:**

36%
FEMALE

44%
MALE

It has been estimated that **two-thirds of the world's illiterate population are women.**

The literacy rate (above 15 years old)

83%
FEMALE

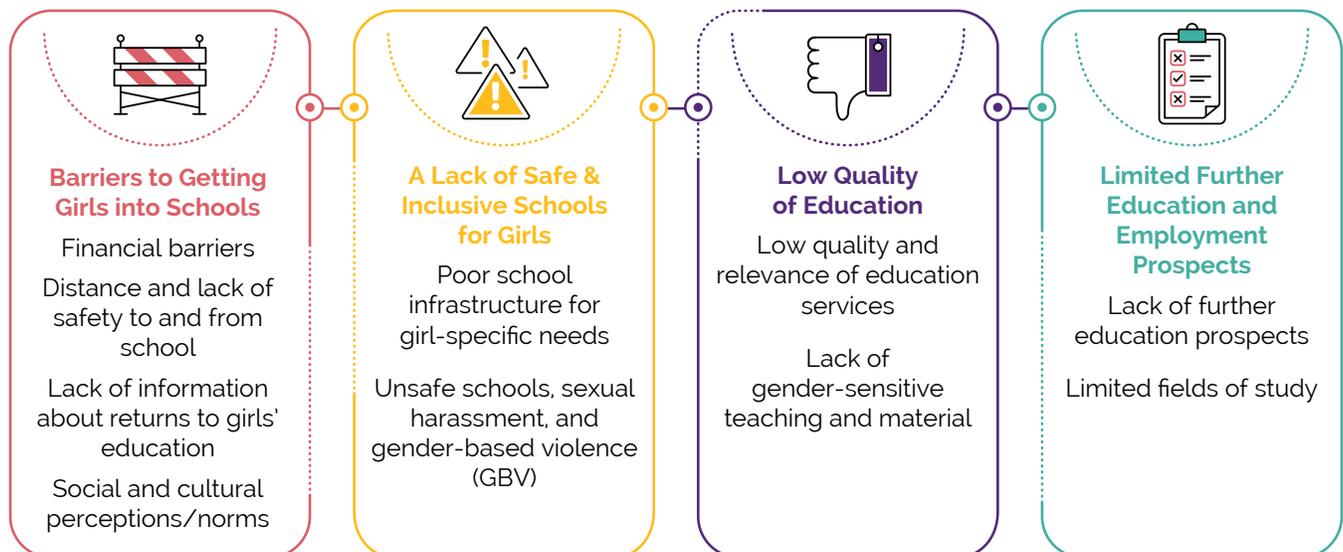
90%
MALE

BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS ARE FACING A LEARNING CRISIS. Learning Poverty (LP) measures the share of children who are not able to read and understand a simple text by age 10. While girls are on average 4 percentage points less learning-poor than boys, the rates remain very high for both groups. The average of LP in in low- and middle-income countries is

females 55% | males 59%

The gap is narrower in low-income countries, **where LP averages about 93% for both boys and girls.**

The World Bank's approach to supporting girls' education recognizes that multiple factors lead to low enrollment rates, low educational attainment, as well as low levels of learning. Some of these constraints affect boys and girls alike, while others affect one gender more than the other. Constraints include:



THESE CHALLENGES HAVE BEEN COMPOUNDED BY THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 Recovery in Education

The COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures have **significantly impacted both boys and girls**. This generation now risks losing **\$17 trillion in lifetime earnings**. In low- and middle-income countries the share of children living in Learning Poverty will also rise sharply—potentially up to 70 percent. The early evidence is mixed on the gender-related impacts of this crisis. In some contexts, girls have faced disproportionate impacts on school dropouts and learning losses, while in others, boys have been at a disadvantage.



As part of its **comprehensive operational response**, the World Bank is actively responding to the challenges presented to girls' education by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example:

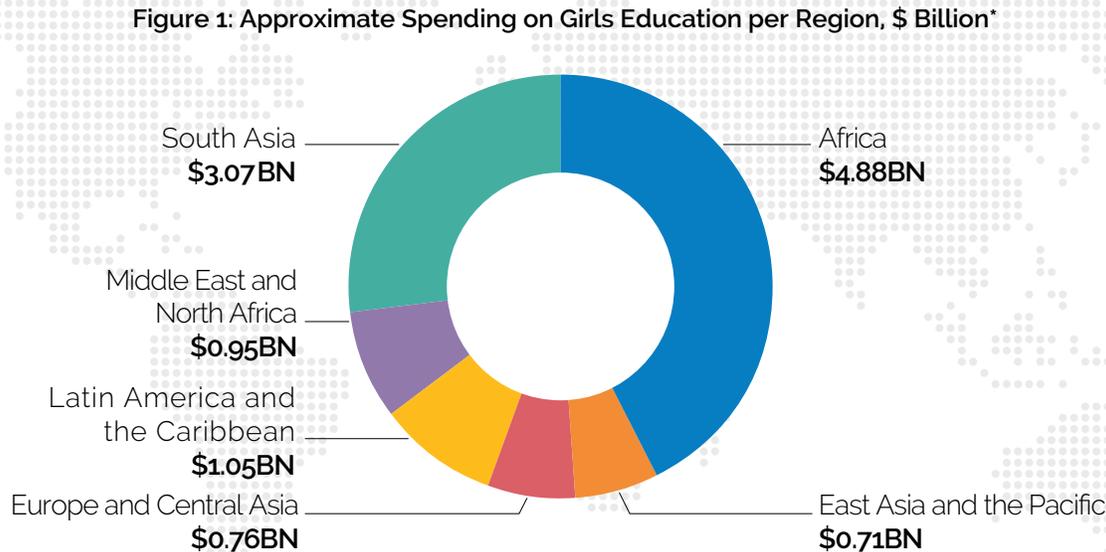
- o In **Chad**, the COVID-19 **Education Emergency Response Project** includes an advocacy campaign focused on reducing drop-outs due to COVID-19 and preventing exacerbated effects of gender-based violence (GBV) during this time.
- o The **Sudan Education COVID-19 Response Project** will run an awareness campaign to combat GBV and is creating specialized learning material for disadvantaged students who have been affected during this time, including girls.
- o Education projects addressing COVID-19 recovery in **Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, Pakistan** and **Uganda** all have components for advocacy campaigns about girls' re-enrollment.
- o In **Malawi**, a second additional financing to the **Equity with Quality and Learning at Secondary Project** includes sub grants to schools to provide cash transfers, in an effort to get both boys and girls back into school, with differentiated application for girls. In addition to the sub grant it also includes campaigns for readmission of students, and facilitation of mother groups, to sensitize and counsel vulnerable children to return to school.



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AN OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT TO GIRLS' EDUCATION IN WORLD BANK EDUCATION OPERATIONS

There are **172 active projects across 91 countries** in the Education Global Practice portfolio (as of February, 2022). The **total portfolio size is \$23.3 billion**, and the total approximate **spending on girls in these projects is \$11.4 billion—almost half of the total expenditure**. As our largest portfolios are in Africa and South Asia, the majority of this spending on girls' education is in the Africa and South Asia Regions. (Figure 1).



*Figures have been rounded

SUPPORTING GIRLS IN FCV CONTEXTS

Approximately **\$4.9 billion** of the **\$23.3 billion Education GP portfolio** is in countries affected by **fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV)**. An estimated **\$2.4 billion** goes to girls in FCV countries.

For example, *Support for Displaced Rohingya People (DRP)* is being fostered in **Bangladesh** through: (a) the establishment of 1,000 new and makeshift learning centers to conduct informal learning activities in **DRP camps**; (b) supporting approximately 500 already established learning centers through funding from other sources; (c) recruiting and training 2,000 teachers and learning instructors (at least 50 percent female) for the **DRP learning centers**; and (d) deploying a proportionate number of properly trained female teachers to address parents' safety concerns while ensuring retention of female learners. Consequently, about 112,000 children and adolescents are enrolled in 1,239 learning centers. **More than 55 percent of the enrolled students are girls with close to 100 percent retention rate in the first year.** More than 1,100 of the teachers are female and have completed special training.



Photo: GPE/Stephan Bachenheimer



SPOTLIGHT
ON

Investing in Early Childhood Education

Education, including early childhood education (ECE), is a priority for the Government of **Lao PDR**; however, coverage of ECE remains insufficient, with services and resources varying considerably across geographic, socio-economic and ethnic dimensions. The World Bank Group has provided funding of \$28 million, through the International Development Association (IDA), to the Government of Lao PDR for the **Early Childhood Education Project**. The ECE Project seeks to support the expansion of quality ECE services, with the objective of improving the overall development and school readiness of children aged 3-5 years in disadvantaged villages across the country. **It also provides scholarships for ethnic minority girls to become teachers, increasing access to early childhood education for girls.**

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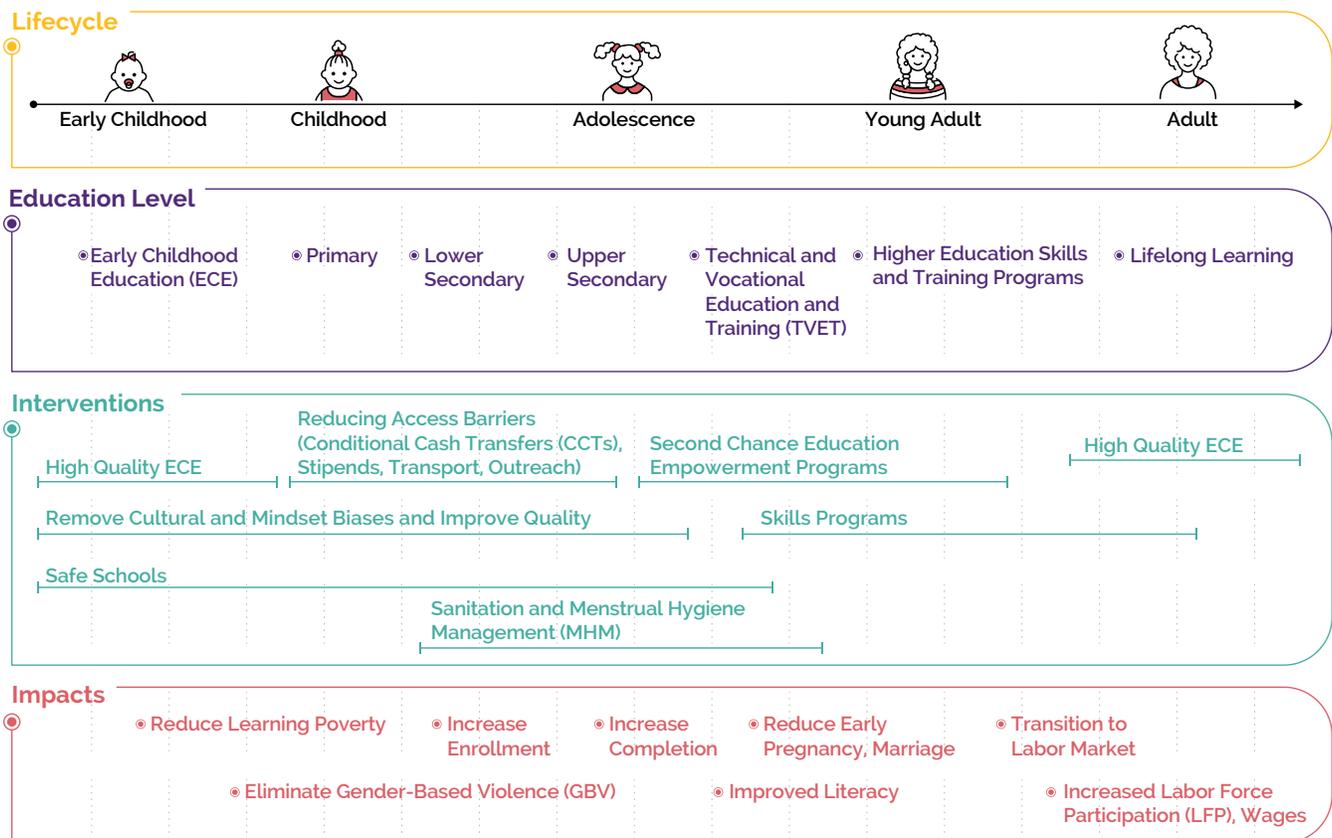
In **Morocco**, access to pre-primary education is particularly limited for girls in rural areas. The **Improving Early Childhood Development Outcomes in Rural Morocco** project will address the gender gap. The program will support enhanced early childhood development (ECD) outcomes for girls through a Behavior Change Campaign for improved ECD practices. This will include parental education sessions focused on positive parenting and promotion of girls' enrollment and attendance of preschool. **This will lead to a significant expansion of the supply of quality early childhood education services in rural areas and allow for the enrollment of 100,000 additional rural children.** It will also contribute to increase equitable access to quality pre-primary education especially for girls. This investment is expected to bring about positive benefits in terms of women's labor force participation overall, by reducing the time women allocate to caregiving, and by creating job opportunities for women as preschool educators.

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LIFECYCLE APPROACH: SUPPORT FROM BIRTH TO ADULTHOOD

The World Bank's work on girls' education takes a holistic approach—a lifecycle approach. Our project interventions focus on some of the biggest barriers to girls' education and are designed based on knowledge and evidence of successful interventions and what works in local contexts.

LIFECYCLE APPROACH: Education Interventions that Support Girls and Young Women from Birth to Adulthood



SPOTLIGHT ON



Empowering Girls and Young Women

The **Girls Empowerment and Learning Project** in Angola includes improved access to sexual and reproductive health services, while strengthening the information and knowledge of girls, boys, parents, and community leaders to boost uptake of these services. For out-of-school youth, the project scales up second-chance education, incorporating life skills and adolescent health information. **It introduces a scholarship program reaching 900,000 youth entering secondary school, with a registration bonus for girls.** In addition, support will be provided to improve teaching and learning outcomes, and 3,000 new classrooms will be built.

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SPOTLIGHT
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Educational Quality and Support for Girls

In Haiti, the projects *Providing an Education of Quality in Haiti* and *Providing an Education For All Haiti (EFA)* support quality girls' education. Project activities promote awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful stereotypes toward girls. A safer space will be created to learn life skills, and to improve safety and security among girls. **Activities include gender clubs for school beneficiaries, gender-sensitive rehabilitation of bathroom facilities, and in-service training of school directors and teachers.** Ultimately, these interventions will lower the likelihood that girls miss school and increase their chance to successfully transition to secondary education.

Eleven year old Jessica Prudent lives in Port-Au-Prince. She went to a school in Carrefour, one of the poorest neighborhoods of the capital. She benefited from the Tuition Waiver Program for six years, allowing her to attend school for free. In Haiti, parents have to pay on average \$130 each year to send their children to school, leaving more than 200,000 children who cannot pay, out of school.



On average, children start school two years late, as was the case for Jessica's older sister. Her mom says,

"The first one did not enter school early. She is 21 years old and in her final year of secondary school."

Jessica adds,

"The Program EFA helped me pursue my studies. If I didn't have it, I don't know where I would be at this time."

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PARTNERSHIPS EQUAL GREATER IMPACT

Partnerships both within and outside of the World Bank are critical to the Education Global Practice's (GP) work on girls' education. The Education GP works with other global practices in the Bank to improve girls' education—for example, collaborating with the Water GP for access to sanitation and hygiene in schools, with Social Protection and Jobs GP for challenges related to labor market transition, or Energy GP to improve school safety.

The World Bank collaborates actively with many donors and organizations. As a signatory to the G7 Charlevoix Commitment, the Bank has already committed an estimated \$3.2 billion to girls' education in FCV countries as of February, 2022—exceeding its pledge of \$2.0 billion from 2018 to 2023. The Education GP is also:

- o collaborating with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office FCDO (UK) about targets and high-level engagement with G7 donors, to support aid and financial commitment for girls' education;
- o a member of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Girls' EIE Reference Group, which seeks to further research and advocacy for girls' education in emergencies;
- o a member of the UNESCO Gender Flagship Reference Group and has provided technical contributions to the UNESCO-commissioned study *"When schools shut: Gendered impacts of COVID-19 school closures"*; and
- o working closely with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as the implementing agency for 57 percent of the total GPE grants of \$3.46 billion, that also support girls' education.



Developing Skills for Life and Labor Market Success

In order for **Bangladesh** to meet its future workforce demands, removing barriers that prevent more women from entering the labor force is a crucial step. The World Bank has partnered with the government on **Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP)**, investing in 45 polytechnic institutes to improve female inclusion and deliver industry-relevant skills. The Project has: (a) provided stipends to a total of 240,118 beneficiaries (18 percent female) and 135,631 students (22 percent female) currently on stipend; (b) trained 125,997 unemployed youth (28 percent female); and, (c) certified skills of 31,830 informal sector workers (22 percent female) through the Recognition of Prior Learning. **Enrollment of females in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions has increased to over 20 percent by completion**, and women's participation in the program has enhanced their employment opportunities and promoted their empowerment.

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"I came from a very small village to study at the Dhaka Mahila Polytechnic Institute. My father died in 2013 and I had to struggle to get by, to get here to study computer technology. My dream is to open a programing firm in the future to help kids who had to struggle like I did."

— Kamrul Nahar Omi (young woman in the middle)
STEP program participant



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