

GENDER & EDUCATION

Basic Education Coalition

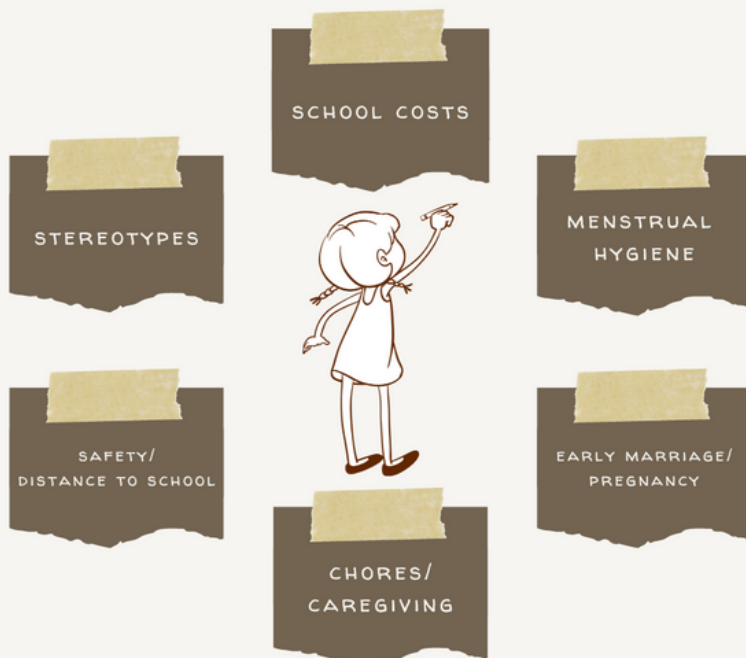
WHY ARE WE STILL TALKING ABOUT GENDER?

For the past two decades, the U.S. Government has been a global leader in promoting education, particularly for girls. Initiatives like "Let Girls Learn" have significantly contributed to narrowing educational equity gaps. However, there remains much work to be done.

IN 2019, 129 MILLION GIRLS WERE NOT IN PRIMARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL.

9 MILLION GIRLS WOULD NEVER ENTER PRIMARY SCHOOL, THREE TIMES THE NUMBER OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL BOYS.¹

WHAT BARRIERS DO GIRLS FACE IN EDUCATION?



WHAT ARE THE CURRENT CHALLENGES?

In the midst of positive developments in girls' education globally, areas of growth remain. These include:

- Reaching the most marginalized girls, particularly those in rural areas, with disabilities, and/or in the geographic regions that have shown the least progress (North Africa, Western Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa).
- Ensuring that girls in primary school successfully transition to and complete secondary school.
- Supporting girls to pursue STEM education and gain 21st-century skills so that they can help address global issues such as climate change and ultimately to close the salary gap with men.
- Providing additional support to girls in areas of conflict and crisis. In such places, girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected areas.²

WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD? ENHANCING INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Some of the barriers to girls' education can be addressed through improved infrastructure and financial inputs. However, others will require immense changes in mindsets, attitudes, and systems.

- At the very minimum, all students must feel safe and protected at school. The prevalence of sexual, physical, or psychological violence inflicted on children and youth in and around schools because of their perceived sex or gender remains high.³ This often results in poor performance, irregular attendance, dropout, and low self-esteem. Confidential counseling and reporting mechanisms are necessary, with a context-specific, participatory, multisectoral approach.
- Programs must educate the community to combat gender stereotypes and build awareness around the benefits of girls' education among families, communities, education stakeholders, and girls themselves and then translate it into behavior change.
- Programming must also build political will, strengthen education systems, and train system actors to create inclusive, equitable policies and practices from the national to the local levels.
- Girls need to be able to shape their own futures, with opportunities to build critical-thinking, social-emotional, leadership, and self-advocacy skills.
- Female staff are underrepresented in the higher ranks of schools (e.g., school principals, secondary school teachers, etc.), depriving young women of female role models and mentors. Filling this gap requires robust capacity strengthening for all education actors and increased opportunities for women's professional development in the education sector.
- Education programs must engage parents and community members, who can help mobilize local resources, hold schools accountable, and ensure that their children are treated with gender equity.
- Teaching and learning approaches and materials that promote more equitable gender roles for girls—and boys—are essential to combat stereotypes and violence that limit the aspirations and possibilities for all learners.
- Engaging men and boys as allies is a key step in promoting girls' education. The effects of educating girls impact the individual student, families, communities, and entire nations, thus, all hands are needed to create sustainable change.



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WE WANT TO BUILD ON A LONG HISTORY OF CREATING BETTER ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY FOR YOUNG GIRLS, BECAUSE WE ALL KNOW THAT GIRLS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL FORCES FOR DRIVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PROSPERITY, AND SECURITY. WHEN GIRLS STAY IN SCHOOL, THEY ARE HEALTHIER, MARRY LATER, ARE MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FORMAL ECONOMY, AND THE WORLD, BY ALL MEASURES, GETS BETTER.

USAID Administrator Samantha Power

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¹<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046272>

²<https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

³<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374509/PDF/374509eng.pdf.multi>