

Policy Note



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Accelerating adolescent girls' education and empowerment: a call for action to the G7

Overview

Catalysing global action on adolescent girls' education and empowerment is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and establishing foundations for broader economic growth and prosperity. To achieve this, the G7 Whistler Declaration on Adolescent Girls can play a key role by recognising the second decade of life as an age of opportunity and strategically investing – through secondary school and beyond – in the world's unprecedented 1.2 billion adolescents.

Scale of the challenge

1. **Despite progress – and known spill over impacts of girls' education on health, nutrition and economic development – nearly 100 million girls remain out of school globally due to discriminatory gender norms.** The most disadvantaged girls, including those with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and those living in remote or conflict-affected areas, are most likely to be denied their rights to an education.
2. **Recent improvements in access to school have not been accompanied by investments in quality instruction and safety.** Schools in LMICs too rarely provide age-appropriate, gender-responsive learning environments that support girls' acquisition of academic, social-emotional and practical skills needed to transition successfully into adulthood.
3. **The cost of providing universal primary and secondary education in low- and lower-middle income countries is expected to balloon to US \$340 billion in 2030.** An annual funding gap of US\$39 billion must be met by aid, and underpinned by a coordinated global finance and accountability architecture.

Key actions for the G7

1. **Move beyond global and national aggregates to focus on “leaving no girl behind”,** ensuring that the poorest and geographically remote, minorities, those with disabilities, adolescent wives and mothers have access to quality education that supports them to both aspire and achieve. Given girls' particular vulnerabilities in conflict-affected settings, lessons regarding rapid scale up of education services from recent conflicts need to be harnessed and funding for education in humanitarian contexts tripled from 2% to 6% to support these.
2. **Improve educational quality by focusing on teacher training, tackling age- and gender-based violence in schools, and delivering a broad menu of skills relevant to girls' real-world needs,** including communication and leadership, technical and digital skills, and practical information on puberty and adolescent transitions.
3. **Increase aid to education six-fold to tackle critical funding gaps, prioritising low-income countries and taking a coordinated, inter-sectoral approach focused on developing the multiple capabilities adolescent girls require** to become educated, healthy, empowered, economically contributing adults. This will require strengthening international frameworks to measure progress, appointing gender champions at senior levels within countries and donor organisations, and investing at least 5% of programme budget targets in evidence about “what works”.

1 The investment case for a focus on adolescent girls

Adolescence as a critical intervention window

Over the past decade, adolescence has become increasingly seen as an ‘age of opportunity’ (Sheehan et al., 2017; Steinberg, 2015; UNFPA, 2014). A wide range of actors – from neuroscientists to development economists to United Nations (UN) agencies – have begun urging parents, school communities and national governments to look past the traditional ‘deficit’ model of adolescence and focus instead on how children’s rapid maturation during the second decade of life can be leveraged to alter and accelerate their adult trajectories. Research suggests that benefits are especially strong for adolescent girls, who are still far more likely than boys to be denied their rights – including the right to an education – despite the commitments laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) (UNFPA, 2014; UNICEF, 2011).

For the development community, the growing focus on adolescents is in part due to their sheer numbers: more than 1.2 billion people – one-sixth of the world’s population

– are aged between 10 and 19 (UNICEF, 2011). Nearly 90% of these young people live in developing countries, and this percentage is expected to increase further given that birth rates in much of sub-Saharan Africa mean that up to half of the population there are under the age of 18 (UNFPA, 2014). Notably, many of these ‘young’ countries are also among the most gender-inequitable (in terms of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index) and tend to have the worst educational outcomes for girls (UNFPA, 2014).

In the global North, the recent focus on adolescence has largely been driven by changes in our understanding of how the human brain develops. Rather than highlighting what adolescents lack – i.e. a functional frontal lobe and an ability to prioritise longer-term outcomes – research is increasingly concentrating on the ways in which adolescents respond to cognitive, emotional and social stimuli. It has found that the threats and rewards that adolescents consider most salient are social and are reinforced through peer interactions, and that adolescents’ brains appear uniquely sensitive to memory formation. Taken together, these new insights open up possibilities for designing interventions that can not only support young people through the difficult and often risky years of adolescence, but also optimise their outcomes in adulthood (Fuhrmann et al., 2015; Crone and Dahl, 2012).



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Discriminatory social norms hinder adolescent girls' trajectories disproportionately

Recognition of the centrality of social-emotional learning during adolescence has coincided with a growing global understanding of how social norms shape beliefs and behaviours, which has in turn led to the emerging consensus that adolescence is a critical time for socialisation into gender roles (Kågesten et al., 2016; McCarthy et al., 2016). While the impacts of social norms on adolescents in general cannot be overstated, in the global South, girls bear the brunt of the burden. As boys see their physical and social worlds expand as they grow up, girls see their worlds shrink,

as they are all too often required to take on an ever-growing burden of household chores, leave school and marry – abandoning not only their educational and career plans but also their mobility and friendships (Harper et al., 2018; Kågesten et al., 2016; Hallman et al., 2015). Capitalising on this turning point in girls' lives – and using it to open up rather than close off their potential – is in many ways a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Taking action now is likely to bring pay-offs not just for individual girls but also for their families, communities and, ultimately, will contribute to achieving national and international development goals (see Box 1) (Kågesten et al., 2016).

Box 1: Why investing in adolescent girls' education is critical to international development

Addressing adolescent girls' education deficits is one of the critical challenges facing the international donor community for three key reasons:

Millions of girls are affected: In 2016 there were 263 million young people out of school (UNESCO, 2016). Of those, 61 million were adolescents of lower-secondary age (11–14 years) and 139 million were adolescents of upper-secondary age (15–17 years). Slightly more out-of-school adolescents are boys (51%) than girls (49%), on account of differential birth rates and boys' greater involvement in work activities outside the home. However, international averages hide considerable variation at the regional and national levels (UNGEI, 2018). In the world's poorest countries, such as Chad – where there are only 46 girls enrolled in secondary school for every 100 boys (Winthrop and McGivney, 2014) – girls remain starkly disadvantaged. Across all low-income countries, 41% of girls of lower-secondary age, but only 36% of boys, are out of school (UNESCO, 2017a). At the upper-secondary level, those figures rise to 67% and 58% respectively. Critically, of all out-of-school children, girls are more likely than boys to never have the opportunity to attend school: in 2016, 10% of primary school-aged girls (6–11 years) were out of school globally, compared to 8% of boys the same age (UNESCO, 2018a).

The economic dividends are significant and well-evidenced: While education is critical for all children, evidence suggests that the economic benefits of investing in girls' education are especially strong because of how those investments unfold, not only in girls' own lives but also through their contribution to their children, families and communities. Indeed, evidence suggests that the success of the SDGs in many ways depends on the investments the global community makes in adolescent girls (UNGEI, 2018; World Bank, 2018b). For example, it has been estimated that each year of primary school a girl completes raises her lifetime adult wages by between 10% and 20% (PRB, 2013); and, due to the more complex skill set mastered in secondary school, each year of secondary school she completes raises her adult wages by 25% (Schultz, 2002). In some countries, impacts are striking: in Pakistan, for example, highly literate women were found to earn 95% more than women with minimal literacy, whereas the differential for men was only 33% (Aslam et al., 2010). The impacts of women's increased earning potential on household poverty are substantial, because women have been found to spend 90% of their income on their families, compared to only 30%–40% spent by men (Women Deliver, 2015). Impacts on national economies are also large. For every percentage point increase in girls' education, a country's gross domestic product (GDP) climbs 0.3% (Dollar and Gatti, 1999). Over time, this increment adds up. It is estimated that by 2050, GDP losses due to a lack of universal education will equal \$1.8 trillion for low-income countries alone (International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2016).

Positive spillover effects on global health and nutrition outcomes are undisputed: The impacts of educating girls also affects a wide range of health and nutrition outcomes. Shell-Duncan et al., (2016) note that education has been found to be associated with the decline of FGM/C. The likelihood a woman allows her daughter to be cut diminishes as the mother's level of education rises. In the case of HIV risks, in South Africa, girls who had not completed high school were 3.75 times more likely to be HIV positive than their peers who had completed secondary school (Pettifor et al., 2008). Similarly, if all girls were to complete secondary school, child marriage rates would plunge by an estimated two-thirds (Global Partnership for Education, 2014), child mortality would decline by 49%, and 26% fewer children would suffer from stunting (UNESCO, 2014). Indeed, the impact of girls' education is so strong that effects are visible with even a single year more education. For example, for every additional year of maternal education, children stay in school for 0.3 more years (Bhalotra et al., 2013) and child mortality rates due to pneumonia drop 14% (Gakidou, 2013). Educating girls is also critical to improving community health, given that 75% of health workers are female (UNGEI, 2018), and critical to future gains in education, given that in many countries, today's girls are tomorrow's teachers (World Bank, 2012).

2 Barriers to girls' education

The advent of adolescence often results in the end of girls' education for multiple, often inter-linked reasons:

Education-related costs often prevent parents sending girls to secondary school: While there has been strong progress in supporting girls to complete primary school, in the absence of social protection that shifts some education-related costs away from families, many parents prevent girls attending secondary school because they are unwilling to invest their limited financial resources (UNGEI, 2018). Even when tuition is free, indirect costs such as uniforms and school supplies are often more than the poorest families can bear or are willing to spend on their daughters, given that educating girls is seen as less likely to translate into paid employment and subsequent contributions back to the family than educating boys (UNGEI, 2018; World Bank, 2012; UNICEF, 2011). Rural girls are especially disadvantaged, given that secondary schools in some countries tend to be located in urban areas and thus require significant outlays for transportation or boarding, which adds to parents' concerns about girls' safety en route to or at school (Harper et al., 2018).

Time-consuming domestic and care-related tasks negatively impact adolescent girls' schooling: Adolescent girls in many countries in the global South find that their engagement with education tails off due to increased domestic responsibilities as they grow older and become more capable of substituting their own labour for that of their mothers (Harper et al., 2018). Indeed, UNICEF (2016) estimates that on a global basis, girls between the ages of 5 and 14 spend 550 million hours a day on household chores – 160 million more than boys. National-level data supports these global patterns. In Rwanda, among children aged 10–14, the average girl spends 4 hours more each week on chores than the average boy (NISR, 2012), and by age 15, this gap has risen to 6 hours. Girls' greater responsibility for household work has various implications for their schooling. They are more likely to be late (because they are fetching water), absent (because they are caring for siblings), and to fail important examinations (because they are not allowed time to study). In Ethiopia, for example, 55% of girls failed the 2014 General School Leaving Certificate Examination at end of 10th grade, compared to 39% of boys – despite more lenient pass scores required of female students (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Child marriage and early motherhood are key barriers to adolescent girls' education, especially for adolescents aged 15+ years: Child marriage, which is both a cause and a consequence of girls' limited access to secondary education (Brown, 2012), directly impacts 41,000 girls under the age of 18 every day (Wodon et al.,

2017). Indeed, despite recent progress in tackling child marriage, in 2018, 40% of young women aged 20–24 living in the least developed countries had married before reaching adulthood, i.e. the age of 18, and 12% had married before the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2018). Rates in some countries are far higher than the global averages. In Niger, for example, three-quarters of girls are married as children. In addition, although child marriage rates globally are declining, there is evidence that in some humanitarian contexts, they are increasing.

They forced me to stop my education and made me marry. . . . It is because I am female that I have been forced to drop out from school. . . . I have suffered a lot as a result of dropping out of my education. The chance to attend school was given to my brother. (girl, 14 years, Ethiopia)

Among Syrian refugee girls in Jordan, for example, rates rose from 12% in 2011 to 32% in 2014, as families desperate to make ends meet married their under-age daughters to (often older) men whom they believed could provide for them (Girls Not Brides, 2017). Notably, while many girls are withdrawn from school prior to marriage, others are forcibly withdrawn explicitly for marriage (Brown, 2012); and regardless of when they are pulled out of school, once they are married, few return. In Nigeria, only 2% of married girls are in school, compared to nearly 70% of their unmarried peers (Brown, 2012). The 2016 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that married girls were out of school because they were too busy with family life (47%) or denied permission by their (usually significantly older) husbands (30%) (CSA and ICF International, 2017). For young brides who soon become young mothers, the law can even prevent them from accessing their right to an education. In Tanzania, for instance, schools regularly give girls pregnancy tests, and 8,000 girls are expelled each year due to pregnancy (UNGEI, 2018).

Gender- and age-based violence in schools also precludes girls' education: On a global basis, 732 million children live in countries where corporal punishment at school is allowed and 130 million adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 experience bullying (UNICEF, 2017). Girls are particularly at risk. In some countries, violence is directed at girls specifically because they are pursuing an education. Sperling and Winthrop (2016) note that since 2009 there have been at least 70 countries where the idea of girls' education has been attacked at least once.

Children should be beaten when they are late at school. However, it makes me sad when my daughter is beaten because of not having some school materials. It is not her fault that we are poor. (mother of adolescent girl, Rwanda)



Photo © Lindsay Mgbor/Department for International Development

In most countries, however, girls experience violence not because they are pursuing an education per se, but simply because they are girls (Parkes et al., 2017; Leach et al., 2014). In Bangladesh, nearly 90% of girls aged 10–18 have experienced sexual harassment (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) 2010 survey, cited in Islam, 2012) and in Uganda, up to two-thirds of girls aged 15–19 have experienced physical or sexual violence (UNICEF, 2011). Critically, school is not a respite from this violence. Indeed, more than three-quarters of students in Ghana and Senegal report that teachers are the primary perpetrators of school violence (Fancy et al., 2012). Research has found that in South Africa, for example, nearly one-third of girls have been raped in or near school (UNGEI, UNESCO and EFA, 2015) and that in other countries, including Ghana and Tanzania, teachers sometimes pressure girls to trade sex for grades (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016; Morley, 2011). Notably, it is not only the threat of violence that leads parents to keep their adolescent daughters at home; parents' actions are also driven by discriminatory gender norms that place girls' sexual purity at the centre of family honour, and girls may find themselves homebound until they marry in order to protect this (Harper et al., 2018).

A dearth of 'girl-friendly' school facilities may also push girls out of school: In some contexts, girls require separate classrooms (or shifts) and female teachers so as to protect their reputation – or inspire them to different futures (UNGEI, 2018; Marcus and Paige, 2016). In Liberia, for example, where only 13% of primary teachers are female, more than half of all girls are out of school in part because they do not see education as obtainable for females (UNESCO, 2017b). In other contexts, providing sex-segregated toilets and menstrual supplies can make a critical difference. In Bangladesh, 40% of girls missed an average of three days at school each month due to their periods (Alam et al., 2014) and in Ghana, supplying girls with sanitary pads and puberty education improved their classroom participation (Dolan et al., 2014). The idea of girl-friendly schools also encompasses welcoming married girls and young mothers back into the classroom, providing them with childcare and catch-up tutorial support where necessary (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016). Critically, given the developmental imperatives of adolescence, providing girls – and boys – with practical information about how their bodies work, and giving them access to contraception, can also eliminate a barrier to their continued schooling (High-Impact Practices, 2014).

Poor-quality teaching and environments also forces adolescents (especially girls) out of school: Driven in part by the large enrolment gains seen since 2000, classrooms in many developing countries are overcrowded and poorly supplied, with teachers receiving inadequate age-appropriate training and support (World Bank, 2018b). Indeed, learning outcomes in most LMICs remain low and in some they have been declining (UNESCO, 2015a). A survey of 27,000 girls in 12 countries, for example, found that the literacy levels of 14- and 15-year-old girls were similar to those expected of 7-year-olds (Coffey International Development Ltd., 2015). Given the higher opportunity costs of educating adolescent girls – who are both more capable of earning their own income and of freeing up their mothers’ time by substituting their own – and the lower returns to investment that many parents see to girls’ versus boys’ education, parents often pull girls out of school if they see they are not learning (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016). In Ethiopia, for example, Jones et al. (2016) found that a primary reason for girls’ school leaving (and child marriage) was failure on the national exams for which most rural students lack adequate preparation to pass given resourcing at rural schools.

When girls fail to get promoted to the next grade level, their parents worry that they will be idle and switch to practice sexual activities. (girl, 13 years, Ethiopia)

Limited attention to adolescent girls’ voices and leadership: There is also too little attention paid to helping adolescents, especially girls (given gendered norms that encourage passivity), to master the soft skills (such as communication, confidence and collaboration) that are increasingly important to a successful transition to paid employment in today’s more non-agricultural labour markets (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016; Cunningham et al., 2016). The overcrowded classrooms in many developing countries rely solely on learning by rote (World Bank, 2018b; Sperling and Winthrop, 2016). Teachers tend to prioritise boys over girls for both question-asking opportunities and classroom leadership positions; where projects and programmes do provide opportunities for girls’ active participation, they tend to be led by non-government organisations (NGOs), are usually short term, small scale, and sometimes provided to girls who need them the least (Marcus and Page, 2016).

Men and boys are more confident. It is the reason why boys are the class representatives while the girls are the deputies. When a girl represents a class, it’s taken as a favour. (girl, Rwanda)

In Viet Nam, for example, Jones et al. (2015) found that children’s and girls’ club places were often allocated to the highest-performing students and that the specific threats facing adolescent girls (e.g child marriage or marriage by kidnapping) were often not prioritised even in rights-based curricula. Supporting girls to grow their own voices not only lengthens their educational trajectories and improves their learning outcomes, as they are better able to bargain with their parents to stay in school and have time to study, but also reduces their odds of child and forced marriage and gender-based violence, as they are better able to articulate their own aspirations and protect themselves (Harper et al., 2018). The impacts of girls’ gaining more voice extend to governance as well. Research in 18 sub-Saharan African countries has found that those with at least a primary education are 1.5 times more likely to support democracy than those with no education (UNICEF, 2015).

Weak linkages between school curricula and labour market demands serve as a further disincentive to parental investment in adolescent girls’ schooling: Parents’ commitment to their daughters’ education is also shaped by the reality that girls’ and women’s access to paid employment is far more limited than that of boys and men. Unemployment rates for girls and young women are significantly higher than those of their male peers – 11.5% versus 9.3% for all low-income countries and 15.2% versus 12.8% for LMICs in 2014, with particularly high rates in the Middle East and North Africa (47.5% versus 25.2%) (World Bank, 2018a). Where adolescent girls do find employment, they are disproportionately likely to be confined to either agriculture or the informal labour market in general, and domestic work in particular (UN Women, 2015; Perrons, 2014; Nanda et al., 2013). The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2013) estimates that nearly 10% of all employed 15–17-year-old girls are working as domestic workers – jobs which do not require investment in secondary education.

According to Hmong people, 9th and 12th grade are the same, they don’t need an education level, they just need a person who is hard working to marry. (mother, Viet Nam)

Schools have also done a poor job in providing access and supporting quality education for the most marginalised girls – including the poorest girls, those from ethnic and linguistic minorities, refugees, and girls with disabilities: In Ethiopia, for example, only 11% of poor rural girls complete primary school, compared to 85% of rich urban boys (UNESCO, 2015b). In Viet Nam, only 3.4% of Hmong girls are enrolled in upper-secondary school, compared to 66% of their ethnic majority peers

(UNFPA, 2011). In Nigeria, 97% of poor Hausa-speaking girls between the ages of 17 and 22 have fewer than two years of education (Romaine, 2013). Conflict also sharply limits girls' access to education (Perezniето and Magee, 2017; Burde et al., 2015). Four of the five countries with the largest gender gaps in education – including the Central African Republic, Yemen and South Sudan – are experiencing conflict (Nicolai et al., 2015).

Disability status is another key barrier to adolescent girls' education: girls with disabilities are especially likely to be out of school compared to both boys with disabilities and girls without disabilities (Male and Wodon, 2017). Census data from 19 LMICS shows that while 85% of 12-year-old girls without disabilities are enrolled in school, only 72% of girls with disabilities are enrolled at the same age (Male and Wodon, 2017). In addition, while approximately 44% of 20 year old women in those LMICS have completed secondary

school, only about one-third of women with disabilities have graduated from high school (ibid.). These figures are made far more stark by placing them in a context which highlights the impact of disability on education: one-third of all out-of-school children have a disability (Saebones et al., 2015) and half of all children with disabilities in LMICs are out of school (International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2016). While numbers are likely to be far lower in conflict-affected contexts, we do not know how much lower because evidence gaps render those living at the margins largely invisible (see Box 2).

Her teacher punished her because she didn't memorise her lesson. He asked her to stand up all the class time in spite of her leg pain which she suffers from a lot. Sometimes it is even to the extent that she is screaming in pain (mother, Palestine)

Box 2: The imperative for better evidence

While the progress made since the advent of the millennium has taught us much about 'what works' to improve girls' educational access on the broadest levels, critical evidence gaps remain in terms of how to increase access for the most marginalised girls, including those living in conflict-affected countries, refugee girls, the poorest girls, and girls with disabilities (UNGEI, 2018). Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon, for example, demonstrates how to use double-shift schools to quickly scale up the number of available classrooms. Little is known, however, about how to support adolescents who have fallen behind to bridge back into formal education (Burde et al., 2015). Similarly, although relatively simple infrastructure modifications, such as ramps, can improve physical access for those with mobility impairments, we know very little about how to reduce the disability-directed stigma (Thornicroft et al., 2007) that prevents many teachers and parents providing the support that adolescents with disabilities, especially girls, need in order to access school, especially at the secondary level.

There is also growing consensus that the previous focus on access – rather than experiences and learning outcomes – has, in many ways, served to overstate progress and render invisible the ways in which girls' educational needs remain under-served. We know little, for example, about how to reduce the gender-based violence that drives many girls out of school, or even how to support teachers to adopt non-violent discipline strategies in contexts where class sizes leave them badly outnumbered and stretched too thin (Parkes et al., 2017). Given that today's teachers are products of their own educational systems, and that many have weak academic skills of their own, it is also unclear how to better support them to help adolescents, especially girls, 'leapfrog' and develop the complex skill sets increasingly demanded by today's labour markets (World Bank, 2018b).

3 Global financing of education for adolescent girls: progress and gaps

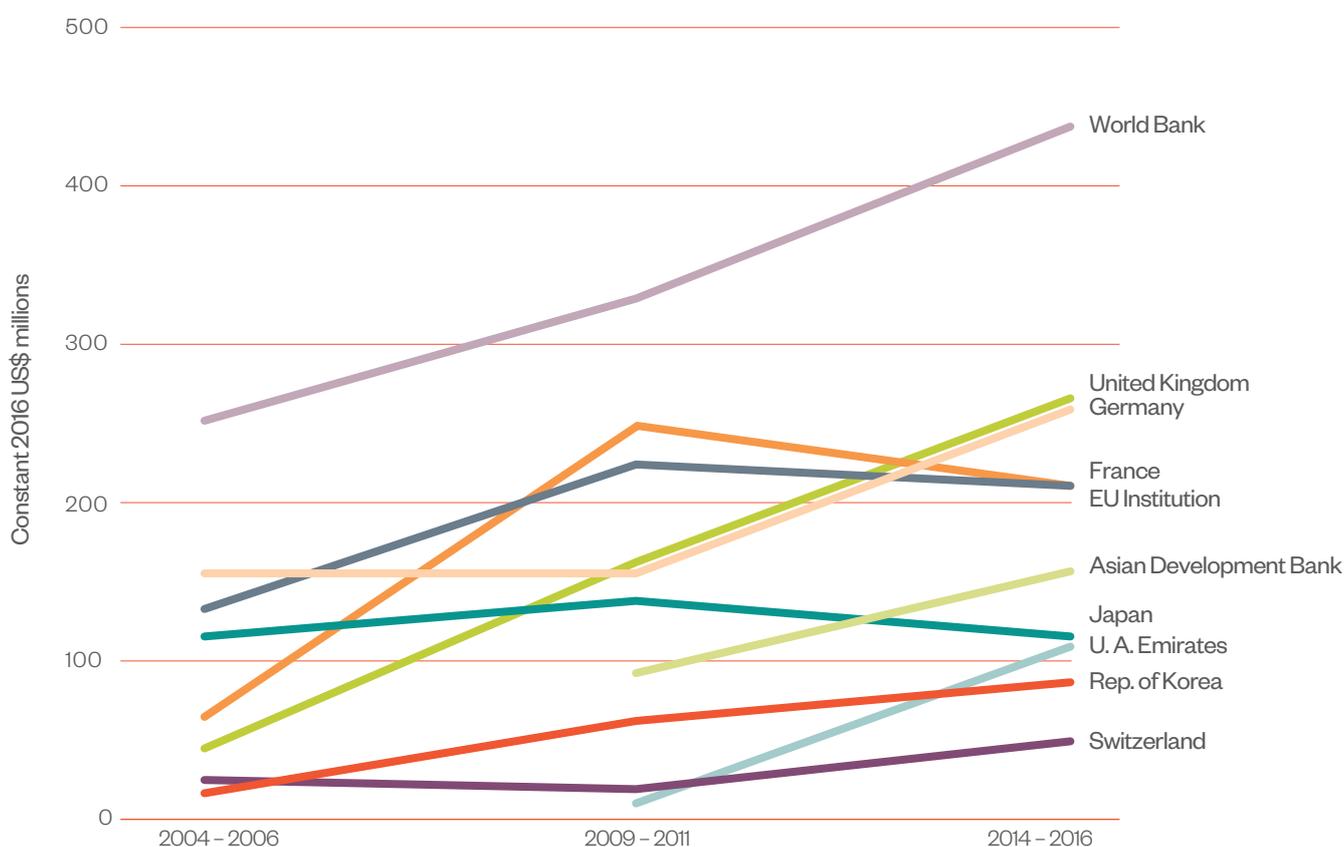
Funding needs for education in low- and lower-middle income countries will more than double by 2030: from US \$149 billion to US \$340 billion. This is due to both the numbers of children attending school and to the need for higher spends per capita to improve learning outcomes. To achieve universal primary and secondary education, UNESCO (2015c) estimates that in lower-income countries, primary enrolment must increase 14%, lower-secondary enrolment must increase 50%, and upper-secondary enrolment increase fivefold. Spending per student must also increase dramatically – from only US \$70/capita to nearly US \$200/capita at the primary level in lower-income countries. Even assuming tax increases and budget reallocation in LMICS, reaching SDG targets will require a six-fold increase in educational aid (ibid.).

Spending on education is largely flat since 2010. On the one hand, there is some good news regarding financing. Total aid to education disbursements in 2016 reached a new high – US \$13.4 billion (up from US \$11.9 the year before) (UNESCO, 2018b). In addition, the share of aid spent on

education increased in 2016, to 8% from 7% in 2015 (ibid.). On the other hand, total aid to education has increased only marginally since 2010 (when it was US \$12.6 billion) and the share of aid spent on education remains markedly lower than it was before the advent of the economic crisis (11%). Even more worryingly, the poorest countries have seen decreases, year after year, in their “share” of aid relative to lower-middle income countries (ibid.).

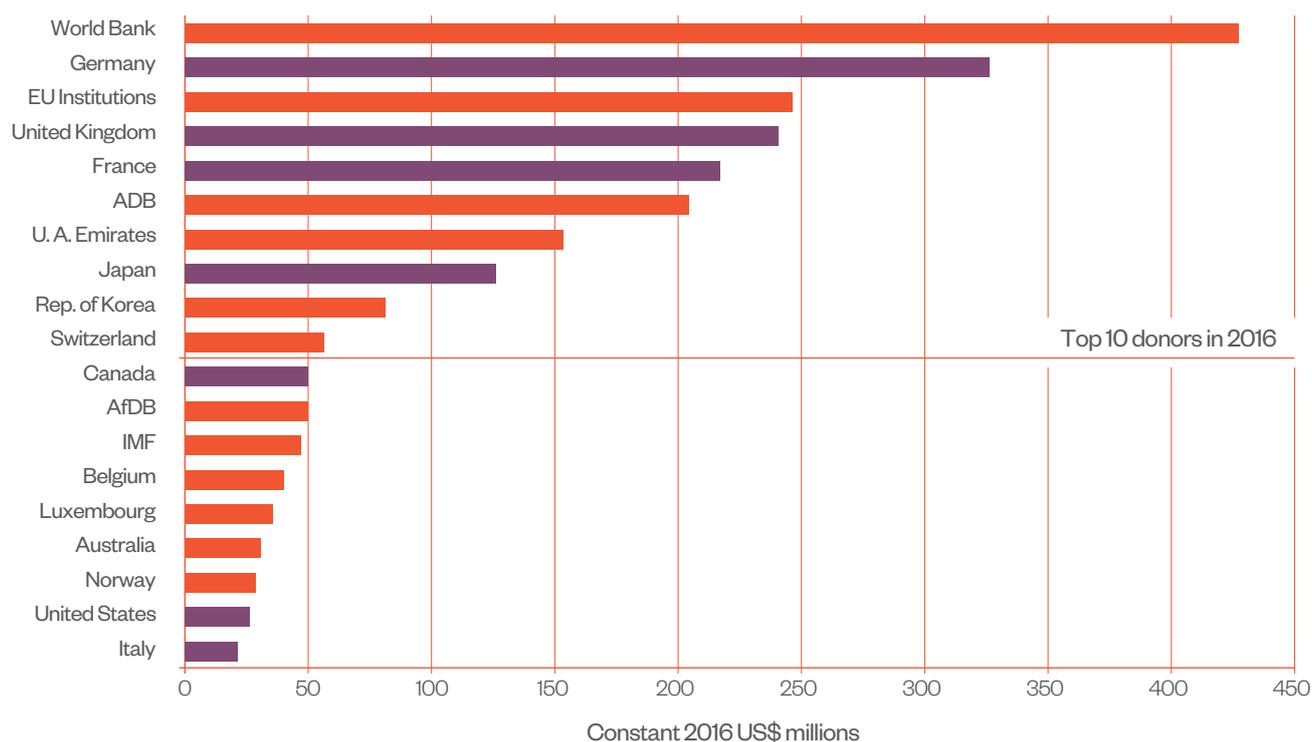
Total aid to secondary education is growing, but contributions from G7 countries vary considerably. In 2016, total aid to secondary education reached US \$2.6 billion—up from US \$2.1 billion in 2010 (UNESCO, 2018b). Historically, bilateral donors, led by the United Kingdom (\$265 million) and Germany (\$259 million), have disbursed 60% of these funds (Figure 1). In 2016, the United States – the largest bilateral donor of aid to education – ranked 18th in this category, as it is concentrating its aid dollars on basic education, and Canada’s contribution was also comparatively low (see Figure 2) (ibid.). Given estimates that the number of secondary students will need to increase fivefold by 2030 (in lower-income countries) to achieve universal secondary education, allocations need to be stepped up and redirected towards adolescents.

Figure 1: The top 10 bilateral and multilateral donors to secondary education



Source: GEM Report Team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2018)

Figure 2: Top bilateral and multilateral donors to secondary education



Note: G7 countries are in purple bars. Source GEM Report team analysis based on OECD Creditor Reporting System (2018)

Aid for post-secondary education is focused on middle-income rather than low-income countries. In 2016, total aid to post-secondary education was US \$4.9 billion – exactly what it was in 2010 (UNESCO, 2018b). While post-secondary education tends to favour the better off, as the wealthiest students are more likely than the poorest students to complete secondary school, more attention needs to be paid to supporting adolescent transitions and scaling up access to TVET to help young people obtain decent employment.

Aid for education in humanitarian contexts is falling below the necessary requirements to avert

a lost generation. In 2017, humanitarian aid increased for a fourth year in a row. However, the share of that aid dedicated to education was a meagre 2.1% – far below the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI)’s recommended 4% target (UN, 2012), and far below actual needs – estimated to be at least \$8.5 billion per year (Nicolai et al., 2015). On a global basis, 25% of all out-of-school adolescents of lower-secondary age (15 million), and nearly 20% of all out-of-school adolescents of upper-secondary age (26 million), live in conflict-affected areas. Failure to adequately provide for their education is leaving a generation of young people at risk (UNESCO, 2016b).

4 Global architecture to buttress adolescent girls' education and empowerment

The global architecture to buttress adolescent girls' education and empowerment is rooted in multiple international treaties and commitments, but must be strengthened to deliver on the ambitious financing and quality improvements discussed above.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, states, in Article 26, that: 'Everyone has the right to education'. Since then, the right to education has been reaffirmed in various international treaties, including the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the CEDAW (1979), the UNCRC (1989), the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). The right to education has also been recognised in ILO Conventions (138 and 182) and international humanitarian law (Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977), as well as in regional treaties.

In addition to states' legal commitment to the right to education, they have also made a political commitment to education as an integral part of achieving sustainable development, building on the legacy of Jomtien (World Declaration on Education for All, 1990) and Dakar (Framework for Action 2000), through the Agenda for Sustainable Development ('2030 Agenda'). Ambitions for education are captured in SDG 4, which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' by 2030. The 2030 Agenda recognises that education is essential for the success of all 17 goals. In terms of adolescent

girls' education in conflict-affected contexts, the study submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) focuses on the right to education and psychosocial wellbeing (UN, 2002).

In terms of financing, important multilateral efforts include the Global Partnership for Education, which seeks to build a partnership around a single point of entry in support of SDG 4 in the 89 low- and lower-middle income countries that are farthest away from reaching that goal, and the Education Cannot Wait catalytic fund designed to transform the delivery of education for countries in emergencies and protracted crises.

To ensure that states deliver on their legal commitments to the right to education, it is critical that G7 leaders support an architecture that is fit for purpose, by:

- Urging LMIC governments to substantially increase public investment in education by devoting a significantly greater share of the proceeds of growth to education.
- Increasing ODA to 0.7% of gross national income and dedicating a larger share of bilateral donors' total spending to education (10%).
- Placing responsive and participatory monitoring and accountability architecture to track progress against commitments, including the 2018 G7 commitments.
- Implementing integrated strategies for gender equality in education and complementary empowerment initiatives that recognise the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices, through indices such as the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Marker.
- Appointing gender champions at senior levels to increase the visibility of the international community's commitments to adolescent girls' education and empowerment.

5 Conclusions and recommendations for action

Conclusions

Catalysing global action on adolescent girls' education and empowerment is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and establishing foundations for broader economic growth and prosperity. To achieve this, the G7 Whistler Declaration on Adolescent Girls can play a key role by recognising the second decade of life as an age of opportunity and strategically investing – through secondary school and beyond – in the world's unprecedented 1.2 billion adolescents.

Despite progress – and known spill-over impacts of girls' education on health, nutrition and economic development – nearly 100 million girls remain out of school globally. Existing evidence highlights that girls' disadvantage is due to gender norms which leave them with less parental support for schooling, time-consuming domestic chores and care roles, and high odds of child marriage, adolescent motherhood, and violence. The most disadvantaged girls, including those with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and those living in remote or conflict-affected areas, are most likely to be denied their rights to an education.

Recent improvements in adolescent girls' access to school have not been accompanied by investments in quality instruction and safety. Schools in LMICs too rarely provide age-appropriate, gender-responsive learning environments that support girls to acquire the academic, social-emotional and practical skills they need to maximise their potential and transition successfully into adulthood.

The cost of providing universal primary and secondary education in low- and lower-middle income countries is expected to grow from US \$149 billion in 2012 to US \$340 billion in 2030. Taking into account country spend, there is an estimated annual funding gap of US \$39 billion that must be met by aid, and supported by a coordinated global finance and governance architecture.

Key actions for the G7:

Given the significant challenges in realising adolescent girls' education and empowerment it is critical that the G7 prioritise the following actions:

1. **Move beyond global and national aggregates to focus on "leaving no girl behind".**
 - Investments in education need to ensure that the poorest, minorities, those with disabilities, adolescent wives and mothers, and those living in remote areas have access to quality education that supports their aspirations and educational success. This should

include complementary investments in community awareness raising efforts and engaging with local leaders to transform discriminatory gender norms, gender-responsive social protection and adolescent-responsive health and nutritional services.

- Given the scale and protracted nature of modern conflicts and girls' particular vulnerabilities in these settings, lessons regarding rapid scale up of education services from recent conflicts need to be harnessed. Leveraging existing community organisations to set up non-formal education centres supported by minimum quality standards can be an early quick win, while investments in double-shift schools, in systems to bridge non-formal and formal education and in cash transfers can support adolescents to re-enter education. Funding for education in humanitarian contexts needs to be tripled from 2% to 6% to support these actions.
2. **Improve educational quality by focusing on teacher training, tackling widespread age- and gender-based violence in schools, and delivering a broad menu of skills relevant to girls' real-world needs.**
 - Teachers need training and resources that support their ability to cater to the diverse learning needs of all students, and skills to employ positive discipline approaches. This should be supported by legislating and enforcing zero-tolerance for teacher-student violence; strengthening reporting, monitoring and accountability systems; and investing in anti-bullying and anti-sexual harassment awareness-raising within school curricula.
 - School curricula also need to be reformed so as to support adolescent girls to acquire not just 'hard' academic skills, but also "soft" skills such as communication and leadership, technical and digital skills, as well as practical and context-tailored information on puberty and adolescent transitions.
 3. **Increase aid to education six-fold, prioritising low-income countries and taking a coordinated, inter-sectoral approach focused on developing the multiple capabilities adolescent girls require to become educated, healthy, empowered, economically contributing adults.** This would involve:
 - Securing a renewed commitment by all OECD donors to 0.7% of international aid with at least 10% of that figure allocated to education so as to tackle complex barriers to education.
 - Strengthening international frameworks to measure progress in adolescent girls' education including renewed commitment to the OECD DAC Gender

Equality Marker and appointing gender champions at senior levels within countries and donor organisations.

- Addressing evidence gaps on what works for adolescent girls by investing at least 5% of programme budget targets for robust research and

evaluations, which are embedded in programme design and implementation from the outset to ensure investments in adolescent girls' education and empowerment are informed by rigorous research and evaluation insights.

Authors: Nicola Jones, Elizabeth Presler-Marshall and Letisha Lunin



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GAGE Programme Office

Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom
Email: gage@odi.org.uk
Web: www.gage.odi.org

About GAGE

Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a nine-year longitudinal research programme generating evidence on what works to transform the lives of adolescent girls in the Global South. Visit www.gage.odi.org.uk for more information.

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