

TODAY'S CHALLENGES FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

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*"If only I can get educated,
I will surely be the president."*

*—A teenage girl in rural Malawi
"There is no more valuable investment
than in a girls' education."*

*—Ban Ki Moon, secretary-general,
United Nations*

Educating a girl is one of the best investments her family, community, and country can make. We know that a good quality education can be life-changing for girls, boys, young women, and men, helping them develop to their full potential and putting them on a path for success in their life. We also know that educating a girl in particular can kick-start a virtuous circle of development.

More educated girls, for example, marry later, have healthier children, earn more money that they invest back into their families and communities and play more active roles in leading their communities and countries.

Over the last 25 years, there have been large gains in girls' education, and we as a global community can congratulate ourselves for the real progress that has been made. This demonstrates that with shared goals and collective action -among governments, international



organizations, civil society, media, and the private sector- we can change the educational prospects for girls around the world.

Despite this progress, our research shows that there are hotspots in the world where girls are not getting a quality education. While there certainly are places where boys are behind, we have focused on understanding how and where across the world girls are behind.

The message is that many countries have work to do to improve girls' education, whether related to the gender gap in primary or secondary enrollment or learning.



There are about 80 countries where progress on girls' education has stalled. These countries are not meeting the education Millennium Development Goals. They are stuck in an education bog—still struggling to enroll all girls and boys in primary school and close the gender gaps between boys and girls at both the primary and secondary levels. There are an additional 30 countries that have successfully enrolled girls and boys in primary and secondary education but are trapped in low-quality learning. They are

struggling to ensure that girls and boys master foundational skills such as basic literacy, numeracy, and science concepts.

Quality learning is important for the future lives of girls and boys, but it is also an especially important ingredient in the virtuous circle of development that comes from girls' education.

Finally, there are another 30 countries where children are successfully enrolled and learning. However, girls are behind boys in math. In some ways, we can think of girls in these countries bumping up against an educational glass ceiling.

In this report, we review in detail the progress in girls' education, the work that remains to be done, and strategies for success. Governments, international development agencies, and civil society organizations have supported a variety of programs that have made a difference in both large and small ways. There are valuable lessons to learn from them—but more progress is needed, especially in the poorest countries and among the disadvantaged populations in most countries. Ultimately we recommend renewed collective action for advancing girls' education in hotspots around the world, especially in the 80 countries where progress on girls' education has stalled. We recognize the powerful contribution that girls and women themselves can make to achieve this. Our first recommendation is to lean in with girls' and women's leadership by investing in two initiatives that could go to scale in a short time frame and rally support from a range of actors, especially civil society and the private sector.

The first initiative aims to build strong girl and women leaders by cultivating their skills and capacities to be agents of their own lives. The second initiative aims to put girls and women at the center of a data revolution on gender, one that would fill the critical information gaps about their status, what support they need to succeed, and which interventions have been the most and the least effective. Throughout the world today, it is possible to put mobile technology to work catalyzing a major girl-generated big data initiative. Our second recommendation is for governments and the partners supporting them to do the long-term work needed to focus systemic reform with a gender lens. This includes strengthening education systems so that they work for girls (and boys). To do this governments and their international partners must increase their investment in accelerating change in girls' education hotspots, especially to help countries stuck in an

education bog where progress on basic education achievement and gender parity has stalled.

Governments and their partners also must ensure that gender analysis is regularly used in developing education policy, especially in national education plans that underpin most of the systems in developing countries. A detailed analysis underpins these recommendations. The report reviews data on six major questions:

- ✓ ● **Why do we care about girls' education?**
- ✓ ● **What progress can we build on?**
- ✓ ● **What do we face today in the effort to educate girls?**
- ✓ ● **Why are girls behind?**
- ✓ ● **What is working to address obstacles to girls' education?**
- ✓ ● **What should we do to accelerate progress on girls education?**



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Sources:

http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/todays_challenges_for_girls_education_exec_summary.pdf