

## Govt, UNESCO join hands to enrol 50,000 girls in schools

ISLAMABAD - The government and Unesco announced yesterday plans to enrol 50,000 girls living in the country's most remote and impoverished areas in primary schools over the next three years.

The \$7 million joint initiative between the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aims to improve access to quality learning opportunities for primary school girls. The "Girls' Right to Education" Programme initiative is funded by the government of Pakistan under the Malala Funds-in-Trust. Pakistan had pledged \$10 million to the international fund in 2014 to promote girls' education in the region. Of this \$7 million would be spent in Pakistan while \$3 million in Afghanistan and Bangladesh to improve enrolment of girls at primary levels and to sustain it further.

The fund has been named after 18-year-old Malala Yousafzai, who was shot injured by the Taliban because of advocating the right of girls to go to school. The programme will be implemented in 9 districts representing all the provinces and areas of Pakistan including Jaffarabad and Ziarat, Upper and Lower Kohistan, Tharparker, Muzafarabad, Hatiyan and Neelam, Mohmand Agency, Neelore and Tarnole areas of Islamabad, and Gilgit and Hunza Nagar. The programme aim is to get 50,000 more girls enrolled in primary schools, as about 3 million girls are out of primary schools in Pakistan.

Gender inequities continue to exist in many parts of the country. In certain cultures and traditions, girls are discouraged from pursuing education. There is a 10% gender gap of net enrolment rate between girls and boys in the country, said Minister for Education and Professional Training Baligh Ur Rehman speaking at the launch of the fund. The Malala Fund program would cover almost all aspects of the education like sanitation facility in girl's schools and teacher's training etc. The programme implementation involves community mobilisation and advocacy, using social techniques best suited for local communities like advocacy, corner meetings and through FM radio and improvement in school physical and learning environment. "Access to education as a basic human right which is essential for sustainable development," said Irina Bokova, DG Unesco, in her video statement at the launch. "Girls and women are strong agents of change and our world will be a better place in 2030, only, if they have equitable access to quality education – today"

**Source:** <http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/09-Oct-2015/govt-unesco-join-hands-to-enrol-50-000-girls-in-schools>