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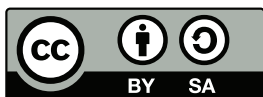
Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education

A Joint Programme by
UNESCO, UN Women, UNFPA and the World Bank



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Why prioritize girls' and women's education?

Despite impressive strides since 2000, girls and women account for the majority of out-of-school children and illiterate adults:

- 31 million girls of primary-school age are still excluded from learning
- only 38% of countries have achieved gender parity in secondary education, against 63% in primary
- 493 million women are illiterate – 64% of the world total

We must do more, differently and better to guarantee the right to education for every girl and woman. We need to chart a new course and build new partnerships for innovation, to empower girls and young women across the board.

Reaching all of the sustainable development goals will be contingent on girls having equal access to education and staying in school long enough for learning to have real impact on their lives and societies.

We need a joined up response because exclusion takes root in economic, socio-cultural and political inequalities. From family poverty and discriminatory social practices to safety concerns, poor education quality and gender-based violence, the journey to school remains fraught for girls through their adolescence, a time when sexual and reproductive health issues also significantly affect the ability to take advantage of educational opportunities.

Societies pay a high price when girls and women are deprived of their right to education: the persistence of chronic poverty, high child and maternal mortality, poor nutrition, early marriage, vulnerability to exploitation and lack of voice in public life.

At the same time, we know that girls' and women's education yields quantum development gains for all, including improved family health and education, decent jobs, higher incomes and greater civic participation– in short a life of dignity and more inclusive societies.



“There is no justification – be it cultural, economic or social – for denying girls and women an education. It is a basic right and an absolute condition for reaching all the internationally agreed development goals. It is through education that girls and women can gain the freedom to make choices, to shape their future and to build more inclusive and just societies.”

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Why a new programme? ● ● ●

We need to draw the lessons of experience. Conventional practices that focus solely on issues of access are not sufficient to drive real change that transforms the lives of women and girls for the better. Girls and women need to get into and stay in school; return to education if they drop out; acquire relevant knowledge, and be empowered to transition to productive work and adulthood.

This Joint Programme takes a life cycle perspective. It aims to strengthen the nexus between education, health, gender equality and empowerment.

It aims to keep girls and young women in education by creating an enabling environment, to empower them with relevant knowledge and skills, to ensure they are healthy and make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, to support them to make successful and healthy transitions into adulthood and the labour market, and to fully participate in society.

The Joint Programme will also harness the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve education delivery and content, and encourage their further application for income generation, lifelong learning and exercising citizenship.



"We must ensure that every door to the education of girls and women remains open across the life cycle; that girls and women who drop out of education have second chances; that they have the relevant skills to transition to productive lives and full citizenship; and that the empowerment of girls and women becomes an inseparable part of the return on our investments in education."

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
Under-Secretary-General/Executive
Director, UN Women

The Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education

The Joint Programme is conceived under the framework of the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, launched by UNESCO in 2011. It is guided by the conviction that educating girls and women can break the cycle of poverty and foster greater social justice, economic development and sustainable peace. The Partnership seeks to increase learning opportunities for adolescent girls and women and to find solutions to some of the biggest challenges and obstacles to their education.

What do we want to achieve? ●●●

This Joint Programme will aim to achieve four main results:

- More adolescent girls and young women will access and complete quality, relevant and gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and ultimately gender-transformative education;
- Social and governance structures that impact girls' and women's lives will be strengthened to help create gender-responsive educational opportunities;
- Education and health services, especially sexual and reproductive health, will be better linked to ensure that girls are healthy, safe and able to learn effectively;
- The capacity of national and subnational authorities will be strengthened to use technology, innovation, knowledge, and data to promote the growth of gender-responsive educational opportunities.

The Joint Programme will contribute to the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the UN Open Working Group, in particular SDG no. 4 to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”; and SDG no. 5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The Joint Programme will take forward the future Sustainable Development Goals that will be agreed.



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Three UN agencies join forces to make a difference ●●●

The Joint Programme brings together three UN agencies – UNESCO, UN Women and UNFPA – seeking to benefit from and build on their comparative advantage and complementarity. Combining the resources as well as the substantive, normative and programmatic experience of each agency, the Joint Programme is expected to promote education, gender equality and good health resulting in the empowerment of adolescent girls and young women. The World Bank will also contribute technical expertise to the Joint Programme as a partner multilateral institution.

Where will the programme be implemented? ●●●

The aim is to reach out to a total of 20 countries where the magnitude of girls' and women's education challenges remains significant, with priority to post-conflict and post-disaster situations. The Joint Programme will reach out to these countries in a phased approach, with six countries to be targeted in the first phase:

- South Asia: Nepal, Pakistan
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Mali, Niger, South Sudan and Tanzania

Who will benefit? ●●●

The Joint Programme will reach adolescent girls (10-19 year-olds) and young women (20-24 year-olds) at risk of discrimination and exclusion from education opportunities.

How will we reach our goal? ●●●

The Joint Programme will capitalize on the collective capacity and expertise of the three collaborating agencies to strengthen education and health sectors, socio-cultural environments, and governance systems at national level through advocacy, normative advice, technical support, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

It will be implemented through four complementary components:

- **Component 1:** Improving the quality and relevance of education for adolescent girls and young women
- **Component 2:** Fostering enabling environments through advocacy and inter-sectoral coordination and governance
- **Component 3:** Strengthening the policy and programmatic linkages between the health and education sectors to respond to the needs and rights of adolescent girls and young women
- **Component 4:** Building the evidence-base for gender-responsive education policies and actions

Country ownership, strong national leadership, and grassroots mobilization with girls and young women will underpin the programme's sustainability.

Who are our partners? ●●●

Powerful partnerships across sectors are essential. Key national stakeholders that will carry the programme forward include Ministries of Education; Gender and/or Women's Affairs; Health; Youth; Technology; Finance, as well as civil society organizations and relevant non-governmental actors.

Mobilizing resources for the Joint Programme ●●●

Grounded in the shared commitment of three UN agencies and a solid vision, this Joint Programme will appeal to Member States, foundations, the private sector and other stakeholders to come on board.



"Today too many girls do not complete school due to teenage pregnancy and early and forced marriage. Providing girls and young people with comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health information and services protects the rights to education and health, and advances gender equality and the achievement of internationally agreed goals."

Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA



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