



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



## GIRLS' EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Investments in girls' education in developing countries supports U.S. foreign policy, demonstrates American compassion and generosity, drives development efforts, and helps reduce extreme poverty.

Globally, 62 million girls between the ages of 6 and 15 are not in school. In conflict-ridden countries, adolescent girls are at particular risk—90 percent are more likely to be out of secondary school than young women in other countries. Girls around the world face enormous obstacles to getting a quality education, among them: poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the roles of girls and women.

### EDUCATING GIRLS PROVIDES BIG RETURNS

- **More girls in school increases a country's GDP:** If 10 percent more adolescent girls attend school, a country's GDP increases by an average of 3 percent.
- **More school for girls = greater earnings:** An extra year of secondary school for girls can increase their future earnings by 10-20%.
- **Education saves lives:** A child whose mother can read is 50 percent more likely to live past age five.

“At USAID, we're working to break down the barriers that keep girls from learning and leading. We want every girl to go to school, live in a home and community free from violence, and receive the care she needs to grow healthy and strong.”

--Michelle Bekkering, Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, USAID

PHOTO: GIRLS IN NEW DHELI MADRASSA ATTEND A USAID-FUNDED FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM. ANITA KHEMKA / USAID

## HOW USAID INVESTS IN EDUCATION

Reducing gender disparities is critical to achieving U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives. That's why advancing equality for women and girls and female empowerment is fundamental to all USAID programming. USAID's Education Strategy promotes inclusive education, including gender equality as a guiding principle for all education programs.

To achieve our education goals, USAID promotes education programs that respond to the needs of both girls and boys by: 1) reducing gender-based violence against children and mitigating its harmful effects; and 2) increasing the capability of learners to realize their rights, determine life outcomes and influence their decision making so that all learners, especially girls, have access to safe, quality education programs and services.

Schooling increases girls' aspirations, empowerment, and agency.

--World Development Report 2018

Here's how USAID improves access to education and quality of learning, from early grades through higher education, and educational opportunities that link youth to jobs:

- **EQUITY:** In Malawi, where only 16 percent of girls complete primary school, USAID and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) are working with the Ministry of Education and local schools to improve girls' literacy levels, promote healthcare that can help them lead happy and productive lives, and eliminate barriers so that girls can be in school and learning.
- **SAFETY:** In Pakistan, where attacks on schools have disrupted many children's education, particularly girls, USAID has since 2015 reached more than 492,000 girls through reading programs, enrolled or re-enrolled more than 213,000 girls in school in areas of the country affected by crisis and conflict, and built or rehabilitated over 520 co-ed or girls' schools.
- **EMPOWERMENT:** In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a third of children are not in primary school and where sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war, a USAID-funded project is providing adolescent girls with the educational, life and leadership skills to become positive change agents in their communities. Activities address education, health and gender-based violence and engage girls, boys, women and men in examining and altering harmful practices. Since 2013, USAID has provided 3,000 scholarships to students in 54 schools and has reached 17,000 primary school students and 13,000 secondary school students in peri-urban areas of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi.

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