



LET \*  
GIRLS  
LEARN

The best judge of whether or not  
a country is going to develop is how  
it treats its women.

- PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Photo: USAID/Kent + Hein

Around the world 62 million girls are not in school. Millions more are fighting to stay there. Girls often have to face harassment, discrimination, threats, and even violence just to get an education. Then, even if they can reach a school, they may not have the trained teachers, adequate materials, or support they need to learn to read, write, and do basic math. Recent events in Nigeria focused the world's concern on their plight. It's time to *Let Girls Learn*.

*Let Girls Learn* is an effort by the United States Government to provide the public with meaningful ways to help all girls to get a **quality education**. It is led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the lead U.S. Government Agency working to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies. In support of the effort, USAID also announced \$231.6 million for new programs to support primary and secondary education and safe learning in Nigeria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Jordan, as well as support for Guatemala's ongoing, successful efforts to improve quality of education for under-served populations.

## NEW EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### Nigeria

In Nigeria, we are launching a program to increase enrollment and improve early-grade reading for **at least 500,000 children**, including **250,000 girls** in Northern Nigeria.

### Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, we will help provide **primary education for 174,000 girls**, establishing 5,000 Community-Based Education classes and adding 1,300 female teachers in under-served areas of the country.

A second program will award university scholarships to Afghan women, selected for their academic merit, financial need, and leadership potential. Eighty percent of these scholarships are reserved for Afghan universities—helping to encourage Afghanistan’s most talented women stay in the country and serve their communities.

### **South Sudan**

In six states of South Sudan, USAID and UNICEF will provide **emergency education to 150,000 children**, including **60,000 girls**, forced from their homes by violence.

### **Jordan**

We are responding to the challenges of the Syrian humanitarian crisis by partnering with UNICEF to support the No Lost Generation Initiative, a program that will work with over 180,000 school-aged and preschool child refugees, including **over 90,000 girls in need of resuming their education.**

### **Guatemala**

In Guatemala, we will continue to improve reading and access to schooling for indigenous children in **more than 900 rural schools**, and will provide 2,000 out-of-school youth with access to alternative education and vocational opportunities.

## **WHY LET GIRLS LEARN?**

When girls are educated, their families are healthier and they have more opportunities to generate income in adulthood. An **educated girl has a ripple effect:**

### **On Her Family:**

- One more year of education increases a woman’s income by up to 25 percent.
- A girl who has a basic education is three times less likely to contract HIV.
- Children born to educated mothers are twice as likely to survive past the age of 5.

### **On Society:**

- If all women in sub-Saharan Africa had a secondary education, 1.8 million lives would be saved each year.
- Simulations using data from women farmers in Kenya suggest that crop yields could increase by 25 percent if all that country’s girls attended primary school.
- After looking at 100 countries, the World Bank found that increasing the share of women with a secondary education by 1 percent boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points.
- Countries where women hold more than 30 percent of seats in political bodies are more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic.

## HOW DOES THE UNITED STATES SUPPORT GIRLS EDUCATION WORLDWIDE?

The U.S. Government is committed to improving opportunities for children in low-income countries to receive a quality education and obtain the skills they need to live healthy and productive lives. This includes an average annual investment of **\$1 billion by USAID** in international education efforts to ensure equitable treatment of boys and girls, provide the basic skills that will allow them to succeed and stay in school, create safe school environments, and engage communities in support for girls' education. The **U.S. Department of State** and **U.S. Peace Corps** lead global programs to empower girls and increase their chances for academic success. The United States Government also engages in several multilateral, global policy and advocacy initiatives that promote girls' education and gender equality in education.

The United States' combined efforts extend well beyond traditional classroom activities because there are numerous obstacles to girls education. These efforts include programs to prevent early and forced marriage, initiatives that educate girls about healthy behavior and reproductive health, and unprecedented efforts to prevent and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS. Focus areas include:

### ***Ensuring girls have equal access to education:***

- **In Liberia**, where more than three quarters of the country's poorest girls aged 7-16 have never been to school, USAID's Girls Opportunity to Access Learning (GOAL) project grants scholarships to girls and school-improvement grants to communities in order to create safer school environments for girls and boys. GOAL also supports girls' clubs and mentoring programs as well as community awareness campaign.
- USAID sits on the Board of Directors of the **Global Partnership for Education** - a global partnership between developing countries, donor governments and public, private, and civil society organizations - to galvanize and coordinate an international effort to deliver a quality education to all girls and boys, prioritizing the poorest and most vulnerable.
- The **U.S. Peace Corps** trains all of its 7,200 Volunteers serving in 65 countries around the world in gender-analysis skills. Volunteers work at the community level and develop and integrate gender-sensitive community development activities into their two years of service. About one third of these Volunteers work in schools, directly supporting teachers, students and school administrators to find culturally appropriate ways to address gender-based violence.
- In 2014, the United States became **one of 14 champion countries for the U.N. Global Education First Initiative**, which seeks to raise education to the top of the public and policy agenda by putting every child in school; improving the quality of learning; and fostering global citizenship. USAID is part of the **U.N. Girls Education Initiative Technical Advisory Committee**, which measures and monitors gender equality in education. The Initiative seeks to assist national governments ensure gender equality and the right to education for all children.

### ***Helping girls stay healthy and in school:***

- In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, 4.4 million children, nearly half of the school-age population, are out of school, and 60 percent of these children are girls. USAID's

Empowering Adolescent Girls through Leadership and Education, with support from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), is working to ensure girls make a successful transition from primary to secondary school as well as gain leadership skills and avoid early pregnancy. The program also engages communities in combatting gender-based violence in schools and making schools safer for all learners.

- In **Mozambique**, with PEPFAR support, USAID is empowering young girls at risk of sexual exploitation by providing block grants and scholarships that enable them to stay in school. While in **Cote d'Ivoire**, a large PEPFAR and USAID-supported project increases access to education as well as HIV and health services for 20,000 girls age 10-17. Another project increases access to secondary and higher education for vulnerable girls in **Tanzania**, in order to reduce risk of HIV infection as well as other health risks, such as early childbearing.

### ***Ensuring girls access to learning in conflict and crisis***

- In **South Sudan**, we are working to increase access to education for girls and boys in remote, conflict-affected regions by promoting safe learning environments, delivering more relevant formal education, and strengthening the education system's ability to support learners experiencing psychosocial difficulties due to conflict and crisis.
- In **Afghanistan** today, 3 million girls are enrolled in school. A decade ago, there were none. USAID has supported these gains by building more than 560 schools and several provincial teacher-training centers throughout the country, producing and distributing textbooks to schools nationwide, and developing a university teaching degree program.
- Many of **Syria's** children have been out of school for over three years. Some have witnessed unspeakable abuse. In **Jordan**, where children make up approximately 54 percent of Syrian refugees, U.S. Government support is strengthening Jordanian schools – which have enrolled more than 100,000 Syrian refugee children – and is helping to develop safe spaces for girls and boys in school.

### ***Supporting girls' leadership***

- The U.S. State Department supports extensive exchange programs focused on empowering girls and expanding their opportunities. **TechGirls** offers teenage girls from the Middle East and North Africa the opportunity to participate in an intensive, three-week exchange program in the United States that equips them with skills and resources to pursue higher education and careers in technology.
- The U.S. State Department's Empowering **Women and Girls through Sports Initiative** works to inspire more women and girls to become involved in sports and experience the benefits of participation, such as improved health, increased self-esteem, and greater academic and professional success.
- The U.S. State Department's **English Access Microscholarship Program** provides English-language training to talented, economically disadvantaged 13-20 year olds – more than half of them girls – in their home countries. Access participants gain English skills valuable to their future education and careers.

- The Peace Corps organizes and leads **GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) Camps** around the world to promote gender equality and empower young women. GLOW camps, which range from day-long sessions to week-long overnight programs, create a safe and supportive environment for learning, cultural exchange, individuality, creativity, leadership development, and fun. In 2013, Peace Corps Volunteers in 60 countries ran educational camps serving a total of 30,000 young people.