

EDUCATION

“We will open the doors of education to all citizens, but especially to girls and women... We are doing all of these things because we have seen that when women and girls have the tools to stay healthy and the opportunity to contribute to their families’ well-being, they flourish and so do the people around them.”

-- Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, January 2010

Girls’ education is one of the most leveraged development investments a country can make. The benefits to girls and their families are well-documented, from better health and nutrition for themselves and their children, to delayed marriage and enhanced employment opportunities. Studies show a single year of primary education correlates with a 10 – 20 percent increase in women’s wages later in life; a single year of secondary education results in a 15 – 25 percent increase. Education is the best tool we have available to reliably change entrenched attitudes and is an important step in breaking the cycle of poverty. We must ensure that girls not only receive the same quality education as boys, but that they are able to attend school regularly and are safe as they travel to and from school. Unfortunately, significant inequalities hinder progress; of the 13 million illiterate youth globally, 63 percent are female.

Although we have made strides, the global community is still falling short of the Millennium Development Goals, and the current financial crisis has increased the number of girls who are dropping out of school. A range of simple interventions, from elimination of school fees to providing incentives such as meals, can make a substantial difference, encouraging families to send and keep their daughters in school.

Women’s and Girls’ Education

Investments to improve women’s and girls’ education will include:

- **Access to Education:** Supporting programs that increase girls’ enrollment and completion of primary, secondary, and tertiary education by providing funding for direct educational resources, including books, uniforms, and school fees, and covering indirect costs of schooling through scholarships, stipends, and school health and nutrition programs, particularly in countries with acute challenges.
- **Capacity Building:** Building the capacity of schools, teachers, civil society, and communities to reduce the barriers to regular attendance for women and girls, particularly for the poorest and most disadvantaged, including by addressing safety concerns and engaging with families and community leaders to raise awareness of the benefits of enrolling and keeping women and girls in school.

