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Policy paper

UK government support for girls' education worldwide

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1. The challenge

Two youth leaders, Tendai and Ayesha, interview Minister of State for Development and Africa Andrew Mitchell about the power of girls' education:

[Youth leaders interview Minister Mitchell \(YouTube\)](#)

The global context

Seven out of 10 children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read and understand a basic text by the age of 10. This increases to 9 out of 10 children in sub-Saharan Africa [\[footnote 1\]](#). The COVID-19 pandemic put many children in lower-income countries – especially girls – at risk of dropping out of school altogether. There are already 244 million children not in school globally.

The UK government is working to provide quality education for all children. We are guided by the [Global Objectives on access and learning in low- and lower-middle income countries by 2026](#), which were agreed by the G7 during the UK's Presidency in 2021:

- 40 million more girls in school
- 20 million more girls reading by age 10

Group activity within a school library. Credit: Manahel, Syria Education Programme.

The [International Women and Girls Strategy](#) sets out our approach to advancing gender equality around the world. This includes including standing up for the right of every girl to have 12 years of quality education. Advancing gender equality is a policy that benefits everyone. It brings freedom, boosts prosperity and trade, strengthens global security and builds resilience. It is the fundamental building block of all healthy democracies.

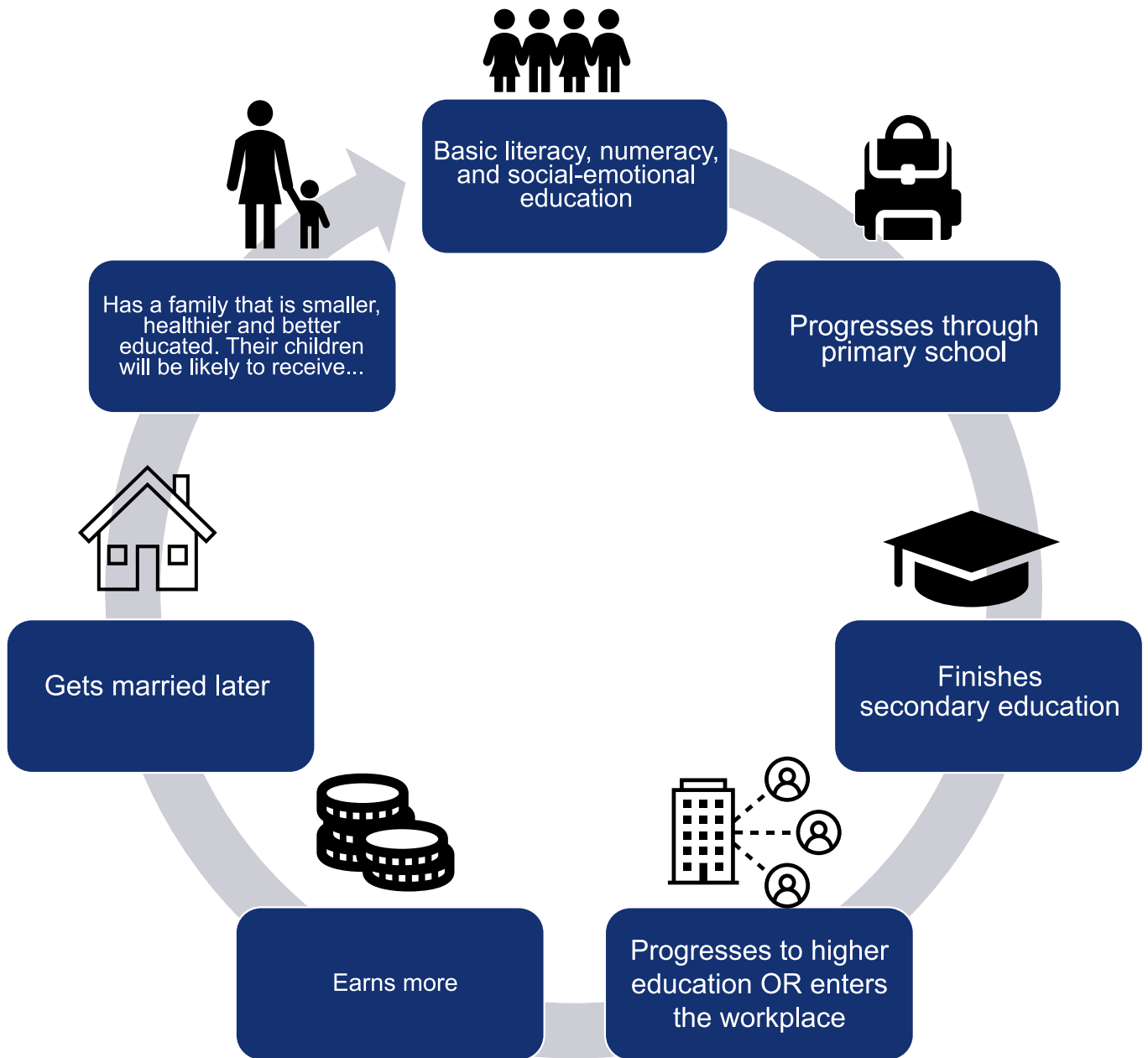
This does not mean we value boys' education less highly. The majority of our education work benefits boys as well as girls. We recognise that only by involving boys and men can we address harmful gender stereotypes and improve the barriers holding girls and women back. For instance, teaching that challenges discriminatory values and beliefs and expands children's horizons is as important for boys as for girls.

2. The results

UK government's role

The UK is helping to change lives. We supported 15.6 million children, including 8.1 million girls, to gain a decent education between 2015 and 2020.[\[footnote 2\]](#) Alongside our programmes, the FCDO's Education, Gender and Inclusion Research Team invests in pioneering research in more than 40 countries worldwide. The research includes exploring what works to improve access and learning and the best use of education technology.

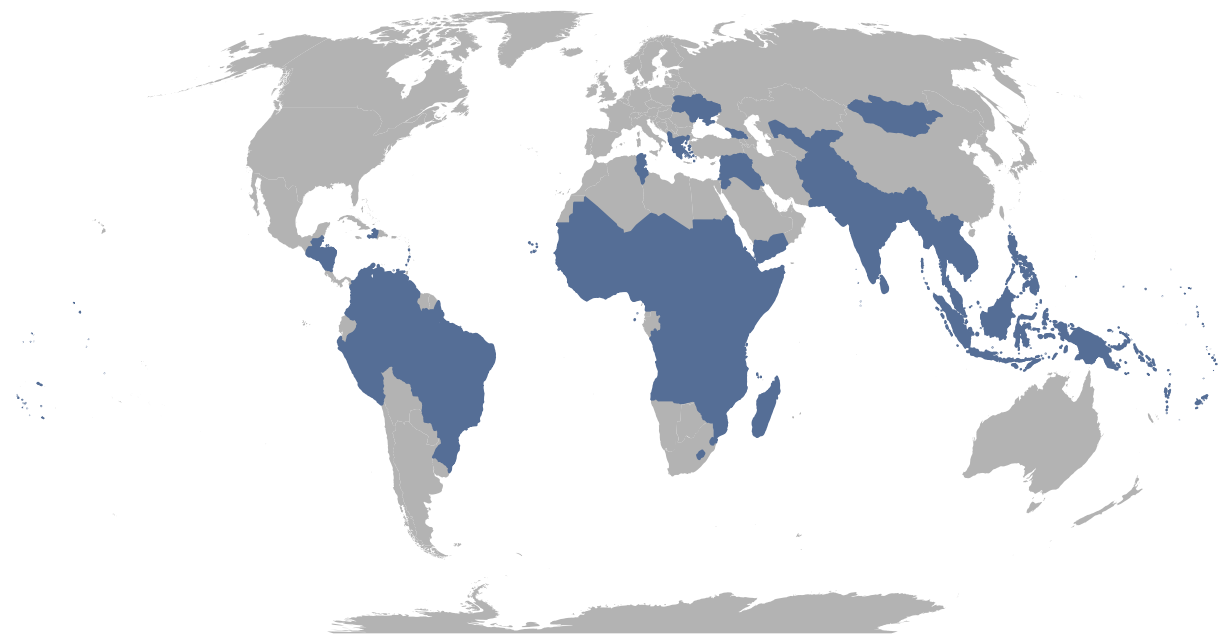
We do this not only because education is a human right, no matter where in the world you live. We also recognise that girls' education, and all the benefits that come with it, leads to safer and more prosperous societies, more effective peacebuilding, gender equality and greater resilience against climate change.



Read [more about our results](#).

3. Where we work

Through our bilateral, multilateral and research spend, FCDO is supporting education in 100 countries worldwide.



Map of the world showing countries (in blue) supported by UK aid on education. The full list of countries is available in the 'where we work' section.

Read [more about the countries we work in.](#)

4. Education changes lives

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Linley, Angeline Murimirwa (CAMFED Chief Executive) and Teacher Mentor Annie L Macjessie outside the primary school Linley volunteers at. Credit: CAMFED.

Growing up without parents in rural Malawi was not easy for Linley, but with UK funding, she was able to finish school. Linley now volunteers in local schools to support her community. Girls' education is one of the best investments we can make to break cycles of poverty.

Read [more about Linley's story, and how education changes lives](#).

5. Great teachers

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A teacher from the National Numeracy Programme teaches her students in Malawi.
Credit: Ministry of Education, Malawi.

Teachers matter. Teaching quality is the most important factor affecting learning in schools. But in sub-Saharan Africa, there is an average of one trained teacher for every 58 primary school pupils.

Find out [how Josiane, a teacher in Rwanda, kept children learning during COVID-19](#).

6. Education in emergencies

A student at School Number 18 in Chernihiv, northern Ukraine, destroyed during the early phase of the conflict. Credit: GPE/Dmytro Maksymenko.

Wars and disasters impact 224 million children around the world, making it difficult for them to receive a decent education.^[footnote 3] Girls are more likely to be out of school during emergencies and without the protection that schooling provides, they are at high risk of becoming victims of gender-based and sexual violence.

Read [more about protecting education in emergencies](#).

7. Ending violence against children

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Children learning numeracy. Credit: Malawi Ministry of Education.

Violence is a daily reality for far too many children. One third of children experience physical violence and one quarter of children experience psychological violence worldwide. Child marriage increases a girl's risk of gender-based violence, plus early pregnancy and dropping out of school.

Find out [how the Big Sister, Little Sister programme in Nepal helped stop 15-year-old Arti's arranged marriage](#).

8. Leaving no girl behind

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Girls with crutches provided by the Girls' Education Challenge CHANGE project in Ethiopia. Credit: People in Need.

The UK government's ambition is for all children with disabilities to be equipped with the skills they need to lead fulfilling lives. Children with disabilities in lower-income countries are least likely to be in school and learning, and girls face additional barriers.

Learn [how 15-year-old Mimi from Ethiopia was supported to attend school after staying home for years due to her disability.](#)

9. Blogs, resources and announcements

Blog

Resources

- [International women and girls strategy 2023 to 2030](#)
- [UK government's strategy for international development](#)
- [Addressing the climate, environment, and biodiversity crises in and through girls' education](#)
- [Every girl goes to school, stays safe, and learns: 5 years of global action 2021 to 2026](#)
- [Development Tracker](#)

Announcements

- [New UK funding to boost education opportunities for women and girls in Southeast Asia](#)
- [UK boosts girls' access to education in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)
- [Four young women from across Ghana chosen as Ambassador for a Day](#)
- [UK launches new global Women and Girls Strategy on International Women's Day](#)
- [I want to follow my mother's example in helping women across the world: article by James Cleverly](#)

Social media accounts

- UK government's Girls' Education Challenge on Twitter [@FCDOGEC](#)
- FCDO Girls' Education on Twitter [@FCDOEducation](#)
- FCDO Research on Twitter [@FCDOResearch](#)
- Andrew Mitchell on Twitter [@AndrewMitchMP](#)
- Helen Grant OBE on Twitter [@HelenGrantMP](#)
- FCDO on Twitter [@FCDOGovUK](#)

10. Information about results estimates

The UK supported 15.6 million children to gain a decent education between 2015 and 2020. The [Department for International Development \(DFID\) published this estimate in 2020](#). The publication includes details of how DFID produced the aggregate result and DFID's statement of voluntary compliance with the [UK's Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Programme monitoring and evaluation systems generate programme-level results and these are reported in programme review documents. They are available through [Development Tracker](#).

1. [Turning the tide on global learning poverty](#) (worldbank.org) (Accessed 11 July 2023) ↵
2. For a programme to count as supporting a decent education, it must do one or more of the following: provide a quality education, improve the equality of existing education provision, provide an education where there is no alternative education provision (for example, in emergency settings) ↵
3. [Number of crisis-impacted children in need of education support rises significantly: Education Cannot Wait issues New Global Estimates Study](#) ↵

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