

FACT SHEET: LET GIRLS LEARN

OVERVIEW

Today, the Obama Administration announced that it is expanding its efforts to help adolescent girls worldwide attend and complete school through an initiative called Let Girls Learn.

This new effort will build on investments we have made and successes we have achieved in global primary school education, and expand them to help adolescent girls complete their education and pursue their broader aspirations.

62 million girls around the world – half of whom are adolescent – are not in school. These girls have diminished economic opportunities and are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, early and forced marriage, and other forms of violence.

Yet when a girl receives a quality education, she is more likely to earn a decent living, raise a healthy, educated family, and improve the quality of life for herself, her family, and her community. In addition, girls' attendance in secondary school is correlated with later marriage, later childbearing, lower maternal and infant mortality rates, lower birth rates, and lower rates of HIV/AIDS. A World Bank study found that every year of secondary school education is correlated with an 18 percent increase in a girl's future earning power.

This new effort will build on the Let Girls Learn public engagement campaign launched last summer by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Let Girls Learn will elevate existing programs, including in areas of conflict and crisis, and leverage public and private sector partners. It will also look to build more partnerships and challenge other organizations and governments to commit resources to lift up adolescent girls across the globe.

A key part of Let Girls Learn will be to encourage and support community-led solutions to reduce barriers that prevent adolescent girls from completing their education. Through the efforts of the First Lady - working with the Peace Corps – this new initiative will support community-generated and community-led girls' education projects worldwide.

FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA & PEACE CORPS – SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LED SOLUTIONS

Throughout her travels over the past six years, in meetings with local leaders and the Mandela Washington Fellows from the Young African Leaders Initiative, and in discussions with experts and global education advocates, the First Lady has heard first-hand about the power of community-based solutions to eliminate barriers to adolescent girls' education around the world.

Peace Corps' nearly 7,000 volunteers – in more than 60 developing countries – are already working side-by-side with families and community leaders. Through the grassroots development work that Peace Corps volunteers do each and every day, they are already positioned to work with communities to identify the barriers facing adolescent girls who want to attend, and stay in, school.

This will lead to hundreds of new community projects to break down those barriers. To support this effort, Peace Corps will train thousands of volunteers and tens of thousands of community leaders; collaborate with local leaders to identify community-based solutions; and recruit, train and place hundreds of additional volunteers.

The Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) will also connect volunteers with members of the public and private sector to fund small, community- initiated, sustainable, grassroots projects. For more information, visit <http://www.letgirlslearn.peacecorps.gov>.

The Peace Corps' Let Girls Learn program will be phased in globally, starting in 11 countries the first year, including: Albania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Georgia, Ghana, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Togo, and Uganda. Additional countries will be phased in following the first year.

Organizations announcing commitments in support of this effort include: The Brookings Institution – as part of their collaboration with CHARGE (Collaborative for Harnessing Ambition and Resources for Girls' Education), CARE, Girl Rising, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., Global Partnership for Education (GPE), National Peace Corps Association, PBS LearningMedia, and UN Foundation/Girl Up. For more information about these commitments, please visit: <http://www.WhiteHouse.gov/LetGirlsLearn>

EFFORTS ACROSS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING LET GIRLS LEARN & ADOLESCENT GIRLS EDUCATION

Through Let Girls Learn, agencies across the U.S. Government will work together to address the range of challenges confronting adolescent girls around the world. Agencies will increase efforts to build strategic partnerships and enhance diplomatic efforts that

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will help adolescent girls succeed. This initiative will build upon the broad portfolio of existing programs across the government, all aimed at addressing the complex and varied barriers preventing adolescent girls from attending and completing school, and from realizing their potential as adults. These include programs that address: education; empowerment/leadership; health and nutrition; preventing gender-based violence; preventing child, early and forced marriage; and partnerships with bilateral and multi-lateral partners. Below is a selection of existing programming.

Education Programs

- The Empowering Adolescent Girls to Lead through Education (EAGLE) project focuses on promoting girls' education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This five-year, \$15.9 million initiative funded by PEPFAR and USAID, seeks to equip adolescent girls in the DRC with educational, life, and leadership skills, including sessions on health, HIV/AIDS awareness, and self-esteem. The project includes teacher training and programs to reduce school-related gender-based violence. EAGLE will provide scholarships for 3,000 primary school students ("EAGLE scholars") to help improve girls' transition from primary to secondary school and increase completion rates for lower secondary school.
- In Liberia, USAID works to support over 7,000 young and adolescent-aged girls through primary school enrollment, attendance, and retention in 60 primary schools through Girls Opportunities to Access Learning (GOAL) Plus. The program provides a combination of scholarship packages for girls' uniforms, supplies, backpacks, hygiene kits, along with grants for Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to make improvements that will help keep girls in school. The program also includes extra training and mentoring for teachers, and resources for libraries, all aimed at ensuring the school and teachers welcome and support girls in school.
- USAID's Girls Empowerment through Education and Health Activity (ASPIRE) works in Malawi to improve both education and health outcomes for over 125,000 adolescent girls. ASPIRE improves the reading skills of girls in upper primary school so that they are better prepared for their future. The program also trains teachers, parents, and communities to best support adolescent girls.
- USAID/Jordan provides training and materials to supervisors and teachers who are coping with large numbers of Syrian refugee students in their classes. Approximately 75% of the trained teachers are female, many of whom teach upper primary and secondary school, helping adolescent girls benefit from the improved inclusive education delivery.
- In El Salvador, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is investing \$100.7 million to improve the quality of education and skills development for Salvadoran students. MCC will also support the development and institutionalization of the Ministry of Education's Gender Policy and Gender Unit, which will provide input and guidance on the Ministry of Education's vision, strategies, plans, and processes to help improve the education of adolescent girls.
- In Georgia, MCC is investing \$122.5 million to improve the quality of education in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields and increase earning potential of girls and minorities. The project will renovate about 80 schools with up-to-date science labs; gender- and disabled-friendly restrooms; and will train all secondary science, math, and English teachers - and over 2,000 principals - in inclusive methods that encourage greater engagement of girls and minorities.
- USAID, in collaboration with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Burke Center, launched a global communications campaign to highlight opportunities for individuals to take action to support girls' education. Nearly 30 America's top celebrities lent their voices to the effort, which included more than \$230 million in new funding for programs to support education around the world.

Empowerment/Leadership Programs and Initiatives

- The U.S. Department of State is funding a program in the Middle East & North Africa region to enable teenage Arab girls to explore social issues in their communities and provide a space for reflection through video production. This program is training youth, many of whom are adolescent girls, to influence national and regional dialogues about democracy and human rights.
- In Rwanda, the U.S. Department of State is helping to implement a Girls STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Design, and Math) camp to empower young women with the knowledge and skillsets required to be competitive during a time of rapid technological development. The camp will address the strong gender imbalance that exists internationally with regard to women's presence in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

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- Launched in 2014, USAID's Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs Project (Promote) will provide young educated Afghan women opportunities to improve their skills, experience, knowledge, and expand their networks to become future government, business and civil society leaders. The 5-year program will also engage adolescent girls ages 14-18 to ensure they have the critical leadership skills to participate fully in the transformation decade in Afghanistan.
- In September 2012, we announced the Equal Futures Partnership which brings together partner countries and organizations from around the world to break down barriers to women's political and economic empowerment through legal, regulatory and policy reforms. Commitments to the partnership include support for women and STEM education, women entrepreneurs and civic education, and leadership development for women and girls, including adolescent girls.

Health & Nutrition Programs

- The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) recently launched DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, Safe). This \$210 million public-private partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Nike Foundation seeks to reduce new HIV infections in adolescent girls and young women in up to 10 countries with high HIV prevalence.
- USAID/Afghanistan is supporting UNICEF to integrate weekly iron folic acid supplementation and biannual deworming into the formal and non-formal education system to reach 10- to 19-year-old girls to prevent adolescent anemia.

Programs to Address Gender-based Violence (GBV)

- The U.S. Department of State and USAID have committed more than \$22 million since 2013 to the Safe from the Start initiative to strengthen prevention and response to GBV at the onset of humanitarian emergencies.
- The U.S. Government funds the Gender-based Violence Emergency Response and Protection Initiative to provide global, short-term, emergency assistance to GBV survivors - including adolescent girls - of extreme forms of GBV and harmful traditional practices. The Initiative also supports integrated training for governments, the judiciary, and key elements of civil society in implementing laws that address GBV. These training sessions are funded by a partnership with the Avon Foundation.
- In Tanzania, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo the U.S. Government is investing over \$50 million in GBV prevention and response programming through the PEPFAR Gender-based Violence Initiative.
- USAID/Jordan supports the "I Have a Story" campaign, which encourages Jordanian communities to broaden their understanding of GBV, to strengthen support systems for survivors, and reduce the acceptance of GBV in communities. The campaign uses youth and film clubs to build trust among audience members as well as media partnerships to promote attitude change and education.
- In Guinea, the U.S. Department of State is helping to protect vulnerable girls from the practices of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) through a \$1.5 million project from the Secretary's Full Participation Fund. This project is establishing a national multi-media awareness campaign to promote behavior change in Guinea with key partners, including the Government of Guinea, UNICEF, and religious, health, media and civil society networks.

Programs to Prevent Child, Early and Forced Marriage

- USAID/Bangladesh supports the Promoting Human Rights project, which engages with local NGOs and local government and schools to address issues of domestic violence; child, early and forced marriage; and sexual harassment through dialogue, advocacy, role playing and interactive games. In one year alone, the project prevented 382 child, early and forced marriages through the direct intervention of USAID-supported community based groups comprised of community leaders, elected officials, professionals, members of law enforcement, and religious leaders.
- In Ethiopia, where one in seven girls is married by her 15th birthday, USAID is facilitating "community conversations" with girls, their families, and their community members to discuss the effects of child, early and forced marriage and encourage them to build adolescent girls' social, health, and economic assets. Families are offered school supplies to help overcome the economic barriers to sending girls to school. And families who keep girls unmarried during the two-year program are awarded a sheep or a goat. An early evaluation of the project

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found that girls aged 10–14 in the experimental site were 90% less likely to be married at the end of the two-year program.

Partnerships with Bilateral and Multilateral Partners

- USAID will continue supporting the Global Partnership for Education – a partnership of developing countries, donor governments, international organizations, the private sector, teachers, and civil society / NGO groups – that is focused on getting all children into school and ensuring they receive a quality education.
- In Pakistan, USAID supports the Safe Schools Initiative with \$4.6 million. The program manages educational services for 53,000 children displaced from North Waziristan and helps increase resilience in affected communities. Over 10,000 children, nearly half of whom are girls, have enrolled in Temporary Learning Centers and approximately 100 teachers have been trained in psychosocial support, health and hygiene promotion, and techniques for teaching in challenging environments.
- In Nigeria, a Safe Schools Initiative trust fund was set up in response to the growing number of attacks on school children, including the kidnapping of more than 200 girls in northern Nigeria. The U.S. Government donated \$2 million to support the program. The program aims to meet the educational needs of thousands of children affected by the ongoing conflict in northeast Nigeria, specifically in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states.
- The U.S. Government’s \$1.2 million contribution to the UN Literacy Decade Fund - in partnership with UNESCO - supports specialized literacy centers across South Sudan and the training of 230 teachers to improve literacy learning among out-of-school adolescent women and girls.
- As one of 16 champion countries for the UN Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), the United States seeks to raise education to the top of the global policy agenda to put every child in school, improve the quality of learning, and foster global citizenship.