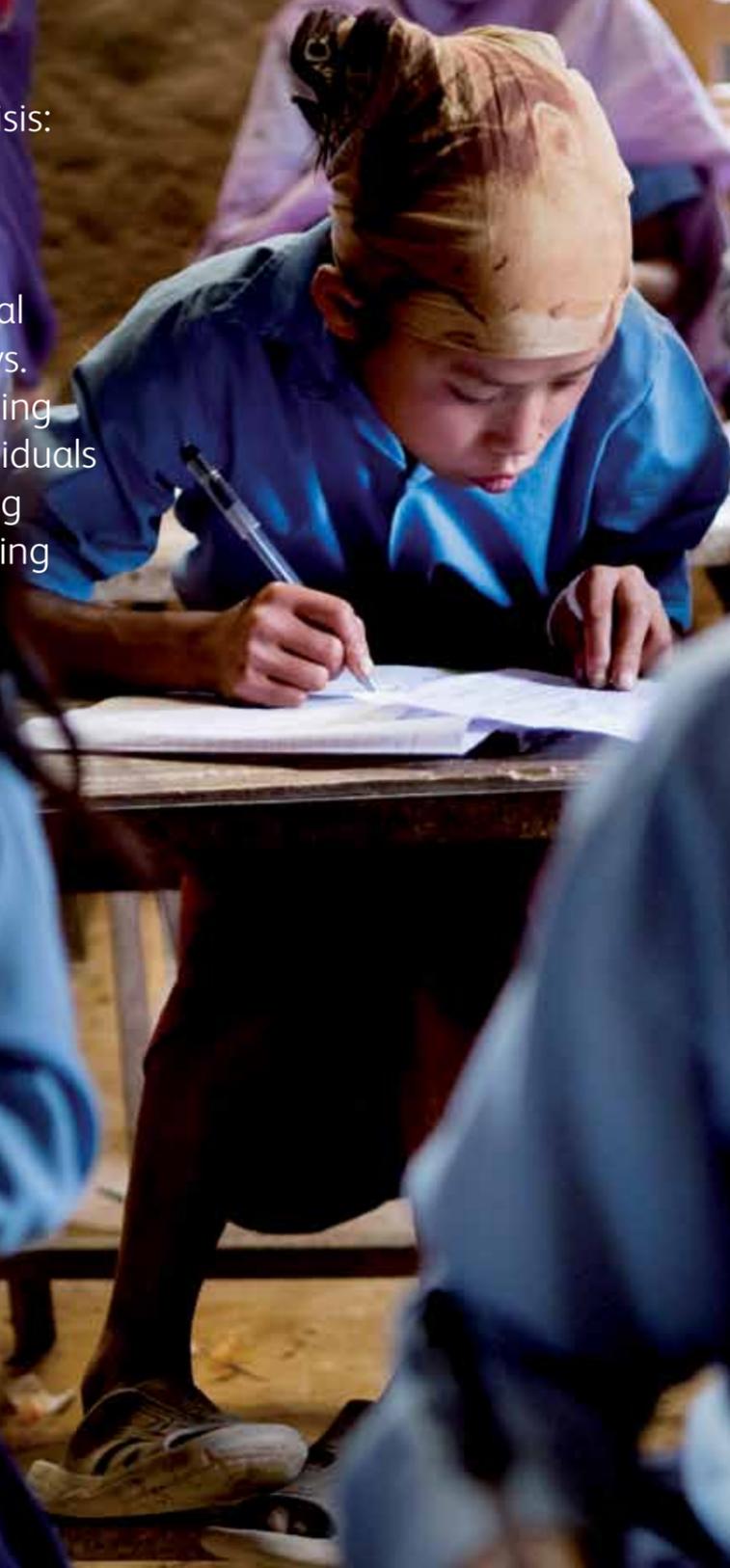


From rhetoric to results

Closing the global
education gap for
the world's girls
and women

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR
EDUCATION

Girls' education is in crisis: in the vast majority of developing countries, girls are more likely to be deprived educational opportunities than boys. This is having devastating consequences for individuals and societies, restricting opportunity, undermining progress in health and harming the prospects for economic growth.



Education's hidden crisis

Throughout the last decade significant progress has been made in increasing girls' enrolment in primary education. However, although more girls, but far from all, now have an increased chance to access school, the challenge of true gender equality goes much deeper.

The multiple barriers and discriminations faced by girls means that, once they have enrolled, they are more likely than boys to drop out or be forced out of school and are less likely to successfully complete their education.

These are girls like Hadiza, 8, from Nigeria and Shengai, 13, from Tanzania, who both have to work to support their families. While Hadiza is enrolled in school, she frequently misses classes to help her family sell their produce. Shengai has never been to school. Both girls' stories are highlighted by the Global Campaign for Education's Send My Sister to School campaign.

Especially where it interacts with other markers for disadvantage like poverty, ethnicity, disability and the rural-urban divide, gender inequality in education is a decisive factor in reducing educational access and achievement.

There are only four years remaining in which to fulfil the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring that every girl and boy completes primary education. But global community is falling well short of this shared objective, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. It is therefore vital that the limited progress that has been made not be overstated. Much remains to be done to deliver on the promise universal primary education in general and for girls in particular.

The gender gap in education

- Girls are still less likely to have a chance to go to school. If girls participation in primary education was equal to boys then 3.6m more girls would be in school.
- In Pakistan only 57% of girls enrol in primary school compared to 73% of boys.
- Of all the children that start primary school in Burundi, 44.9% of boys will complete compared to 27.3% of girls.
- No country in Africa sends more than half its girls to secondary school.
- In South Sudan, girls at 15 are more likely to die in childbirth than to complete primary school.
- Two thirds of the world's 760 million illiterate adults are women.

Photo: Keshari, 13, at school, Sathipaila village, West Nepal. Nepal has been struck by conflict and unrest since 1996.
© Save the Children.

Cover Photo: Reem, 11 at school in Buner, Pakistan. 10% of the world's primary school-age children who do not attend school live in Pakistan and a majority of them are girls. © Save the Children.

Girls education: laying the foundation for success

The case for investing in girls' education is both urgent and compelling. Ensuring that every girl has the opportunity to enjoy a good quality education is a basic human right, but it is also an economic and social imperative.

Education empowers individual girls, transforms communities, and promotes democracy. It is the key to protecting them from abuse, improving their health, enhancing their skills, boosting their earning power, and empowering them to participate in society.

Education saves lives

Women with higher levels of education are more likely to delay and space out their pregnancies and to receive health care. In Burkina Faso, mothers with secondary education are twice as likely to give birth in health facilities as those with no education. A child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past age five.

Education is also girls' best protection against HIV. For a girl in Africa, completing basic education makes her three times less likely to contract HIV.

Education empowers

Providing girls with education is also a key to preventing child marriage. Women with seven or more years of schooling get married an average of five years later than women with no schooling.

Education drives growth

Investing in girls' education is also a proven and effective route to ensuring long term economic growth.

Just one extra year of primary school is likely to boost a girl's eventual wages by 10-20%.

More significant is what the wages are used for: women and girls make good use of the money they earn, reinvesting 90% into their families compared to only 30-40% for men.

Our failure to educate girls doesn't make economic sense; in fact it's estimated that gender inequality in education actually costs the global economy some \$92 billion per year.

The case is clear: providing good quality education for girls is the key to promoting their rights and those of their families and to ensuring long term, sustainable, economic and social development.

Girls can't wait

Despite the clear case for investing in girls' education, the international community has failed to step up to the challenge.

The gains that have been made in girls' enrolment in primary school have led to a dangerous misconception that the job is almost done. But even when girls get to enrol in school, and many still don't, they drop out of school earlier and complete their education less often than boys.

We need to act on all these fronts and to ensure that what we're measuring our success against is what counts for girls: enrolment, completion and achievement in education.

With the UK government's support the crisis in girls education can be reversed.

The UK has played a crucial role in supporting the progress achieved in education thus far. It has championed education internationally, is a leading donor to the sector and is committed to improving the quality of the aid it provides.

Gender equality in general; and the education of girls in particular are also public priorities for the Secretary of State and the Department for International Development (DFID).

Building on the UK's record in education and the government's commitment to the rights of women and girls we have the opportunity to turn the situation around: by centralising girls' education within the UK's development strategy, and taking the global political leadership necessary to ensure that girls' marginalisation is tackled once and for all.

The Global Campaign for Education has identified six priority areas where we believe DFID could make an important contribution to securing the right to education for the world's girls. They are:

- Improve learning opportunities for girls
- Support girls' transition to secondary school
- Tackle the global crisis in women's illiteracy
- Support education during humanitarian crises
- Protect girl students and their teachers from attack
- Provide more and better aid for education

'From rhetoric to results' explains the importance of each of these areas to the education of girls and then provides specific recommendations for how the UK, both alone and in collaboration with other development partners, could make a significant contribution to securing a more successful future for the world's girls and women.

Improving girls' educational access and achievement increases individual opportunity, helps improve health outcomes, and drives economic growth.

Improve learning opportunities for girls

Over the last decade, the attention of the global community has been focused on improving access to education, leading to significant gains in the number of girls initially enrolling in school.

This has been a step in the right direction, but unfortunately improved enrolment levels have been widely adopted as the main indicator for assessing overall progress on girls' education. This narrow focus has meant that the vital issues of sustained participation, completion and learning outcomes have each been neglected.

Getting girls into school is of limited benefit if they are unable to learn whilst they are there and they stop attending before completion.

There are a wide variety of issues that make it challenging for girls to learn. Ensuring a safe school environment that is responsive to girls' needs is fundamental to their ability to stay in school. This requires well-trained and resourced school management, gender conscious teacher recruitment and training, gender sensitive curricula, female role models, and adequate school infrastructure such as separate latrines for girls.

Making positive strides in the provision of girls' education requires a clear understanding of the extent to which they are currently marginalised. To do this we need to change the indicators we use to define educational progress. Access-based indicators remain relevant but should be used in conjunction with other indicators that track outcomes and prioritise learning.

The Department for International Development should:

- **Support efforts to recruit and train the 1.9 million new teachers that are necessary to deliver the promise of universal primary education by 2015**, and support strategies for increasing the numbers of female teachers working in countries and areas where they are inadequately represented in the teaching profession.

- **Ensure that the teacher training it supports is gender-conscious and equips teachers with the skills and knowledge to employ child centred and gender sensitive teaching methods.**

- **Develop and adopt improved indicators for progress in education, prioritising completion and learning outcomes alongside enrolment and attendance.** All data should be gender disaggregated and where possible also disaggregated by other measures of exclusion such as rural residence, ethnicity, linguistic background and disability. DFID should focus its own DFID-attributable indicators on outcomes, within a framework that explains how money spent will have a positive impact for girls.

- **Establish and lead an international movement to secure the adoption of a more comprehensive set of indicators by other development actors and developing countries.**

- **Support in-depth research at country level that can provide a reliable overview of girls' educational exclusion and learning opportunities.** Long term progress in tackling girls' marginalisation from education is dependent upon having detailed knowledge of the most effective interventions in keeping girls engaged in school and learning.

Girls marginalised in Nigeria

There are 8.2 million children of primary school age that do not go to school in Nigeria: this is the highest number for any country in the world.

68% of boys enrol in primary school compared to 58% of girls. This figure in itself demonstrates significant marginalisation but when the effect of gender is combined with wealth, location and ethnicity then the impact is exacerbated.

For example, wealthy boys and girls who live in urban areas spend an average of ten years in school compared with just three years for poor females living in rural areas.

Over half of those marginalised from education are Hausa speakers, a group that makes up only one-fifth of the total population. When all of these things are taken together the most disadvantaged group of all becomes apparent: Hausa girls who come from poor families and live in rural areas each spend an average of less than six months in school.

We need to work harder to get the world's out of school girls into education, to support girls to stay at school and to learn more whilst they are there.

Photo: Brenda, ten, with her back pack of newly provided educational materials at school in Nakuru, Kenya. Her favourite subjects are science and religious education. Brenda would like to become a teacher.

The case for expanding access to secondary education for girls is compelling and should receive greater support.

Support girls' transition to secondary school

Although many girls manage to enrol in and progress through primary, few manage to make the transition to let alone complete secondary education.

Providing girls with the opportunity to go to and complete secondary education is a vital building block in developing competitive economies. Providing secondary education also saves lives: UNICEF calculates that providing every mother in sub-Saharan Africa with secondary education would save the lives of 1.8 million children every year.

The progress that has been made for girls in primary enrolments has naturally led to increased demand for secondary. It is now necessary to provide the finances necessary to meet the increased demand and expand the capacity of the secondary education system.

Secondary education is a crucial stage in the development of girls – it is also the stage of education at which they are most vulnerable because of the combination of factors working against their enrolment and sustained participation. Because girls are especially vulnerable at this stage, they need additional support to get into and remain at secondary school.

The Department for International Development should:

- **Provide funding to support demand-side incentives for good quality secondary education for girls**, including by providing financial support to developing country governments that commit to abolishing fees for secondary education.
- **Expand the provision of targeted bursaries for girls at secondary school and conditional cash transfers** to help mitigate the indirect and hidden costs of school which prevent poor households from sending girls to school such as textbooks, uniforms, and the opportunity costs of education.
- **Support the improvement of secondary school supply** through investments in teacher training programmes for secondary teachers, updating secondary school curriculum to ensure that it is gender conscious, and providing school infrastructure that is conducive to girls' sustained engagement such as separate toilets.

Girls pushed out of secondary school

Gender, family poverty and where they live conspire to rob girls of a secondary education.

In the Dominican Republic rich urban boys have more than a 60% chance of completing secondary education, compared to less than a 10% chance for poor rural girls. The disparity is even starker in Ethiopia, where more than one in three rich urban boys will complete secondary compared to less than one in a hundred poor rural girls.

Tackle the global crisis in women's literacy

In today's knowledge-based economies, literacy is both a survival skill and a route to participation and empowerment for women.

A woman's ability to read has a direct impact on her life chances and that of her children – a child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past age 5 and literate women are more likely to send and keep their daughters at school.

However, literacy is the most neglected of all the Education for All goals, and there is a devastating gender dimension to the literacy divide. Of the 760 million illiterate adults around the world, two thirds are women, and a woman is twice as likely as a man to be illiterate in 41 countries.

Rural and poor women are worst affected and the literacy skills of women from minority language groups are also often significantly lower than those of the majority or national language group.

Empowering female learners through literacy acquisition not only improves skills, but also changes attitudes and challenges structures.

Women's literacy programmes often target communities of women who have previously been marginalised, and as they increase their literacy skills, they grow in confidence and self-esteem. They are better able to access the knowledge they need to take control of their reproductive and sexual health and to safe-guard their and their children's health.

Improved literacy for mothers is also key to girls' participation in education: a woman who is literate is more likely to be able to insist on sending her daughter to school.

A literate woman is also better equipped to access financial services and participate in community decision making, including Parent Teacher Associations and School Management Committees. This in turn helps to promote girls' and women's participation in the decisions which affect them at school, leading to better learning outcomes for whole communities.

The Department for International Development should:

- **Develop a strategy for improving women's literacy through bilateral funding, technical assistance, policy dialogue and political leadership.**

Research has demonstrated that advances in female literacy are both feasible and affordable. DFID should lead the way in this field, differentiating itself from the governments who pay only lip service to the importance of female literacy.

- **Increase technical assistance to partner countries to ensure that national literacy policies are translated into specific action plans, with long-term goals and interventions that support family learning and are relevant to women's lives and livelihoods.**

- **Encourage governments in developing countries to dedicate at least 3% of their national education sector budgets to adult literacy programming, with special emphasis on women's literacy.**

- **Ensure that literacy in general and women's literacy in particular is included in the reform and renewal of education related global financing initiatives, including the Education for All Fast Track Initiative.**

Female literacy in the Middle East and North Africa

Rich urban women in Yemen up to three times more likely to be literate as rural women, and women living in the poorest 20% of households are ten times less likely to be able to read and write as those living in the richest households.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, although 85% of the wealthiest women are literate, the figure drops to 33% for women from the poorest homes.

In Morocco however, the government launched a coordinated strategy to reduce illiteracy from 43% in 2003 to 20% in 2012. Effective coordination with public institutions, NGOs and private companies is bearing fruit for women: of the 709,000 individuals enrolled in the programmes in 2007, 82% were women and 50% lived in rural areas.

The international commitment to Education for All cannot just mean education for girls today, it must also encompass the large numbers of women who never had the chance to learn to read or write as children.

Support education during humanitarian crises

Providing children caught up in humanitarian crises with an education should be an essential part of the first phase of all emergency responses.

Ensuring education systems and funding mechanisms provide safe learning environments for girls in conflict and emergencies protects them from immediate risks and lays the foundation for personal, community and societal recovery and development.

In times of conflict or humanitarian crisis, communities' normal protective systems deteriorate or break down completely.

In a destabilised environment, girls are left vulnerable to various forms of abuse or exploitation including rape, trafficking and kidnap.

Aggressive and violent behaviour against girls and women also often increases in times of conflict as stereotypical gender roles are reinforced. In this context, the existence of a safe space for education can act as a powerful force for the protection of girls.

The practical barriers to girls' education are also exacerbated in conflict or crisis. Although children and their families prioritise education in emergency situations, the normal obstacles to learning that girls face are often exacerbated. Increasing economic difficulties mean that girls are relied upon to support the family income, whether by working themselves, or by looking after younger siblings to enable parents to work.

An increase in the number of child-headed households leaves more girls with too many responsibilities to pursue their learning. For those who are able to continue learning, access becomes increasingly difficult, with girls having to navigate longer, more dangerous routes to schools.

Once there, many girl students find that the conflict or disaster has meant that any previously available water and sanitation facilities, including separate toilets for girls, have been damaged or destroyed.

There are occasions, however when humanitarian crises present unique opportunities to further girls' education. In some crises, the influx of international NGOs to camps for refugees or internally displaced people can provide more options for girls' education than were available in their country or region of origin.

Alternative, non-formal or accelerated learning programmes can provide targeted and flexible learning that enables girls to catch up on schooling missed in the past, and mechanisms that encourage girls' attendance and progression in education programmes are often encouraged by international development partners.

These opportunities must be seized and built on to allow girls affected by humanitarian crises to continue their learning, or begin learning for the very first time.

The Department for International Development should:

- **Recognise and prioritise education as a core component of first phase response in emergencies**, and should work to secure the same commitment from other humanitarian funders, including ECHO, the European Commission's humanitarian aid department.

- **Work for funding to be earmarked for gender responsive education programming in humanitarian crises**. Interventions that facilitate girls' education and encourage gender mainstreaming should be allocated funds, particularly through collaborative appeals.

- **Collaborate with the Education Cluster in partner countries to improve gender sensitive leadership, coordination and accountability in emergencies**.

This may include advocating for an increase in the gender responsive education elements of country level Humanitarian Work Plans, ensuring gender issues are included in needs and impact assessments, and requiring collection of gender disaggregated data.

- **Work to improve the gender aspects of resilience and preparedness in partner countries**.

Issues likely to affect girls' education should be considered in country office contingency planning exercises, and awareness of the importance of girls' education in emergencies should be included in local capacity building.

Education for girls returning to South Sudan

After two decades of conflict it is estimated that 92% of women in South Sudan cannot read and write, and only 27% of girls are in school. At 15, girls have a higher chance of dying in childbirth than finishing primary school.

The world's youngest nation faces a battle to provide its girls with a quality education. Cultural practices and traditions leading to early marriage and pregnancy often cause girls to drop out of school, and schools lack infrastructure, including crucially toilets.

Since October 2010, over 290,000 returnees have come back to Southern Sudan, many of them living in makeshift camps. The challenge of integrating returnee children, many of whom speak Arabic, into an English-language education system where girls are already disadvantaged is huge.

All children are adversely affected by conflict and emergencies, but girls' vulnerabilities are particularly compounded in times of crisis.

Protect girl students and their teachers from attack

Girls' right to learn must include protection from violent attack. Intentional attacks on students, teachers and schools are on the increase, with girls and female teachers disproportionately affected and targeted.

A recognised motive for attacks on education is to discourage and disrupt girls' education, particularly in regions where religious or militant groups are ideologically opposed to female education. Afghanistan and Pakistan are two countries where girls have been particularly targeted. The gender motive for attacks in these countries is emphasised by the written warnings against girls' education from the Taliban which often precede attacks. Following receipt of such warnings, girls' schools often close in a climate of fear.

Unless perpetrators of these attacks are held to account, girls will remain afraid to go to school, teachers will remain afraid to teach, and parents will be afraid to send their daughters to school.

Female students and teachers are also subject to sexual violence by armed groups, soldiers or security forces, either as a tactic of war, or simply due to disregard for the rights of girls and women. Girls and female teachers are often targeted on their journeys to or from school, or whilst carrying out other daily tasks. Some 40% of women in the North and South Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo have reported undergoing a sexually violent attack. The psychological trauma of such attacks has a detrimental impact on girls' ability to learn and female teachers' ability to teach. Even for the girls and women who have thus far escaped sexual violence, the fear of falling victim to such an attack means girls and women are often less willing to travel to reach school.

Attacks on education that target girls and female teachers are serious threats to the right to education of millions of girls around the world, and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Both the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office should:

- **Work to strengthen and reinforce the international Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Children and Armed Conflict.** This mechanism, established in 2005 by UN Security Council Resolution 1612, aims to provide the Security Council with timely, accurate, reliable and objective information on grave violations against children in conflict, including attacks on schools. As a donor government, the UK should provide targeted funding to agencies and NGOs working to strengthen the MRM.

- **Support the development of a comprehensive, international reporting mechanism of human rights violations relating to education,** including attacks on school children, schools and teachers. UNESCO's 'Education Under Attack' reports provided the basis for this and UNESCO should be mandated to lead this process on an ongoing basis. Ensuring that such data is available and reliable is a powerful tool in promoting government accountability in partner countries

- **End impunity for attacks on education by working to ensure perpetrators are punished,** both through supporting investigations at an international level in appropriate criminal courts, and by supporting the criminalisation of attacks on education in national law in all partner countries.

- **Act decisively on rape and other sexual violence.** The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1882 in 2009 means that countries with incidents of sexually violent attacks against children in conflict can now be listed for monitoring and action

plans under the MRM. Despite this, reporting on sexual violence remains limited. DFID should ensure better monitoring and reporting of sexual attacks against girl students and female teachers, prioritising safe routes to schools and ensuring school leaders are empowered and equipped to deal with abuses that occur on school premises.

- **Insist on adherence to human rights legislation and good practice,** with particular reference to the rights of girl children, when entering into aid agreements with conflict affected countries.

Girls under attack in Afghanistan and Pakistan

In Afghanistan, 74 children were killed in the first half of 2010 as a result of suicide attacks or improvised explosive devices often whilst in school or walking to school. Recent attacks have included girl students coming under fire from gun-men on motorbikes on their way home from school; girl high school students being burned in an acid attack on the way to school; and school girls being admitted to hospital after a mass poison attack. Some 40% of the schools attacked in 2009 were girls' schools, compared to 32% mixed and 28% boys.

In the Swat district of Pakistan, over twice as many girls' schools as boys' schools were targeted between 2007 and 2009, with shelling, demolishing and other attacks depriving 23,000 girls of an education in that region alone. Girls' schools in other areas have also been targeted, with 95 girls injured in one attack as they left school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Photo: Girls gather in the front of their school in Khan Younis, Gaza. The school along with many other educational institutions suffered damage during the 2009 bombardment of Palestine which left over 1,300 dead and over 5,300 injured.

© Save the Children.

We urgently need to close the global funding gap for education and ensure that aid to the sector meets the needs of girls.

Provide more and better aid for girls' education

Making the financial investment in girls' education has a significant impact upon individual wellbeing as well as both economic and social development. A significant factor constraining increased financial investment from donors is the misconception that the job is almost done. This myth is doing untold damage to the futures of millions of girls across the world.

Increased and well targeted financing is vital to ensuring that education becomes a reality for the millions of girls currently excluded from education and learning. The implementation of all of the recommendations in this document is dependent on a substantial and sustained flow of finance for education in general and for financing that adequately reflects the needs of girls.

The UK is one of the world's largest donors to education and the results of the Bilateral and Multilateral reviews of education were encouraging for education as a whole.

However, the UK also needs to develop and publish a statement of its strategic intent for the education sector. Since its election the Coalition Government has published Frameworks for Results for improving reproductive, maternal and newborn health and malaria, and we believe that a similar framework in which the Department for International Development can articulate its priorities for and approaches to supporting education is urgently required.

The document would enable the Department to detail the UK's commitment, amongst other things, to girls' education, including what measures it will support and how it will implement and monitor them.

A business as usual approach will not solve the crisis in girls' education. Gender inequality and injustice in education is a persistent phenomenon which needs both new resources and innovative approaches. Given its commitment to girls' education the UK should incentivise both established and other stakeholders to develop and implement new solutions to the issue. This will require support for innovation and a commitment to test new methods with flexible forms of funding.

More and better aid for girls education from the UK will not be enough on its own. Meeting the Education for All goals and ensuring that they benefit girls and women will require additional and more effective funding from a wider range of donors. Given its long standing and current commitment to education, the UK has a vital role to play in building the interest and political will needed within the international community to develop a new global compact in support of education and the advancement of girls and women in particular.

The Department for International Development should:

- **Establish a new fund for girls' strategy/framework for results which details the UK's commitment, amongst other things, to girls' education**, including what measures it will support, the value of its financial contribution and how it will implement and monitor its work.

- **Establish a new funding mechanism specifically for girls' education**, designed to support new and innovative ideas to tackle girls exclusion from education, encourage new partnerships and scale up what we know already works.

- **Recognise the important role of The Education For All Fast Track Initiative (FTI) as a channel for effective dispersal of funds for girls' education and support the replenishment of the Initiative's funds in 2011.** Alongside recognising the FTI as a valuable and appropriate mechanism through which to disperse aid to education for girls, DFID should also push for ongoing reform of the Initiative, and the prioritisation of girls' education.

- **Coordinate closely with the Treasury in providing policy advice to the UK seat on the IMF Executive Board**, using the UK's role to ensure girls' education is prioritised. This should involve ensuring that macro-economic policies facilitate girls' improved learning outcomes rather than obstructing them, strongly resisting and highlighting the danger for girls in returning to tight fiscal targets and cuts in public expenditure as seen in previous years.

- **Continue exploring innovative financing mechanisms that will make additional funds available for girls' education.** Alongside this, DFID should utilise selective partnerships with the private sector to enhance girls' education. However, this should be undertaken from within an understanding that education is a public good and that governments should remain the main education providers.

- **Support a new annual high level global initiative on education to replace the EFA High Level Group.**

- **Promote improved accountability systems that can track the dispersals that donors make to the countries where girls are most marginalised.** The results of monitoring and accountability systems should be made public, promoting increased transparency on financing and delivery of girls' education.

The UK is perfectly placed to make a defining contribution to closing the education gap for the world's poorest girls and women.

Moving from rhetoric to results

The reality

The past decade has witnessed significant progress aimed at closing the global education gap. The number of children not in school has been falling, the gender gap in primary enrolment is narrowing and more children are completing a basic education.

But in the vast majority of developing countries girls remain marginalised and excluded from school. They still lag behind their male counterparts in accessing school, and drop out and fail to complete their education at much higher rates than boys.

The complete failure of both donors and developing countries to do anything to address the number of adults who can't read and write has robbed the world's 500 million plus illiterate women of that fundamental right. This also exacerbates the gender divide in education for their girl children.

The gender gap in education robs not just girls and women of their rights, but their families of income, their communities of empowered citizens and the economy of a critical human resource.

The rhetoric

A cursory look at international, donor and developing country statements on the education of girls suggests wide recognition of the problem. However, as 'From rhetoric to results' sets out, that recognition hasn't translated into the funding and action required to make either speedy or substantial progress.

We urgently need to renew the global commitment to Education for All and put girls and women at the heart of our efforts, because we know that unless we don't, Education for All and the education related millennium development goals will remain a fine, but unrealised rhetoric.

Delivering results

Delivering on the promise of Education for All and the education related Millennium Development Goals will require concerted action across a range of fronts.

'From rhetoric to results' sets out the key areas in which, the Global Campaign for Education, believes action by the UK government, both alone and in collaboration with other partners, could make a decisive difference on girls education.

The UK has led international efforts in support of education of which it should be very proud: it has championed the issue at the highest level, been a leading donor to education and has worked hard to improve aid to the sector.

The Coalition Government has reaffirmed all of these things, and has also publicly prioritised gender equality and the education of girls in particular in its development effort.

More generally the cross party commitment in the UK to meeting the target of providing 0.7% of GNI for overseas development means that we remain one of the world's most significant and influential donors.

No other national government currently has both the track record, public commitment and available resources to deliver the breakthrough in girls education that the UK currently does.

The UK is consequently uniquely placed to make a defining contribution to closing the education gap for the world's poorest girls and women.

The recommendations in 'From rhetoric to reality' provide an action plan, which if implemented we genuinely believe, will deliver substantial and sustainable results.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is an international coalition of non-government, development, and children's rights organisations, and education unions. In the UK students and teachers from thousands of schools take part in our annual Send My Friend to School campaign. Our parliamentary advocacy and policy work seeks to generate the political will necessary to ensure the UK plays an active and effective part in efforts to secure education for all. For more information about the campaign in the UK visit www.sendmyfriend.org

The Campaign's UK members are:

ActionAid UK	Link Community Development
Association of Teachers and Lecturers	National Association of Schoolmasters
Book Aid International	Union of Women Teachers
CAFOD	National Union of Teachers
CAMFED	Oxfam GB
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City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development	Save the Children UK
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Deaf Child Worldwide	Toybox
Handicap International	UNESCO UK
Leonard Cheshire Disability	Voluntary Service Overseas

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Acknowledgements

'From rhetoric to results: Closing the global education gap for the world's girls and women' was written by David Hollow, Catherine Gladwell and Joseph O'Reilly. Contributions were received with thanks from Lucy Lake, Elin Martinez, Rowan Harvey, Julia Modern, Nicola Cadbury, Stephen Nock and Vibeke Gulliksen.

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The photographs in the report were provided by Save the Children and CAMFED.