

# MIND THE GAP:

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The State of Girls' Education  
in Crisis and Conflict



Inter-agency  
Network for Education  
in Emergencies

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# FOREWORD

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Global education is not a level playing field.

Even before COVID, in 2019, 69 million girls were already out of school in crisis-affected countries. The largest disruptor of education in modern history, the pandemic, saw 1.6 billion children out of education at the height of school closures.

Missing out on school does long-term damage, and it affects girls disproportionately so that up to 20 million girls, particularly adolescent girls, are at risk of permanently dropping out of school in the next year.

In losing access to school, they not only lose the opportunity to learn, but also the protection that schools afford: from domestic violence, early and forced marriage and early pregnancy. It risks the prospects of whole families and communities, and it risks the loss of hope.

Crisis, conflict, and fragility exacerbate existing inequalities in access to quality education and skills training for girls and women, especially those with disabilities and those who are forcibly displaced.

This report gives voice to the positive impact of education for girls and women in crisis-affected countries. Young women like Fatema, a Syrian refugee in Jordan, who is full of pride in a new skill that brings help to her mother and contributes to the wellbeing of her family. Or Esther in Juba who talks about avoiding early marriage.

For a young woman, education is about agency – supporting her confidence to say, “I am knowledgeable, I am capable, I can make decisions for myself, my family, and my future.”

Education brings hope and possibilities; physical and mental wellbeing; improved economic and social livelihoods; safety and protection; and empowerment, civic participation, and innovation. A society that educates its girls is fairer, more secure, and more prosperous for generations to come.

In short, girls’ education is one of the smartest investments we can make, and an absolute game-changer for development. Girls, regardless of race, ethnicity, ability, context, and identity must realise their right to education.

This report captures the state of girls’ education in crisis and conflict and presents a range of case studies to illustrate the social and cultural norms that exist as barriers. It identifies the specific areas where girls are continuing to fall behind and outlines the gaps in data and funding. The report also recognizes the significant progress to date and proposes recommendations for stakeholders and advocates.

Data drives action. This report contributes to the evidence base on girls’ education in crisis and conflict, and outlines the collective action we need to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.

What does action look like? It includes:

- Inclusive, innovative, cross-sectoral, and conflict-sensitive programming which accounts for the additional risks and barriers to learning and access experienced by girls;
- A stronger gender focus in policy and planning which prioritizes girls’ education within initial crisis responses to ensure legal frameworks for the protection of rights and the prevention of violence within schools;
- Ensuring gender-responsive investments and funding to education programming, education ministries, and innovative mechanisms and tools to ensure continued access to education; and,
- Advancing our commitment to working within the development-humanitarian and peace nexus so that education is a priority in our emergency response and remains a priority throughout protracted crises.

We are proud that the G7 has committed to advance the agenda for girls’ education. It is at the heart of the UK’s current G7 presidency, as it was during Canada’s where the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls, and Women in Developing Countries was a key outcome of the 2018 G7 Leaders’ Summit.

G7 leaders committed to support quality education and skills training for girls, adolescent girls and women in fragile, crisis and conflict-affected situations, and to take down the barriers to education for refugees, displaced peoples, returnees and people with disabilities – priorities Canada will advance through the Together for Learning Campaign.

The UK's current G7 Presidency is building on this progress. At the London G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting in May 2021, participants reaffirmed their commitment to 12 years of safe and quality education for all children and especially for girls and women who have the least access to a safe education because of conflict, displacement, and climate related disasters.

We are calling on the global community to get 40 million more girls into school and 20 million more reading by the age of ten in low and lower-middle income countries by 2026.

Without action to address the threats to girls' education posed by conflict and crisis these targets won't be met. This requires continued leadership and partnership across international borders to rebuild better and to restore the gains made in access to quality education. The recently published Girls' Education Action Plan outlines the UK's own ambitious plans to secure progress.

Educating girls, everywhere, has the transformative power to lift communities out of poverty, grow economies and build back better from crises, including from the pandemic. The challenge outlined in the report is huge, but the evidence gives us clarity of purpose, and a clear focus for action.

Today's girls can be tomorrow's innovators, pioneers and campaigners, its leaders, and its role models. If we can give them their wings, we will see them fly.

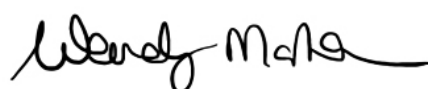
**Karina Gould MP**

Canada's Minister of  
International Development



**Wendy Morton MP**

UK Minister for the European  
Neighbourhood and the Americas



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# ACRONYMS

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<b>AE</b>	Accelerated Education
<b>AEP</b>	Accelerated Education Program
<b>AEWG</b>	Accelerated Education Working Group
<b>AoR</b>	Area of Responsibility
<b>CBE</b>	Community-Based Education
<b>CEC</b>	Community Education Committee
<b>CODEC</b>	Community Development Center, Bangladesh
<b>CRS</b>	Creditor Reporting System
<b>DAFI</b>	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic and Health Survey
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>ECW</b>	Education Cannot Wait
<b>EiE</b>	Education in Emergencies
<b>FTS</b>	Financial Tracking Service
<b>G7</b>	Group of Seven
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GCPEA</b>	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
<b>GEC</b>	Girls' Education Challenge
<b>GESS</b>	Girls' Education South Sudan
<b>GPE</b>	Global Partnership for Education
<b>IDMC</b>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>INEE</b>	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>JYP</b>	Jordan Youth Programme

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<b>KEEP</b>	—————	Kenya Equity in Education Project
<b>LMICs</b>	—————	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
<b>MoE</b>	—————	Ministry of Education
<b>NGO</b>	—————	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NRC</b>	—————	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>OECD</b>	—————	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>oPt</b>	—————	occupied Palestinian territory
<b>REEP</b>	—————	Research for Effective Education Programming
<b>SDG</b>	—————	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SOMGEP-T</b>	———	Somali Girls' Education Promotion Programme
<b>SRGBV</b>	—————	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
<b>STAGES</b>	—————	Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Educational Success
<b>TVET</b>	—————	Technical Vocational Education and Training
<b>UIS</b>	—————	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
<b>UN</b>	—————	United Nations
<b>UN OCHA</b>	———	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>UNESCO</b>	—————	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	—————	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGEI</b>	—————	UN Girls' Education Initiative
<b>UNHCR</b>	—————	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	—————	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNRWA</b>	—————	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
<b>USAID</b>	—————	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WFP</b>	—————	World Food Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report summarizes recent progress made in improving education and training for girls and women affected by conflict and crisis, including refugees and internally displaced persons. It was commissioned by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) under the auspices of the [INEE Reference Group on Girls' Education in Emergencies](#) in response to commitments made by leaders of seven of the world's largest economies at the 44th Group of Seven Summit, which was hosted by Canada in 2018.<sup>1</sup> By adopting [The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women in Developing Countries](#) (hereafter referred to as 'the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education'), these leaders collectively committed to invest in quality education for girls and women during conflict and crisis, including refugees and internally displaced persons.

The purpose of this report is to contribute to the evidence base on education for girls and women in crisis situations. The report draws from data on 44 crisis-affected countries (see Table 1), from recent research, and from a set of case studies of interventions in a range of crisis-affected contexts. Given that the data available at the time of writing were primarily from 2018 and 2019, the data presented do not reflect the impact the COVID-19 crisis has had on girls' education in emergencies; however, some analysis of the education response to the crisis is included.

## KEY FINDINGS

### LAW, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

- Girls' and women's right to education, including in situations of crisis and displacement, is embedded in international human rights law through various international conventions. However, a number of countries with large, displaced populations have not fully ratified these conventions.
- National legal frameworks in crisis-affected countries often provide only limited protection of girls' and women's right to education.
- Alternative education programs can be particularly effective in supporting girls' education during crises, but they need to be integrated into national education policies.
- Evidence from national education policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis indicate that limited attention has been given to the additional barriers girls are facing as they try to learn at home, including the gender digital divide.

### EDUCATION, PROTECTION, AND GENDER

- There is a virtuous circular relationship between the education and the protection of girls. Education can protect girls, which in turn makes their communities more resilient.
- The inability to access education can mean a loss of protection for girls, which may lead them to drop out of school, thus making the girls and their communities less resilient.
- In emergencies, girls are often at greater risk than boys of school dropout. Girls' risk of early marriage, early childbearing, and family expectations around providing domestic labor and unpaid caregiving work also tend to increase during crises.
- Girls experience high rates of school-related gender-based violence in many crisis-affected countries, including "sex for grades," teacher-perpetrated rape and sexual abuse, and sexual harassment, abuse, or rape on the journey to and from school.
- Girls and women with disabilities may be the first to be abandoned and the last to receive emergency assistance and access to education during a crisis, thus they face a high risk of abuse, neglect, and long-term psychosocial trauma.
- Attacks on education that explicitly targeted girls and women because of their gender took place in at least 21 countries between 2015 and 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom adopted the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education.

## CLOSING THE GAP: ARE WE MAKING PROGRESS?

### Crisis-affected girls

- Girls in crisis-affected countries are far less likely than girls in non-crisis affected low- and middle-income countries to attend pre-primary or to complete primary or lower secondary school.
- Girls in crisis-affected countries still lag behind boys in access to primary education overall, but the rate of girls' access to primary education has been making faster progress in recent years.
- In many crisis-affected countries girls have overtaken boys in secondary completion rates.
- Within countries, economically disadvantaged girls in crisis-affected regions lag far behind economically disadvantaged boys in crisis-affected regions.
- Girls' learning lags behind that of boys in many crisis and displacement settings.
- There is a shortage of female teachers in many crisis-affected countries, especially at the post-primary levels.
- Female literacy rates lag far behind those of males in many crisis-affected countries.
- In many crisis-affected countries, male access to vocational training lags behind that of females.

### Forcibly displaced girls

- Data on access to education for girls living in forced displacement are still very limited.
- Displacement exacerbates gender disadvantages for girls living in forced displacement.
- Gender gaps in access, particularly at the secondary level, are larger for girls living in forced displacement than for non-displaced children in crisis-affected countries.
- Enrollment rates for girls living in forced displacement are far below national rates.

## FUNDING TO GIRLS' EDUCATION

- Very few crisis-affected countries meet the education spending targets set out in the Incheon Declaration adopted at the World Education Forum in 2015.<sup>2</sup>
- The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education has been a catalyst for generating international funding that targets girls' education and training in contexts of conflict and crisis.
- The proportion of humanitarian aid focused on education has increased.
- An increasing proportion of aid to education in crisis-affected countries is focused on gender equality and women's empowerment; more than half of the aid to secondary education in these countries is focused on gender equality.

## SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND GAPS

In recent years, great progress has been made toward achieving gender parity in education, increasing access to education for crisis-affected populations, improving data availability, and reforming aid structures to secure longer term, more reliable funding for education in emergencies and protracted crises. The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education has helped to focus additional support where gaps remain for girls and women in crises.

Gender remains a significant determinant of access to education and training among the most marginalized, especially for the poorest households, refugees, and forcibly displaced persons. Where girls have access to education during crises, their learning outcomes are often extremely poor; they also are at risk of school-related gender-based violence and, in extreme cases, targeted attacks.

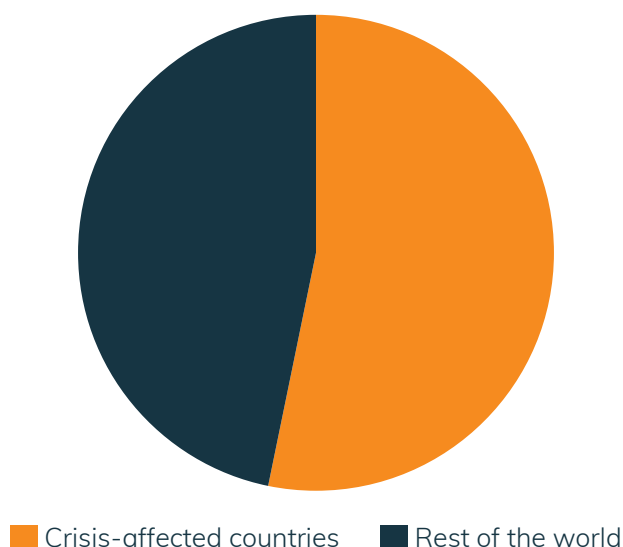
Gaps remain in education funding for girls in emergencies in terms of both national spending and international aid. Humanitarian aid to education remains unpredictable and unevenly distributed. Gaps in the data on access to education for refugees and internally displaced girls and women, girls' learning outcomes, and the prevalence of school-related gender-based violence all present challenges to monitoring progress in girls' access to education in emergencies.

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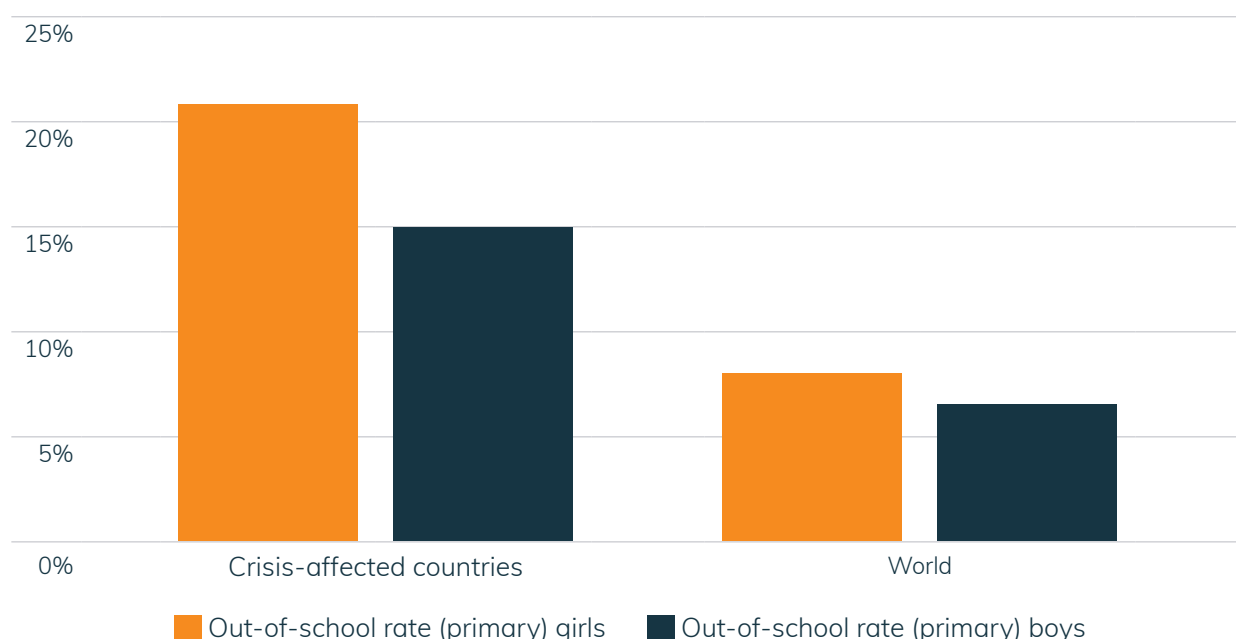
2 UNESCO. (2015). *Education 2030 Incheon Declaration: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/document/education-2030-incheon-declaration-towards-inclusive-equitable-quality-education-and>

# GRAPHIC SUMMARY: THE STATE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT IN NUMBERS

Most (54%) of world's out-of-school girls live in crisis-affected countries<sup>3</sup>



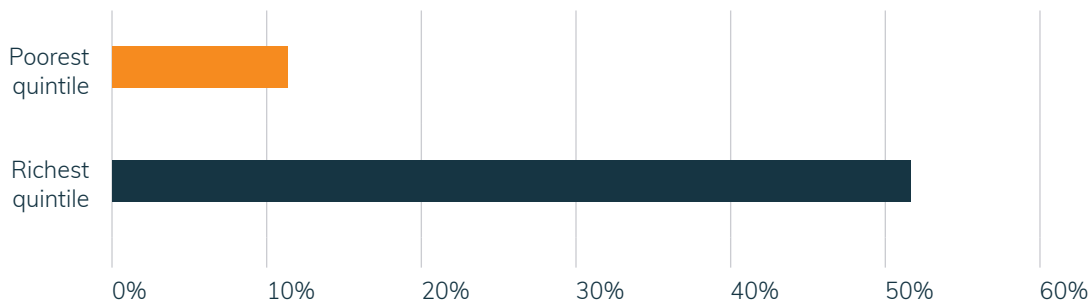
Over a fifth (21%) of primary school age girls in crisis-affected countries are out of school, compared to 15% of boys in those countries, and 8% of children globally



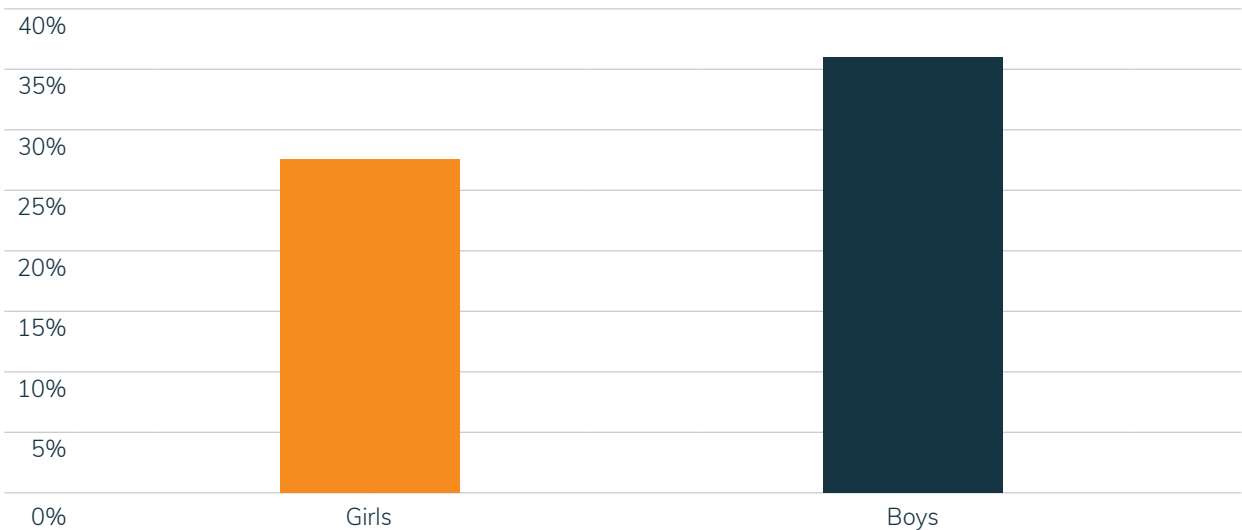
<sup>3</sup> See Annex 1 of "Mind the Gap" for the methodology used to identify crisis-affected countries (44 countries). The statistics in this report on out-of-school children and girls in crisis-affected countries represent an update to the 2020 INEE publication: (INEE). (2020). 20 Years of INEE: Achievements and Challenges in Education in Emergencies. New York, NY. <https://inee.org/resources/20-years-of-innee>.



Only 11% of girls in the poorest quintile in crisis-affected countries complete upper secondary school by graduation age, compared to 51% in the richest quintile



36% of refugee boys are in secondary schools, compared to 27% of girls



Based on current trends, girls will not reach 100% lower secondary completion in crisis-affected countries until at least **2063**



# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This report considers the current state of education and training for girls and women affected by conflict and crisis, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and summarizes evidence of recent progress. The report was commissioned by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) under the auspices of the [INEE Reference Group on Girls' Education in Emergencies](#) in response to commitments made by leaders of seven of the world's largest economies at the 44th G7 Summit, which was hosted by Canada in 2018.<sup>4</sup> By adopting the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education, these leaders collectively committed to invest in quality education for girls, adolescent girls, and women in developing countries, including during emergencies and in countries affected by conflict. They agreed (1) to close the gaps in access to education during conflict and crisis, including for refugees and the internally displaced; and (2) to improve coordination and cooperation between humanitarian assistance and development efforts.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of this report is to support the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education's commitment to improve sex- and age-disaggregated data through the collection, analysis, and reporting of key progress indicators and outcomes that reflect girls' and women's participation in and completion of education, training, and learning. It represents part of INEE's work to enhance the evidence base and improve the monitoring of progress toward the provision of gender-equitable education in crises. As such, this report reviews the data available on the current status of girls' and women's access to quality education and training in contexts of crisis, and also identifies the significant gaps in data and reporting that remain.

This report was conceived before the current COVID-19 crisis but written in the context of global school closures, during which almost all education could be considered education in emergencies (EiE). This report focuses primarily on the state of girls' EiE prior to the pandemic. Given the data available at the time of writing, the data presented do not reflect the impact the COVID-19 crisis has had on girls' EiE; however, some analysis of the education response to the crisis is included. Further data on the state of girls' EiE since the COVID-19 pandemic will be included in a planned future edition of this report.

**Chapter 1** provides a contextual summary of the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education and the methodology, data availability, and limitations of this report.

**Chapter 2** reviews international and national-level policies and legal frameworks that protect girls' and women's right to education, including in emergencies, and policies that enable continuity of learning when formal schools are not accessible. It also considers some of the policy and planning responses to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

**Chapter 3** of the report examines the close relationship between education and protection for girls and women in emergencies. This includes descriptions of the virtuous cycle through which education can protect girls and

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1 for the list of seven nations that adopted the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 2.

women, thereby enabling them to protect themselves and to help create more resilient societies, and of the negative effects emergencies can have by perpetuating the denial of access to education and a lack of protection. This section also considers the challenges faced in protecting girls in learning environments, including school-related sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) and targeted attacks on education.

**Chapter 4** presents the most recent global data available on girls' and women's education and training. By examining the data from 44 crisis-affected contexts and comparing them with data from other countries with comparable income levels, and by comparing data on girls and women living in forced displacement with global data, the report examines the extent to which girls and women in emergencies are being left behind. This section also examines the differences in access and learning outcomes between girls and boys, and the extent to which emergencies can amplify gender-based disadvantages. The data used were primarily from 2018 and 2019; full comparable datasets for 2020 will not be available until late 2021. The report therefore provides a baseline for monitoring progress since the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education. As noted, because the context is fluid and research is ongoing, the data presented do not fully reflect the impact the COVID-19 crisis has had on girls' EiE.

**Chapter 5** reviews the national and international expenditure on education by governments and donors, which indicates that, while funding for girls' EiE has increased somewhat, huge gaps in funding remain. This section also looks at challenges around tracking funding to girls' education in emergencies and protracted crises based on current humanitarian and development data collection processes.

**Chapter 6** provides a summary of progress and gaps in provision, funding, and data.

## 1.2 THE CHARLEVOIX DECLARATION ON QUALITY EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

Leaders attending the 44th G7 Summit in 2018 emphasized the value of education for girls and women. Recognizing that girls and women affected by conflict and crisis are often denied the right to education, they adopted a declaration that committed them to close the gaps in education access, including improving access to quality education for girls and women in the early stages of humanitarian response and peacebuilding efforts.

The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education represents the G7 leaders' commitment to recognize gender equality as fundamental to human rights, social development, and sustainable economic growth. Investing in girls' and women's education is seen as a priority, including for refugees and IDPs in situations of conflict and crisis. The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education is also a commitment to build partnerships and to coordinate with developing country governments, UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, and global organizations, such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

Key commitments of the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education include:

- Closing the gap in access to education for the most vulnerable in conflict and crisis contexts
- Improving coordination and cooperation along the humanitarian-development continuum
- Preparing women for the jobs of the future
- Improving sex- and age-disaggregated data and accountability
- Ensuring continuity of education for all
- Supporting innovations in education service delivery
- Increasing access to at least 12 years of safe, quality education that promotes gender equality
- Reinforcing the value and opportunity costs of including and retaining girls in school by removing barriers at the primary and secondary education levels

The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education served as a milestone in bringing global attention to this issue, and it generated a historic level of investment from donors. It also acted as a catalyst for generating international funding that targeted girls' and women's education and training in contexts of conflict and crisis. At Charlevoix in 2018, Canada, the European Union, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the World Bank together committed Can\$3.8 billion to support its goals. At the United Nations (UN) General Assembly later that year Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Qatar committed a further Can\$527 million.

These commitments are built on successive commitments by the international community to ensure that all women and girls, including those affected by crises, have access to the transformative power of quality education. On numerous occasions, world leaders have publicly committed to achieving gender equality in education and to ensuring access to quality education for all. These commitments are reflected in the Education For All commitments made in Dakar (2000); in the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goals 2 and 3 (2000); the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs 4 and 5 (2015); and at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (2018).

By monitoring progress toward education for all, it soon became clear that children affected by conflict and crisis were being left behind (UNESCO, 2011). It was also clear that, without a focused global effort to provide education in emergencies and protracted crises and to increase reliable multi-year funding, the goal of education for all would never be achieved. Education Cannot Wait, a new global fund dedicated specifically to supporting education in emergencies and protracted crises, was initiated in recognition of this challenge at the Oslo Education Summit in 2015 and launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey in 2016.

The last five years have also seen a global commitment to fundamentally reform how humanitarian aid and support are delivered to refugees and IDPs by the international donor community. The Grand Bargain (2016), the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (2017), and the Global Compact for Refugees (2019) commit leaders of UN member states, UN agencies, and civil society organizations to pursue closer partnerships among donors, national governments, and local civil society and, in acknowledgment of the fact that many crises are protracted, to develop long-term solutions for the inclusion of refugee and displaced children and youth in host country education systems. The Global Compact for Refugees explicitly refers to the need for flexible programs for girls. The Grand Bargain has committed to greater mainstreaming of gender within the humanitarian sector, including more funding for and participation of local women's groups and increased gender-responsive approaches to cash delivery programming.

As more attention has been given to providing and monitoring education in emergencies and refugee situations, more data disaggregated by age and sex have become available. They reveal alarming levels of gender inequality in education for refugees and other crisis-affected populations. While there are still huge gaps in the data, especially around education for IDPs, it is clear that girls and women in emergencies face multi-dimensional vulnerabilities. The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education therefore commits to actions that specifically target education for girls and women affected by crises, and to collecting better future data on EiE that are disaggregated by sex and age.

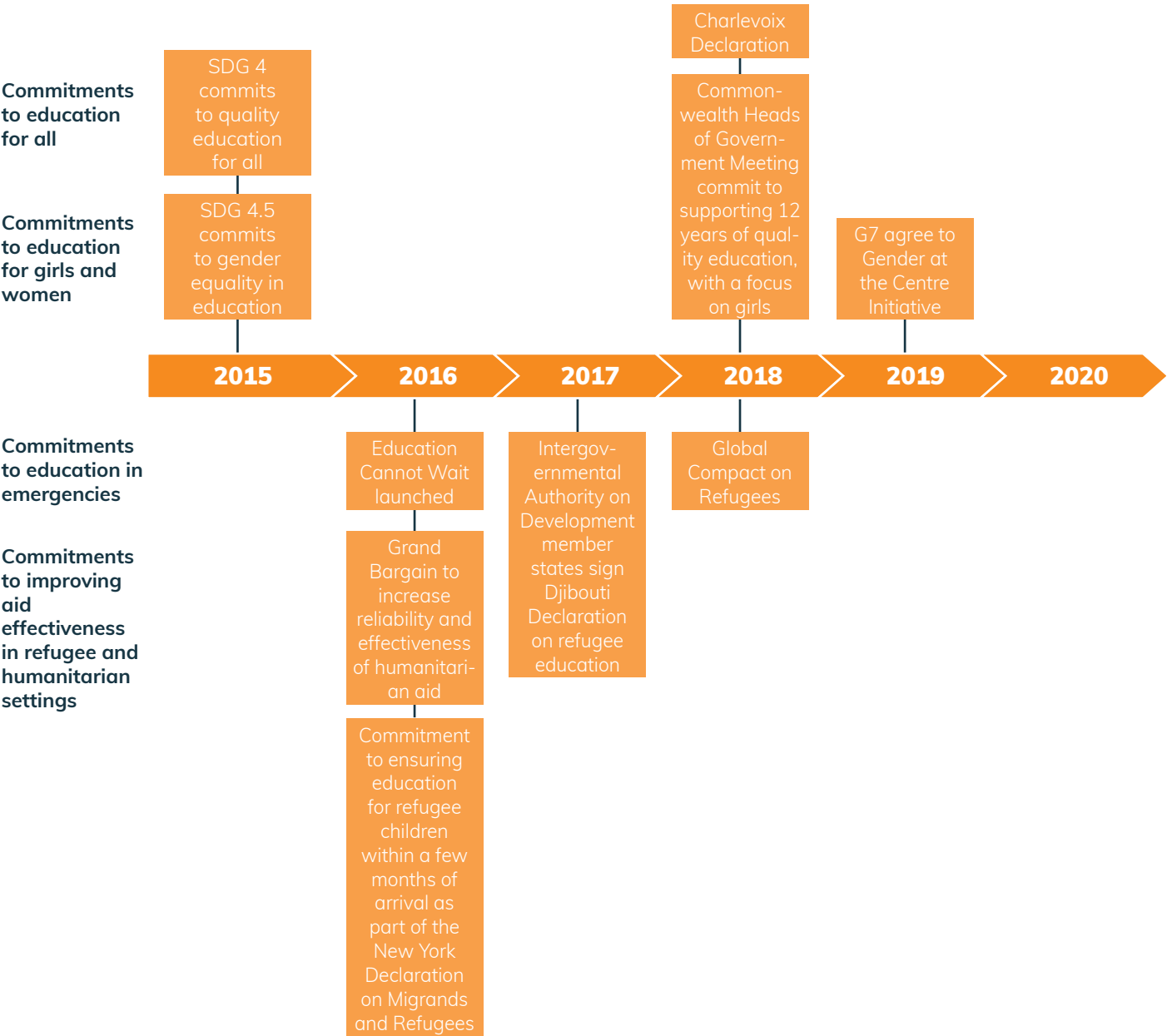
At the 45th G7 Summit, hosted by France a year after the signing of the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education, the Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment emphasized the importance of education and training for girls and women. It also underlined the commitment to increase opportunities for at least 12 years of safe, quality education for all, particularly in emergencies and in conflict-affected states. The summit supported the launch of the Gender at the Centre initiative, which commits donors to support national governments in putting gender at the center of education-sector planning. The eight focus countries for this initiative are all crisis-affected.<sup>6</sup>

Global commitments to improve girls' and women's access to quality education and training build on a wider global commitment to gender equality, as established in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 2020, UN agencies marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration in various ways, including by holding a high-level meeting at the UN General Assembly, by UN Women launching the Generation Equality campaign, and by focusing the 2020 UNESCO gender review of the *Global Education Monitoring Report* on progress made toward the relevant objectives set out in the 1995 document (UNESCO, 2020). The 2020 gender review noted the remarkable progress made globally since 1995, including 180 million more girls enrolled in primary and secondary school, and gender parity achieved in school enrollment. However, it also noted that gender interacts with other disadvantages and that disadvantaged girls continue to face the worst forms of exclusion. This report examines how gender interacts with crisis and displacement, where significant gaps in gender parity remain.

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<sup>6</sup> The focus countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone is not on the list of 44 crisis-affected countries that was used for this report, but it would have been considered crisis-affected in previous years.

Figure 1 - The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education in context



Source: Adapted from Plan International (2019)

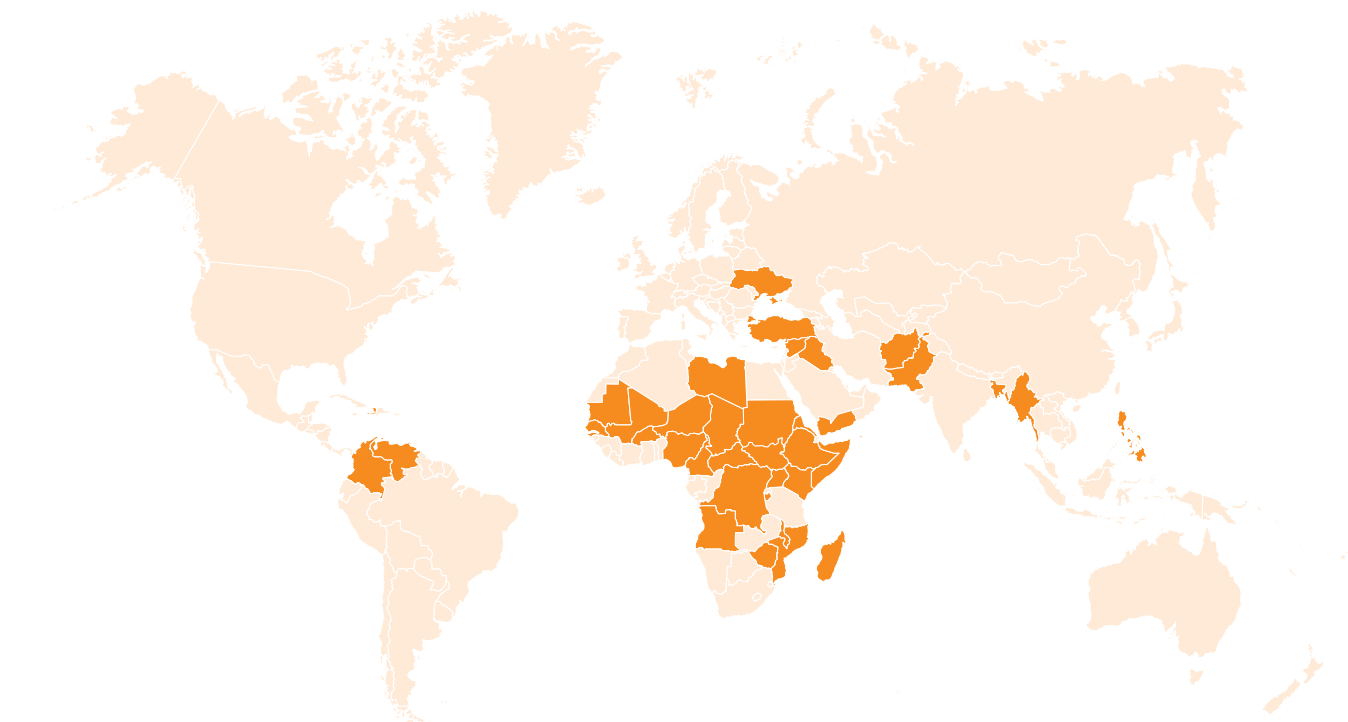
## 1.3 METHODOLOGY, DATA AVAILABILITY, AND LIMITATIONS

This report uses a list of 44 crisis-affected countries (see Table 1) that is based on two main criteria: one, the number of humanitarian appeals made in each country in recent years; and two, the proportion of each country's population that is forcibly displaced persons. See Annex 1 for details.

**Table 1 - List of 44 crisis-affected countries**

East Asia and the Pacific	Eastern and Southern Africa	Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	Central and South Asia	West and Central Africa
DPRK	Angola	Georgia	Colombia	Iraq	Afghanistan	Burkina Faso
Myanmar	Burundi	Turkey	Haiti	Jordan <sup>*7</sup>	Bangladesh	Cameroon
Philippines	Djibouti	Ukraine	Venezuela	Lebanon*	Pakistan	Central African Republic
	Eritrea			Libya		Chad
	Ethiopia			occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)		DRC
	Kenya			Sudan		Mali
	Madagascar			Syria		Mauritania
	Malawi			Yemen		Niger
	Mozambique					Nigeria
	Somalia					Republic of the Congo
	South Sudan					Senegal
	Uganda					
	Zimbabwe					

**Figure 2 - Map of 44 crisis-affected countries**



<sup>7</sup> Lebanon and Jordan are not included in the aggregate figures of enrolment, intake, and completion rates for crisis-affected countries in this report; they are on this list due to the number of refugees they are hosting. Refugees in Lebanon and Jordan are included in the absolute figures for out-of-school children in this report.



For these 44 countries, this report analyzes the most recent education data available from the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#) and [UNESCO's World Inequality Database on Education](#). Inequalities that intersect with gender are analyzed where possible, predominantly by analyzing demographic and health survey (DHS) data and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The selection of case studies for this report started with the initial list of 44 crisis-affected countries. The [INEE Girls' Education in Emergencies Reference Group](#), [INEE Gender Task Team](#), and other gender and education stakeholders in the INEE network were asked to provide relevant examples of girls' education interventions in these countries. The research team compiled a shortlist of nine crisis-affected contexts from these contributions, then reached out to ministry of education (MoE) officials, representatives from UNICEF, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), donor aid agencies, bilateral and multilateral funding mechanisms, international NGOs, and local organizations operating as their implementing partners. The nine identified emergency contexts were the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, Jordan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Colombia. Case studies on the Lake Chad Basin and Colombia were not included in this report, due to challenges encountered in sourcing sex-disaggregated data and robust evidence of impact.

While soliciting case studies, the research team noted how challenging it was to locate specific interventions focused on girls' education that were implemented at scale and had evidence of their impact. [The Girls' Education Challenge](#) was an exception, and three of the eight final cases studies were supported through this program. Few of the case studies represent projects funded since the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education, as it takes time to design and implement programs for girls in crises and to achieve measurable results in access and learning. Thus, we reiterate that this report should be considered a baseline from which to measure future achievements and progress made toward the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education.



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## CHAPTER 2. LAW, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

### Key findings

- Girls' and women's right to education, including in situations of crisis and displacement, is embedded in international human rights law through various international conventions. However, a number of countries hosting large refugee and displaced persons populations have not ratified these conventions.
- National legal frameworks in crisis-affected countries often provide only limited protection of girls' and women's right to education.
- Alternative education programs can be particularly effective in supporting girls' education during crises, but they need to be integrated into national education policies.
- Evidence from national education policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis indicate that limited attention has been given to the additional barriers faced by girls learning at home, including the gender digital divide.

### 2.1 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

Girls' and women's right to education is a fundamental human right that is embedded in international human rights law, most notably through the following:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and its Optional Protocol
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)

Forcibly displaced children's right to education is explicitly included in the following:

- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention)
- Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998)
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention, 2009)

All children's right to education is enshrined in international humanitarian law. In the Geneva Conventions, Education (Rule 135) and practice concerning attacks against schools (Rule 7D) state that "necessary measures" shall be taken to "ensure that [the education of] children under fifteen," including "children who are orphaned or separated from their parents as a result of war" is arranged through the efforts of national and local authorities or by the "occupying power." The legal protections of girls' and women's right to education are further reinforced through the Education 2030 Framework for Action, including SDG 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all, and SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

While a number of global conventions offer some legal protection of girls' and women's right to education, including for those living in situations of forced displacement, many crisis-affected countries have either not ratified these conventions or signed with reservations, as shown in Table 2. The proportion of crisis-affected countries that ratified these declarations versus the countries that have not is similar to the overall proportion of signatories and non-signatories.

Most countries have ratified both the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Optional Protocol. However, there are a number of exceptions, including some countries currently hosting large numbers of refugees.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2 - Signatories to international conventions protecting girls' and women's right to education in emergencies (2019 data)**

International conventions protecting girls' and women's right to education in emergencies	Number of countries out of the 44 identified in this report that have ratified	Number of countries globally that have ratified
UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education	21	104
UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	42 (13 with reservations)	190 (49 with reservations)
1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Optional Protocol	32 to the Convention and 33 to the Protocol	146 to the Convention and 147 to the Protocol
Geneva Conventions	44	196
Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions:		
Protocol 1 – relating to the protection of victims of international conflict	Protocol 1: 39	Protocol 1: 174
Protocol 2 – relating to the protection of victims of internal armed conflicts within the borders of a single country	Protocol 2: 36	Protocol 2: 169
Protocol 3 – relating to the adoption of an additional distinctive emblem for those providing humanitarian services in times of war	Protocol 3: 8	Protocol 3: 77

Sources: 1. UNESCO. (n.d.). UNESCO HER Atlas: Atlas of girl's and women's right to education. 2019 data, collected August 2020. 2. ICRC. (n.d.). ICRC Database. Data on ratification of Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949), and Additional Protocols, and their Commentaries. Retrieved August 2020.

While this report focuses on a global overview, it is worth noting that significant steps have been taken at the regional level to protect girls' and women's rights, such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol, 2003). The Protocol guarantees comprehensive rights to women, including the right to take part in the political process, to social and political equality with men, to improved autonomy in their reproductive health decisions, and an end to the mutilation of female genitalia. Another important regional example is the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (the Convention of Belém do Pará, 1994), which defines violence against women, establishes that women have the right to live a life free of violence, and that violence against women constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

<sup>8</sup> See UNHCR (2015) for more detail.

## 2.2 NATIONAL LAWS AND POLICIES SUPPORTING GIRLS' EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

In countries that have ratified some or all of the international conventions that guarantee the fundamental rights of girls and women, national law and policy are meant to reinforce both the explicit guarantee to education and the implicit guarantee to be free from any discrimination, inequity, and injustice that could be a barrier to access. This section explores some examples of national law and policy relative to girls' EiE.

UNESCO mapped the national policies that support girls' and women's right to education and presents their findings through the *HER Atlas* (UNESCO, n.d.). While there are many gaps in the data on national policies, those available make it clear that, in many crisis-affected countries, legislation that reinforces girls' and women's right to education during an emergency is limited.

**Table 3 - National laws protecting girls' and women's right to education (2019 data)**

Protection of girls' and women's right to education in national law	Proportion of crisis-affected countries that protect the right to education for girls and women (N of countries with data available)	Proportion of other countries that protect the right to education for girls and women (N of countries with data available)
Legal framework guarantees 9+ years of free and compulsory education	65% (N=37)	80% (N=146)
Legal framework guarantees equal access to post-secondary education	35% (N=26)	28% (N=64)
Legal framework protects from violence (corporal punishment and GBV) in education institutions	8% (N=26)	6% (N= 63)
Pregnant and parenting girls' right to education is legally protected	4% (N=27)	24% (N=67)
Legislation sets the minimum age of marriage for girls at 18 (some exceptions permitted for those age 16 and 17 who receive judicial consent)	36% (N=25)	41% (N=65)

Sources: 1. UIS (n.d.) UIS.Stat – legal guarantee of 9+ years of education taken from UIS data on SDG indicator 4.1.7a. 2019 data, collected January 2021. 2. UNESCO. (n.d.) *HER Atlas: Atlas of girl's and women's right to education*. 2019 data, collected August 2020.

National laws in about one-third of crisis-affected countries do not guarantee at least nine years of free, compulsory education. Only four countries out of the 44 listed as crisis-affected guarantee 12 or more years of free and compulsory education: Kenya, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Turkey. However, it is clear that legal guarantees alone are insufficient to ensure girls' access to education.

While most of the 44 countries provide some legal protection from violence in schools for children, this protection is usually limited and does not offer comprehensive protection from corporal punishment, or from psychological, physical, and sexual GBV. Five of the crisis-affected countries were found to have no legal protection from violence in education institutions, and only Colombia and Ukraine offer comprehensive legal protection from violence in schools.

Of the 44 crisis-affected countries in this study, Georgia, Honduras, Jordan, Lebanon, South Sudan, and Uganda have endorsed *Safe to Learn*, an initiative of the End Violence Against Children partnership, which asks governments to commit to a set of actions needed to end violence in schools. These actions include the development and enforcement of laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence in and around schools, strengthening school-level prevention of violence and response to violent acts, shifting social norms, investing resources, and generating and using evidence of violent acts (Safe to Learn, 2020).

When the data for the *HER Atlas* were collected, of the 44 countries in this study, only the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had explicit legislation to guarantee continued education for pregnant girls and young mothers. Venezuela and Mauritania had laws prohibiting sanctions against girls or adolescents who became pregnant. In five of the conflict-affected countries, the legal framework included restrictive provisions relative to pregnant girls' right to education. These data were collected in 2019; since then, Burundi and Mozambique have changed

the ministerial decrees that banned pregnant girls from school, and Zimbabwe has amended its education act to prohibit the banning of pregnant girls and corporal punishment in schools (Human Rights Watch, 2020b).

Of the 25 crisis-affected countries for which data were available in 2019, seven set the legal minimum age for marriage for girls at 18. Another 11 countries set the same minimum age but allowed non-judicial exceptions that permit marriage at a younger age.

For populations living in areas held by anti-government factions, girls' and women's access to education may depend more on the views and policies of opposition groups than on national laws. While some opposition groups have explicitly restricted girls' access to education, there have been recent signs of positive change. For example, according to a recent Human Rights Watch report, the Taliban officially state that they no longer oppose girls' education and, during negotiations in 2019-2020, Taliban negotiators said they were open to education for girls and women through to university level (Human Rights Watch, 2020c). However, according to the report, in areas under Taliban control, few Taliban officials actually permit girls to attend school past puberty, and "others do not permit girls' schools to exist in any form" (Human Rights Watch, 2020c). Girls' access to education is further restricted by the lack of female teachers, and some religious leaders promote the restriction against women's freedom of movement, including that of female teachers (Human Rights Watch, 2020c). According to the report, in government-held areas of Afghanistan, government officials have acknowledged that female teachers are critical in encouraging families to send girls to school. However, the short supply of female teachers, especially those qualified to teach at the secondary level, makes options for girls' education extremely limited (Human Rights Watch, 2020c).

## 2.3 THE NEED FOR LAWS AND POLICIES THAT SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Alternative education programs can be particularly effective in supporting girls' education in contexts where safety concerns, distance to school, or a girl's age or caregiving responsibilities make it difficult to access formal school (Girls Education Challenge, 2019).<sup>9</sup> There is strong evidence of the effectiveness of community-based education (CBE) in increasing access and academic achievement in protracted crisis contexts where girls are largely confined to their homes (Burde et al., 2015). Case study 4 (see Annex 2 and Boxes 2 and 10) is an example of a CBE program for girls in Afghanistan.

In order to have an impact or to be sustainable during a protracted crisis, alternative education programs need to be validated and integrated into national education policies so that students' learning is recognized and certificated, and pathways must be established for re-entering the formal education system (AEWG, 2017; Girls' Education Challenge, 2019). To support continuous learning during an emergency, policy decisions need to be made around who may be certified and paid to fill emergency teaching positions or learning facilitator roles, and these people must be on the education payroll.

Accelerated education (AE) is an alternative education approach commonly used in contexts of crisis. The Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG, 2017) defines an accelerated education program (AEP) as

a flexible, age-appropriate program, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aims to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and youth. This may include those who missed out on or had their education interrupted due to poverty, marginalization, conflict and crisis. The goal of Accelerated Education Programs is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity. (p. 7)

Girls are more likely than boys to have missed out on basic education in crisis-affected countries (see section 4). AEP can give out-of-school girls who are too old to enroll in primary school an opportunity to catch up on missed education and rejoin the formal system. The case study in Box 1 describes an example of an AEP in the Sahel region. Case study 2, about a girls' education program for pastoralists in Somalia, is another example (see Box 9 and Annex 2).

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<sup>9</sup> "Alternative education" generally refers to education programs that agencies, governments, and donors do not consider formal education, including programs that agencies and NGOs offer to refugees and the internally displaced. Alternative education programs, which are often, but not exclusively, offered outside the auspices of a host country's formal education system, include those where the education is not automatically certified; ad hoc education and awareness programs that respond to a specific need; and short-term emergency education programs that are considered a bridge to the formal curriculum; Retrieved from INEE Glossary <https://inee.org/eie-glossary>.



## Box 1 - AE in the Sahel to help those left behind due to conflict and insecurity

Plan International's AE program has been developed, adapted, and expanded to respond to the crisis across the Sahel region. It provides education to refugees, internally displaced children, and many more who are denied access to schooling because of conflict and insecurity.

The AEP specifically targets out-of-school children ages 9 to 14, with particular emphasis on girls. The program supports children in completing the early grades of primary school and then reentering formal education for grades 3 and 4. The intervention runs in nine-month cycles; the initial three months of instruction are carried out in learners' mother tongues, with a focus on developing second language ability in French; the second six months provide core curriculum content in French. Psychosocial wellbeing elements are also included in the curriculum.

The AEP integrates education and child-protection activities. It seeks to build understanding of girls' experiences and to develop community-level strategies to overcome gender barriers that hinder girls' access to schooling. This integration ensures that the program responds to excluded groups, in particular girls who are mothers, who otherwise would not have access to education. Since 2013, Plan International has provided AE access to more than 50,000 girls across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, and has trained more than 4,000 AE teachers in gender-responsive approaches and psychosocial techniques.

For full details, see [case study 7 in Annex 2](#)

## 2.4 GENDER IN EDUCATION POLICY RESPONSES TO COVID-19

At the time of writing, according to UNESCO data, COVID-19 had interrupted education for more than 767 million girls worldwide.<sup>10</sup> The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, and has had a negative effect on girls' and women's safety, wellbeing, education, economic security, health, nutrition, and access to technology (Plan International, 2020a). Based on evidence from previous emergencies, estimates are that losing even six months of education due to COVID-19 will have a proportionally greater impact on girls than on boys (Malala Fund, 2020). Extrapolating from data on the negative effects of previous crises, estimates are that tens of millions of secondary school age girls could remain out of school after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended (Malala Fund, 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the effects of the pandemic could be vast for girls, such as lost education and an increase in pregnancies among adolescents. Some anticipate that the resultant effects on the economy will include US\$10 billion in lost gross domestic product (World Vision International, 2020).

The global pandemic has required many countries to rapidly develop policies, plans, and resources to support learning at home. Due to the scale and duration of the pandemic, a wealth of lessons has been learned. For example, practical examples of distance education programming in emergencies have been delivered through radio, television, print, mobile, and online platforms that can support education continuity despite school closures. The following are promising practices (Dressen et al., 2020) for addressing equitable access to distance learning during an emergency:

- Using multiple delivery channels for distance learning, including digital and non-digital, radio, TV, and take-home packages of learning resources for poorer households that have limited access to digital distance learning.
- Providing support, including psychosocial support, for teachers, facilitators, and parents who are delivering remote learning. This should include talking to parents to ensure that girls are not overburdened with domestic duties as a result of being at home.
- Gathering feedback on the reach and quality of remote learning services in order to strengthen them and ensure that no unintended negative consequences result from remote and distance service provision.
- Ensuring alternative or accelerated forms of learning and catch-up courses to help address the interrupted learning. Self-paced learning and flexible scheduling can be critical to girls' continued learning, given the particular challenges they face during school closures.<sup>11</sup>

Unless distance learning takes existing gender barriers into account, relying on education delivery at home through technology alone risks widening gender gaps in access and learning outcomes, as the most marginalized girls will not be reached without additional support, such as paper-based learning materials, community-based radio listening/reading clubs, and the sensitization of parents and caregivers on how to support girls' learning at home. Where digital technology is used, safeguarding measures need to be included to protect girls and boys from online abuse (UNESCO, 2020).

10 Data from <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>, accessed October 5, 2020.

11 For more promising practices and key actions, see "COVID-19: Gender and EIE. Key Points to Consider," at <https://inee.org/blog/covid-19-gender-and-eie-key-points-consider>.



## Box 2 - The gender digital divide in numbers

In the least developed countries, only 14% of females used the internet in 2019, compared to 24% of males and 48% of females globally; this gender gap has grown in recent years (International Telecommunications Union, 2020).

Women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are, on average, 10% less likely than men to own a mobile phone and 26% less likely to use mobile internet (GSM Association, 2018).

There is a large gender digital divide in LMICs (see Box 2). Girls have significantly less access to mobile phones, the internet, radio, and television (Naylor & Gorgen, 2020), even when these devices are available in the home, due to gendered household attitudes and behaviors. Girls tend to have less time than boys to study at home, due to expectations that they will do many of the household chores and care for children, elders, and those who fall sick (UNICEF, 2020a). However, evidence from a number of technology-facilitated distance education programs indicates that, once girls gain access to distance learning technologies, their utilization rate is often higher than boys (Naylor & Gorgen, 2020).

COVID-19 has brought into stark focus the need for all countries to develop systems, policies, and practices that enable girls and boys to continue learning when schools are not accessible, and to provide an accelerated learning or catch-up process for those who experience gaps in learning. COVID-19 education policy responses from 218 states included in the Centre for Global Development 2020 database make almost no mention of how to address the specific needs of girls and women. Only one intervention (in the West Bank and Gaza) mentions the need for psychosocial support to address gender-specific issues, one (in the Dominican Republic) highlights the need for virtual girls' clubs, and one (in South Africa) calls for the dissemination of sanitary pads to girls who normally get them at school. As described above, there is a danger in low-income settings that overreliance on media and digital technologies for continuity of learning will disadvantage girls disproportionately and widen existing gender gaps. It is therefore concerning that only five of the national response plans for education continuity in low-income countries—Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Uganda—mention providing hard copies of learning materials for those without access to electronic media (Centre for Global Development, 2020b).

The guidance for GPE COVID-19 accelerated funding includes the requirement that proposals state explicitly how the needs of the most vulnerable girls will be addressed (GPE, 2020c). The Malala Fund, Plan International, UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), UNESCO, and UNICEF have collaborated to publish *Building Back Equal: Girls Back to School Guide* (Malala Fund et al., 2020), which provides guidance on gender-equitable planning for school reopening.

However, in many contexts, gender appears to be relatively low on the agenda in planning humanitarian support for education responses to COVID-19. The Global Education Cluster's (2020) analysis of COVID-19 education cluster response plans found that, of the 16 clusters that reported having revised their humanitarian response plans, only eight had mainstreamed gender and age markers: Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Iraq, Niger, Nigeria, occupied Palestinian territory, and Ukraine.

In April 2020, at the peak of school closures, the World Food Programme (WFP) found that an estimated 173 million girls worldwide had lost access to meals through school meal programs. While some national responses have been able to provide children with take-home rations or cash-based alternatives to school meals, often with support from WFP, these measures reach only a minority of the children impacted by school closures. As of August 2020, the estimated number of girls without access to school meals was still 149 million (WFP, 2020).

Restrictions on their movement and the closure of health and social services has put girls at increased risk of GBV, unwanted pregnancy, and child marriage (UNESCO, 2020). Given the importance of the protective role education plays, especially during emergencies (see section 3), it is concerning that, in many contexts where girls currently have no access to the protective space of a school, community-based protection services have also been cut. In June 2020, almost half of UNICEF country offices (26 out of the 53 responding) reported a 75% to 100% drop in household visits by social service workers to children and women at risk of abuse, due to restrictions on movement related to COVID-19 (UNICEF, 2020b).

## Box 3 - CBE supporting girls in Afghanistan during the COVID-19 crisis

During the COVID-19 crisis, CBE providers are working with the MoE in Afghanistan to develop alternative solutions, including providing learning materials to children in rural and remote areas who have no access to television or mobile education. Recent data indicate that these efforts have been largely successful in increasing access to remote education for girls. A study conducted by the Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Educational Success (STAGES) II project with CBE and AE students in rural and remote areas of eight Afghan provinces in June 2020 indicated that 99% of the girls are participating in some form of remote learning (STAGES II, 2020). This is a surprisingly high rate, considering the multiple barriers girls in Afghanistan face; it reflects a shift in parental support for girls' education.

For full details, see [case study 4 in Annex 2](#)



## CHAPTER 3. EDUCATION, PROTECTION, AND GENDER

### Key findings

- There is a virtuous circular relationship between the education and protection of girls. Education can protect girls, and can make them and their communities more resilient.
- When girls are unable to access education, it can cause a downward spiral of lost protection and lead to school dropout, which makes girls and their communities less resilient.
- Girls are often at a greater risk than boys of school dropout during emergencies. Girls' risk of early and forced marriage, early childbearing, and doing unpaid caregiving and domestic work all tend to increase during crises.
- During a crisis, girls and women with disabilities may be the first to be abandoned and the last to receive emergency assistance. They face a high risk of abuse, neglect, and long-term psychological trauma.
- The rate of school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) against girls is high in many crisis-affected countries. SRGBV includes "sex for grades," teacher-perpetrated rape and sexual abuse, and abuse on the journey to or from school.
- Between 2015 and 2019, attacks on education that explicitly targeted girls and women because of their gender took place in at least 21 countries.
- Over half of crisis-affected countries covered in this report have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration (see section 3.2.2).

### 3.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND PROTECTION FOR GIRLS IN EMERGENCIES

**There is a virtuous circular relationship between the education and protection of girls.** Educational attainment for girls leads to increases in their health, nutrition, and wellbeing; greater economic participation and development; and individual equity, agency, and decision-making ability (Wodon et al., 2018). Each additional year of secondary education a girl completes is associated with a lower risk of early marriage and early pregnancy, sometimes by as much as six percentage points (Wodon et al., 2018). It is estimated that, if all girls in developing countries completed primary school, child marriage would fall by 14% (UNHCR, 2018), and that if they all completed secondary education, child marriage would be virtually eliminated and early childbearing would be reduced by 75% (Wodon et al., 2018). Girls who are able to stay safe and healthy and to delay childbirth and marriage are more likely to reach a higher level of education, which enables them to be more self-reliant and better prepared to protect themselves and their families. Girls who complete a secondary education can earn twice as much as those who complete only primary school; with a tertiary education they can earn three times

as much (Wodon et al., 2018). Moreover, each additional year of school completed increases a woman's earnings by 10%-20% (World Bank, 2017). Having greater earning power allows women to buy food, access healthcare and medicine, pay for school fees, and create space for decision-making in the home.

*I am not educated myself and I know how difficult it might be when you are not able to read and write. As a refugee sometimes you are asked to read and sign papers and it is frustrating to always count on other people. Education is empowerment, for that reason I have strongly encouraged my daughter to go to school when the opportunity for the second chance school has come up. I do not regret it and I do encourage her to follow her dream.*

—Mother who is a participant in a Plan International AE intervention

Source: Plan International, 2020, unpublished program document

Education is a fundamental right that also protects other rights. Going to school reduces, but does not eliminate girls' vulnerability to gender-based violence. Girls going to school are less likely to experience harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and trafficking (Savadogo & Wodon, 2017; Wodon et al., 2018). Girls with a secondary education experience greater agency and empowerment, adaptability, and reproductive choice; these life skills have been demonstrated to have intergenerational benefits for the mothers and their children (Sperling et al., 2016). In emergency contexts, providing essential life skills interventions in safe spaces for adolescent girls, with support from peer networks, can help to reduce unwanted pregnancies and early marriage; in some cases, it can enable out-of-school girls to return to their education (Rafaeli, 2020). Furthermore, integrating comprehensive sexuality education into the curriculum can be critical in helping young people, girls in particular, to make informed decisions about their sexuality and learn to address conflicting, negative, and confusing messages that perpetuate harmful practices or behaviors (UNESCO, 2018b).

*My mother is a well-known tailor in the camp, the money she makes for tailoring used to be the only source of income for our family. I always wanted to learn tailoring, and I joined the Norwegian Refugee Council [NRC] program for that reason. I participated in Level 1 and Level 2 of the program, where I got to learn and practice my skills, and I am now at Level 3 where I get an income too. Once I acquired the tailoring skills I wanted, the community began asking for my services regularly, now I'm about to support my mother in providing for our family.*

—Fatema, 24, Syrian refugee in Jordan; see case study 6 in Annex 2

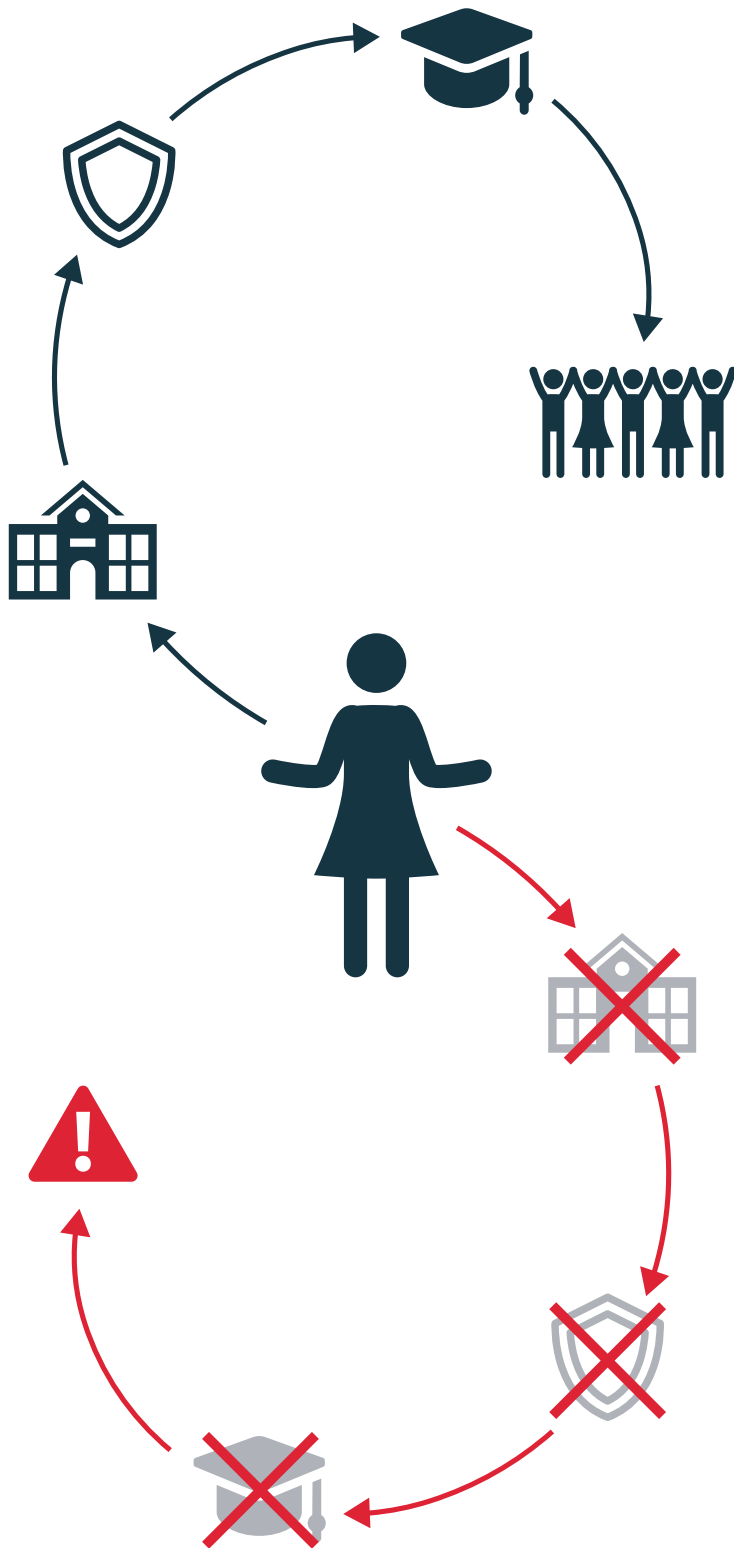
Source: NRC, 2020, unpublished program document

**The virtuous circular relationship between the education and protection of girls extends beyond the individual girl and the rewards are felt by entire communities.** Prioritizing education for girls has a transformative effect on public health, the environment, poverty, and conflict. Educating girls has long-term positive dividends related to peace and security (Malala Fund, 2017); for example, data show that conflict is less likely in contexts where there is gender parity in mean years of schooling (Omoeva et al., 2016; INEE, 2016). This impact is intergenerational, as educated mothers are more likely to prioritize education for their own children (UNICEF, 2003).

**Education has enormous potential to protect girls and to mitigate the effects emergencies have on their families.** Educated girls become literate mothers who have the benefit of more information and critical thinking about health and wellbeing. Child survival rates are better among women with higher education levels, due to their knowledge of better nutrition and of how to prevent water- and insect-borne infectious diseases (UNESCO, 2013). Between 1990 and 2009, the lives of 2.1 million children under age five were saved worldwide because of the improved education provided to girls and women (UNESCO, 2013).

The flip side of these improvements is that limiting girls' and women's access to education can cost a country between \$15 trillion and \$30 trillion dollars in lost lifetime productivity and earnings (World Bank, 2018a). According to UNESCO (2013), Nigeria could lower its child mortality rate by 43% if all women completed a secondary education. An analysis in Uganda established clear gender dimensions linking conflict drivers to traditional social and cultural practices, such as early marriage, which prevented girls' access to school and retention (UNICEF, 2016). Incidents of SRGBV were linked to conflict at the community level, with girls and women bearing the brunt of such violence (UNICEF, 2016). Unsafe learning environments that threaten SRGBV are detrimental to learning and increase girls' long-term vulnerabilities (discussed in more detail in section 3.2).

Figure 3 - Girls' education and protection is a virtuous cycle that can become a negative spiral if broken by an emergency



Girls' education and protection reinforce each other, leading to positive outcomes for the whole of society. They grow up to become productive and informed citizens who protect the rights of others.

But when emergencies block girls' access to education, it leads to a downward spiral of lost protection and permanent school dropout, making girls and their societies less resilient to future crises. They become vulnerable to violence and harmful practices and are prevented from exercising their rights as empowered, informed women.



**Emergencies and crises can break the virtuous cycle between education and protection.** To begin with, women and girls are often more vulnerable in an emergency than their male counterparts, due to existing inequalities and inadequate access to food, sanitary amenities, and health services (Kwauk et al., 2019). Global estimates show that, during conflict, more than 70% of women and girls experience some form of GBV (UN Women, 2020a) and they are more susceptible to human trafficking, sexual assault, and exploitation. Women who lack literacy skills are particularly vulnerable in displacement settings (UNESCO, 2019).

**Intersecting inequalities.** There are 105 girls for every 100 boys living in extremely poor households, across all ages (World Bank, 2018b). Girls' and women's increased vulnerability during crises is often layered onto existing multidimensional vulnerabilities, including poverty and disability (see Box 4). It is anticipated that COVID-19 will further increase extreme poverty, food insecurity, and inequities related to health and wellbeing, especially for girls and women (UN Women, 2020b). Poverty, violence, cultural norms and practices, and fragility are the greatest predictors of whether a girl can access or stay in school (World Bank, 2017). When these conditions intersect with an emergency, it can mean a permanent end to education for girls. Worldwide, 44% of girls ages 10 to 19 from the poorest families have never attended school, or they dropped out before completing primary education (UNICEF, 2020c). As health and wellbeing are adversely affected by the reallocation of resources and priorities at the household and community level, women's and girls' vulnerabilities are exacerbated when reallocation occurs. Such economic pressures heighten the risk that girls will be forced into transactional sex and early marriage, and school closures and displacement during emergencies deny girls the protective effects of education. Moreover, the traditional gender norms and customs women and girls are subject to, including restricted movement outside the household and, in some countries, a lack of access to land, financial credit, and social capital, are further constrained during an emergency, which further limits women's and girls' ability to acquire lifesaving skills, reliable information, or even access to public services (Kwauk et al., 2019).

#### Box 4 - Intersecting inequalities put girls with disabilities at risk

Girls facing intersecting factors of marginalization because of poverty, race, ethnicity, geographical location, or disability and minority status experience the greatest exclusion from education (Leonard Cheshire Disability & UNGEI, 2017). Heightened insecurity and the breakdown of family and social supports during emergencies affect attendance and increase dropout rates. In insecure environments, families may feel that children with disabilities, girls especially, should be kept at home for their own protection. Girls with disabilities may be the first to be abandoned and the last to receive emergency assistance, and they face a high risk of abuse, neglect, and long-term psychosocial trauma. Disability, when it intersects with being a girl, living in poverty, and in an emergency setting, increases risks such as SRGBV (Leonard Cheshire Disability & UNGEI, 2017).

Girls are often at greater risk than boys of school dropout in emergencies. Adolescent girls are the first to be pulled out of school in an emergency, usually due to parents' concerns about security or to alleviate the extra domestic burdens caused by the crisis (Kwauk et al., 2019). Girls and women most often shoulder the greatest burden of unpaid caregiving and domestic labor in their homes (UNICEF, 2020a). Forced displacement also exacerbates gender imbalances in education by increasing the risk of GBV and early and forced marriage (UNESCO, 2019) and by magnifying the cultural barriers that limit girls' access to learning. Girls-only learning spaces can provide access to learning where cultural barriers are a limiting factor, while longer term efforts can help to achieve gender-equitable education (see Box 5).

*Most of the problems we are facing is not because we don't want to study but because of cultural practices that are concealed to the outside world, and also because we are given little chance.*

—Young married girl in Niger

Source: Plan International, 2020, unpublished program document reviewed for case study 7 in Annex 2

## Box 5 - Girls-only sessions for adolescent refugee girls in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, once Rohingya refugee girls reach puberty, deeply entrenched sociocultural norms often restrict their social behavior. These restrictions contribute to a sharp dropoff in girls' attendance at mixed-gender learning centers after age 11; by late adolescence (15-18), only 2% of girls are still receiving an education. Girls are six times less likely than their male peers to attend a learning center. In 2019, the main reasons given for girls' dropout were "cultural reasons" and marriage.

In October 2019, UNICEF and its local partner CODEC provided a space for community members to pilot an education model for girls-only sessions that provide a female-only safe space. In these sessions, girls are encouraged to build their social networks, and they receive emotional support, mentorship, and critical literacy and problem-solving skills.

With the approval of the use of the Myanmar curriculum in refugee camps by the Government of Bangladesh in early 2020, participation in a pilot phase grew from the original 12 girls to 29. The initial scale-up established seven girls-only sessions for 118 girls between the ages of 11 and 14 in areas where the dropout risk was highest. COVID-19 has prevented further scale-up.

Because of concern that girls-only sessions reinforce an inequitable system, UNICEF and CODEC are engaging with community and religious leaders to advance norms that promote girls' rights.

For full details, see [case study 8 in Annex 2](#)

The longer a girl is out of school, the less likely it is that she will return, as evidenced by past crises (Malala Fund et al., 2020). UNESCO and others have estimated that anywhere from 11.2 million to more than 20 million girls and young women may drop out of school in the next year, due to COVID-19 (Malala Fund et al., 2020). During the 2014-2015 Ebola crisis, marginalized girls were more at risk than boys of remaining out of school when schools reopened after the emergency ended (Malala Fund, 2020). Poverty, violence, cultural norms and practices, and fragility are the greatest predictors of whether a girl can access or stay in school (World Bank, 2017). When these conditions are exacerbated by a crisis, it can mean a permanent end to an education for girls (see Box 6).

## Box 6 - Decades of conflict have had a devastating effect on girls' education in South Sudan

South Sudan has experienced decades of fighting, which has eroded children's access to education, especially girls. **At least 2.2 million, or 62%, of school-age Sudanese children are out of school, the highest rate in the world.** The out-of-school numbers for South Sudanese girls are far graver; 75% are not enrolled in primary school, and girls represent only one-third of the secondary school population (UNESCO, 2018c). Gender inequality in education is pervasive in South Sudan; only one girl in ten completes a primary education, and only 2% of that group completes a secondary education. Barriers to girls' enrollment include poverty, cultural beliefs, physical factors such as menstruation, and logistical challenges such as the distance between home and school.

For full details, see [case study 1 in Annex 2](#)

**Early and forced marriage.** During crises, girls are more vulnerable to early or forced marriage. Globally, 21% of young women are married before age 18 (UNFPA-UNICEF, 2019); of the 20 countries in the world with the highest prevalence of child marriage, 18 are crisis-affected (Girls Not Brides Atlas, 2020b). Early marriage is often seen as a coping strategy, to alleviate economic strain, or as "protection" from rape and other conflict-related sexual and GBV (Girls not Brides, 2020a). Child marriage greatly reduces the likelihood of girls completing secondary school, and the countries with the highest gender disparities in secondary enrollment include those with the highest rates of child marriage (Wodon et al., 2017). Early marriage perpetuates cycles of intergenerational poverty, vulnerability, and exclusion, as girls who do not complete secondary school do not reap the economic and social benefits of better educational outcomes (Wodon et al., 2017). Girls married before age 18 see higher rates of poverty in their own homes than those who marry at a later age (World Bank, 2018b), thus low educational attainment is both a cause and a consequence of child marriage.



*Maybe some girls were thinking about getting married because they cannot afford what they need. With this money, they will buy what they need and also wait for schools to reopen so that they can go back.*

—Esther, 16, Juba, South Sudan, talking about emergency cash transfers for girls during COVID-19, June 2020, cited in GESS (2020c)

In Northern Cameroon and Nigeria, families that are among the internally displaced and those living in refugee camps experience extreme poverty, made worse by an emergency that has left them few options for meeting their basic needs. Marrying off school-age daughters is one common “solution” (Girls Not Brides, 2020a). In Yemen, the rate of child marriage has increased during the ongoing conflict (Girls Not Brides, 2020a). In Jordan, the rate of registered child marriages in Syrian refugee communities tripled from 12% to 32% between 2011 and 2014 (Girls Not Brides, 2020a). These married girls are unlikely to be enrolled in school; in Lebanon, for example, one-fifth of Syrian girls cited engagement or marriage as their reason for dropping out of school (American University of Beirut et al., 2016).

**Early pregnancy.** When schools close during an emergency, girls are more vulnerable to early and unplanned pregnancy; teenage pregnancy has been shown to increase by as much as 65% during an emergency (World Vision International, 2020). The greater risk of exposure to abuse, unplanned pregnancy, and other forms of exploitation during emergencies is associated with the barriers that prevent girls from returning to school once they (re)open, including policies that ban pregnant girls and young mothers from returning to school. In Syria, sexual and GBV have led to lost educational opportunities for girls and caused them psychological harm (UNFPA & Whole of Syria GBV AoR, 2019). Evidence gathered during Ebola outbreaks in West Africa and the DRC found that 18,000 teenage girls became pregnant during the crisis and were forced to drop out of school (UNFPA, 2017), which demonstrates further how vulnerable girls are to becoming pregnant when schools close and sexual and reproductive health services are less available (UNFPA, 2017). After the crisis, Sierra Leone revised its education act to make it more inclusive, and in 2020 a ruling that excluded visibly pregnant girls from attending school was revoked (Rafaeli, 2020).

**Household chores and domestic labor.** School closures often mean that girls take on additional chores at home, especially unpaid caregiving and domestic labor (UN, 2020). Unpaid caregiving is recognized as a driver of inequality, as it is linked to increased household burdens, less education, and poor income outcomes for women and girls (OECD, 2014). One example is that, prior to COVID-19, Rohingya girls had less access to education because of having increased caregiving responsibilities in the home (Joint Agency Research Report, 2018). Since the COVID-19 lockdowns and a ban on internet access in the camps in Cox’s Bazar, adolescent girls have become further isolated, taken on more caregiving responsibilities, and often are dependent on the humanitarian workers who provide information door-to-door (UN Women, 2020a).

**Women and girls are also more vulnerable than men and boys during climate-related disasters; the worse the negative consequences, the greater their vulnerability.** Natural disasters compound the vulnerabilities of women and girls, who experience greater social, economic, and health effects because of climate stress, slow-onset disasters, or weather-related emergencies like floods and storms (Kwauk et al., 2019). Existing structural gender inequality means that women and girls often need to work harder in the aftermath of a disaster to carry out daily functions, such as lining up for relief supplies and traveling to find water and food, which means their access to education or employment is further limited (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, n.d.). Women and girls who are forced to migrate are at increased risk of sexual and GBV; in fact, one in five women displaced by a climate-related disaster has experienced sexual violence (UN Climate Change, 2019). In the aftermath of Cyclone Idai and the floods in Mozambique in 2019, there were reports that community leaders were exchanging food and other relief items for sex (Global Protection Gender-Based Violence AoR, 2019). With the onset of the drought in Mozambique in 2016, families turned to child marriage to reduce the number of dependents in their household (CARE, 2019). During environmental disasters and the ensuing scarcity of resources, women and children experience mortality rates 14 times higher than men’s (UNDP, 2016).

Even when girls are able to continue to attend school during a climate-related crisis, the negative effects on their nutrition can interfere with their learning ability and skills development. For example, an analysis of a cohort of girls supported by the Girls Education Challenge in Zimbabwe found that those in drought-affected locations were more likely than girls elsewhere to attend and progress in school, but they also demonstrated lower learning outcomes and leadership skills than those in areas not affected by drought (Nordstrom & Cotton, 2015). In Ethiopia, girls from drought-affected communities suffered poor growth as a result of under-nutrition, which implies that they will have slower cognitive development than their counterparts elsewhere in the country (Bahru et al., 2019; see Box 7). Women and girls represent 60% of all undernourished people in the world (World Hunger Education Service, 2016), and they are often the first to go hungry, as social norms dictate that they “eat last and least” (CARE, 2020a).

## Box 7 - Internal migration and food insecurity undermine girls' education in Somalia

Pastoralists in Somalia face multiple layers of exclusion that reduce school enrollment and retention, especially for girls. The national gross primary enrollment rate for pastoralists across Somalia is only 3%, compared to a national average of 32% (MoE, 2017). The baseline for CARE's Somali Girls' Education Promotion Programme (SOMGEP-T) shows that 42% of girls ages 10 to 19 were out of school; 32% of that group had dropped out of school or did not enroll because their family had migrated (Ha & Forney, 2018). Recurrent drought resulted in families seeking new water sources and grazing grounds, and they experienced economic losses due to disease or death among their livestock. Unaccompanied adolescent migration is common; on average, 0.4 girls moved out of each household in 2018-2019, which is two girls in every five households. Of those girls, 25% went to live with other family members, sometimes as domestic helpers (Miettunen et al., 2020). The majority of migrant girls do not attend school (Ha & Forney, 2018).

For full details, see [case study 2 in Annex 2](#)

**Increasing access to quality education for girls and women can help to mitigate climate change and increase resilience to climate-related disasters.** A study looking at the economics of various strategies to reduce climate change concluded that girls' education is one of the most cost-effective strategies to reduce carbon emissions (Wheeler & Hammer, 2010). Another study has found that lack of education and access to poor quality education are systemic drivers of climate change (Brookings, 2019). Women and girls with poor literacy rates are often cut off from essential information that could alter their behavior at the household and community level, and adolescent girls who are forced to leave school are not well informed about their role in accelerating climate change. Another econometric study, which used panel data on developing countries over the period from 1960 to 2003, examined the role of socioeconomic development in climate resilience (Blankespoor et al., 2010). Findings from this study revealed that, in the contexts with higher rates of girls' enrollment and retention in school, female agency and decision-making increased, which in turn reduced weather-related losses such as death, injury, and displacement. This study estimated that, if developing countries had invested more to increase girls' school enrollment from 1960 to 1999, the number of people affected by floods could have been reduced by 465 million and by droughts by 667 million (Blankespoor et al., 2010).

## 3.2 PROTECTING GIRLS WITHIN EDUCATION

While education can be a critical protective factor for girls, many still experience high rates of physical, sexual, and psychological violence at school or on their way to or from school. Globally, an estimated 50% of children have experienced violence in and around schools (Safe to Learn, 2020). SRGBV is widespread, and it often is driven by entrenched inequalities and unhealthy power dynamics (UNGIEI, 2019). There currently is nothing in the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 4, that addresses the need to eliminate violence in schools.

### 3.2.1 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN AND AROUND SCHOOLS

Corporal punishment is still legally permitted in schools in 128 countries. Where bans are in effect, there is no discernible pattern to indicate that lower rates of corporal punishment have been achieved. Corporal punishment in schools both reflects and perpetuates violence in the wider society, and it is linked in particular to higher rates of violent behavior, aggressive conduct, and violent attitudes in boys. Male teachers who experienced violence as students are more likely to use corporal punishment on their own students (Heekes et al., 2020). Where sex-disaggregated data exist, they reveal that boys are more likely than girls to be victims of corporal punishment (Gershoff, 2017). However, girls who do experience corporal punishment at school are more likely to become victims of intimate partner violence later in their life (Heekes et al., 2020). Stop Violence Against Girls in School, an Action Aid intervention, combined advocacy and education to stop corporal punishment in schools in Kenya and Mozambique, among other countries, during the five-year period from 2007 to 2013. The intervention resulted in an increase in girls' enrollment by 17% in Kenya and 10% in Mozambique; in Kenya, the rate of girls' dropout declined (Gershoff, 2017).

According to USAID's Research for Effective Education Programming (REEP) for Africa, SRGBV can manifest as an inappropriate sexual relationship between a teacher and student, transactional sex to cover school fees or the cost of school materials, sex for grades, and excessive use of corporal punishment. SRGBV is defined as any act or threat of violence occurring in and around schools that is perpetrated by gender norms and ste-

reotypes and enforced by unequal power dynamics (REEP, 2018). Previous evidence has shown that SRGBV is prevalent, but until recently it has not been captured consistently or analyzed sufficiently. UNICEF's results monitoring data indicate that progress is being made, at least at the national planning level; the percentage of countries supported by UNICEF that have plans in place to prevent SRGBV increased from 38% in 2018 to 49% in 2019 (UNICEF, 2020d).

For too long, global school health surveys on violence in schools looked only at bullying or fighting, and thus failed to capture data on abuse, exploitation, and harassment (UNGEI, 2019). In recent years, countries have been bringing together evidence from school health surveys, education data, and other sources, with staggering results. DHS data reveal that a significant proportion of women report having experienced teacher-perpetrated rape and sexual abuse while at school. Based on these proportions, it is estimated that five million women (ages 15 to 49) in the DRC, three million women in Kenya, and three million women in Nigeria are survivors of teacher perpetrated rape (Center for Global Development, 2020a). Two out of five school principals in southern and eastern Africa report that sexual harassment occurred between pupils in their primary schools (REEP, 2018). In an MoE study in Mozambique, 70% of girl respondents reported knowing that some teachers made having sexual intercourse with them a condition for promotion (REEP, 2018). There also is evidence in the Central African Republic and Liberia of high rates of sex for grades (Bray-Watkins, 2019), and male teachers coercing girls into sexual relationships has been documented elsewhere in Africa among those who cannot pay for school-related expenses (REEP, 2018). In Senegal, 1 out of 8 girls experienced verbal or physical abuse from their teachers in the month before they were surveyed (Center for Global Development, 2020a). Girls also are vulnerable to abuse and harassment en route to and from school. Syrian refugee girls in Jordan said they experienced sexual abuse and assault on the way to school, especially where there was no safe and affordable transportation available, and this sometimes led them to drop out (Human Rights Watch, 2020a).

It should be noted that, although violence against girls, including sexual abuse, is prevalent in many educational settings and is unacceptable at any level, girls are generally far safer in school than when they are not attending. Violence Against Children survey data suggest that far more girls experience sexual abuse outside of school than within (Center for Global Development, 2020a).

### 3.2.2 ATTACKS ON GIRLS' EDUCATION

Attacks on education are one of the most egregious violations of international law, yet they persist around the world. Marginalized groups, including girls, often suffer most from these attacks. *Education under Attack 2020*, the most recent flagship report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA, 2020a), identifies more than 11,000 attacks on education from 2015 to 2019 in 93 countries. These incidents include attacks on schools, higher education, students, teachers, and other education personnel; the use of schools and universities by the military or other armed groups; recruitment of children into armed groups at or on the way to or from school; and sexual violence at or on the way to or from school or university. Sexual violence, and the threat of it, is often a key barrier to girls and women continuing their education. In at least 21 of the 37 countries profiled in the GCPEA report, cases were found of girls and women who were explicitly targeted between 2015 and 2019 because of their gender.<sup>12</sup>

A key mechanism for addressing attacks on schools, and therefore for protecting girls and their access to education, is endorsement and implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration. The Declaration is an intergovernmental political agreement that establishes the signatories' commitment to strengthen protection of education from attack and to restrict the use of schools and universities for military purposes (GCPEA, 2015). To account for the specific needs and experiences of women and girls, GCPEA developed guidance on how to implement the Safe Schools Declaration in a gender-responsive way. As of November 4, 2020, 106 countries had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration; 26 of them are crisis-affected countries.

Reporting mechanisms and observatories, such as the UN-supported Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, reports from other UN agencies, the Education Cluster, or human rights NGOs, do not systematically disaggregate reports of attacks on education by gender, meaning that the gender dimension of these attacks cannot be determined at the global level. However, data of this nature are available for several countries, which enables observers to see at least a partial picture of the gendered dynamics of attacks on education. For example, GCPEA identified 48 reports of attacks on education in Pakistan in 2018-2019. Approximately 12 of these attacks, which included explosives or arson attacks on girls' schools, specifically targeted girls and women in four states or administrative territories. In 2018, for example, a girls' middle school in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was attacked with explosives. A militant group was reported to have distributed pamphlets in the region the following day, which stated, "We will not tolerate to see grown-up girls going to schools in various areas" (Gul, 2018). There were approximately 240 recorded attacks in the same period in neighboring Afghanistan, of which at least 41 were directed at girls and women (GCPEA, 2020a).

<sup>12</sup> The 21 countries were Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, DRC, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Venezuela, and Yemen.

In Nigeria, of approximately 37 attacks in 2018-2019, roughly five could be identified as specifically targeting girls and women. The five attacks, which occurred in five different states, involved either rape or kidnapping and were reportedly carried out by both state forces and non-state armed groups. In one attack in February 2018 in Dapchi, Yobe State, Boko Haram abducted 110 girls from a girls' school. By the end of that year, one girl remained in captivity, five had died, and the rest had been released (UN Security Council, 2019). GCPEA released similar research on the Kasai region of the DRC, where survivors and witnesses of attacks on education reported girls and women being raped during recruitment efforts at schools, and while students and education staff members attempted to flee an attack. In-depth research GCPEA conducted in Nigeria and DRC found that girls are less likely than boys to return to school after an attack for several reasons, including the inability to pay school fees, parents' prioritizing boys' education, and fear of sexual violence and lack of security in or on the way to and from school. Girls who have been abducted and subsequently freed also endure stigma and social exclusion, and many suffer psychological effects such as anxiety, stress, or post-traumatic stress disorder, all of which further limit their ability to continue their education (GCPEA, 2018, 2019, 2020a).

Armed groups and militias also target female teachers and instructors. For example, in 2019, female teachers and instructors working with NGOs in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh were threatened and assaulted by an armed group operating in the camps. Many stopped attending school due to fear of further attacks (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Women and girls sometimes suffer the effects of attacks on education even when they are not directly targeted. Attacks in Syria, for example, despite not specifically targeting girls, provide examples of how or where girls' education was affected. GCPEA found approximately 16 reported attacks that affected girls' education in Syria in 2018-2019, primarily aerial bombings and artillery shelling of girls' schools. However, the nature of these attacks suggests that the damage to schools was largely the result of collateral damage rather than a systematic targeting of girls. By point of comparison, there were approximately 20 reported attacks on boys' schools in the same period (GCPEA, 2018, 2019).





## CHAPTER 4. CLOSING THE GAP: ARE WE MAKING PROGRESS?

### Key findings

For girls in crisis-affected countries:

- Girls are far less likely to attend pre-primary or to complete primary or lower secondary school than girls in other LMICs
- Girls still lag behind boys in access to primary education, but girls' education has been making the most progress
- In many of these countries, girls have overtaken boys in secondary completion rates
- Poorer girls in crisis-affected regions within countries still lag far behind boys
- Girls' learning often lags behind that of boys
- There is a shortage of female teachers, especially at the post-primary level
- Female literacy rates lag far behind those of males
- Female access to vocational training lags behind that of males

For girls living in situations of forced displacement:

- Data on access to education are still very limited
- Gender gaps in access, particularly at the secondary level, are greater than for non-displaced children in crisis-affected countries
- Displacement exacerbates gender inequalities
- Enrollment rates are far below national rates

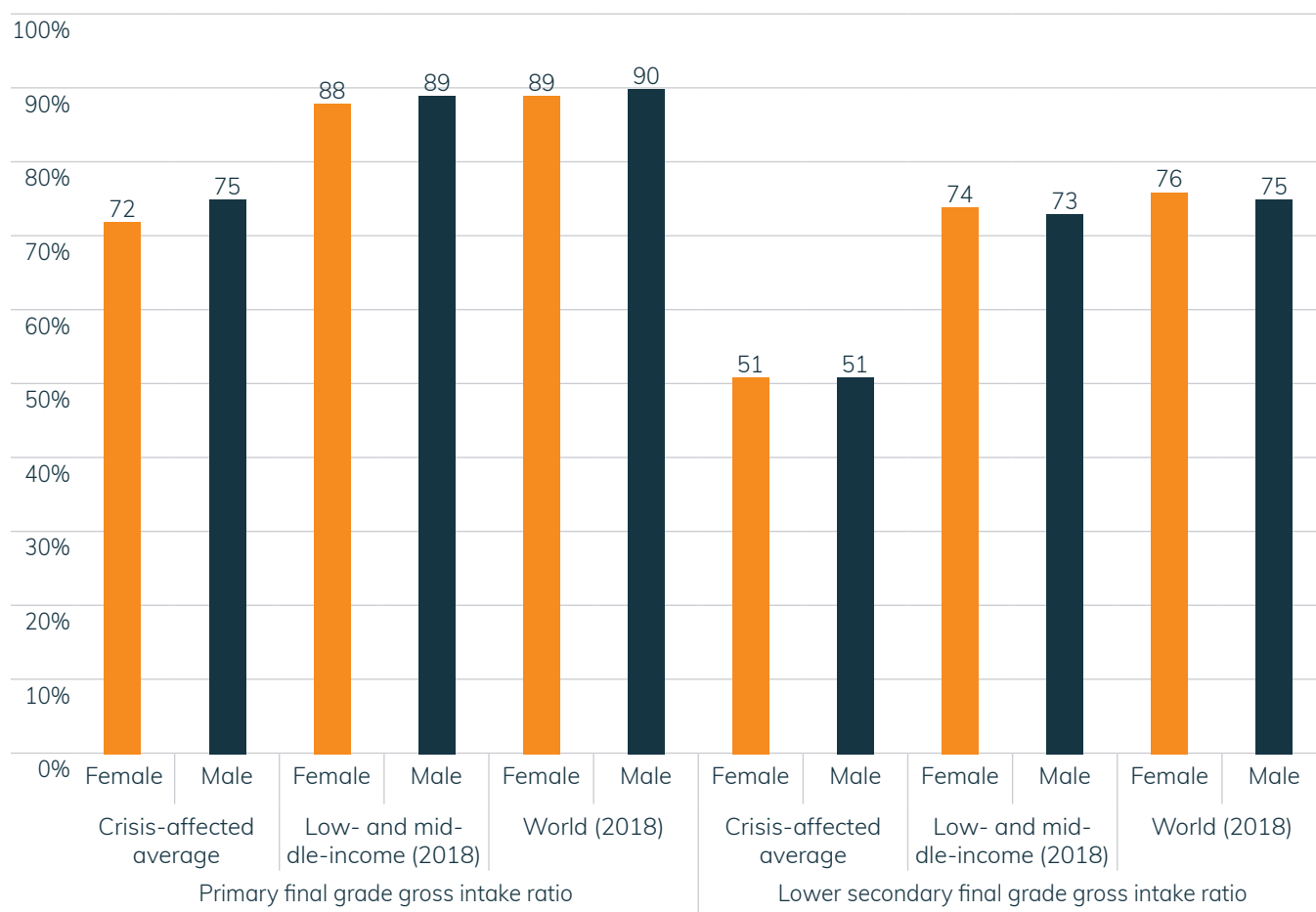
### 4.1 GIRLS' ACCESS IN CRISIS-AFFECTED COUNTRIES LAGS BEHIND BOYS', BUT THEY ARE MAKING PROGRESS

In 2019, there were 69 million girls out of school in crisis-affected countries, 24 million at the primary level and 45 million at the secondary. This accounts for 54% of the world's out-of-school girls. Over one-fifth (21%) of primary school-age girls in crisis affected countries were out of school, compared to 15% of boys. These rates are well over double the global averages for primary out-of-school rates (9% of girls and 7% of boys globally).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Based on UIS estimates of 2019 OOSC data for the list of 44 crisis-affected countries; provided by UIS, March 2021. See Annex 1 of "Mind the Gap" for the methodology used to identify crisis-affected countries (44 countries). The statistics in this report on out-of-school children and girls in crisis-affected countries are an update from the 2020 INEE publication: (INEE). (2020). 20 Years of INEE: Achievements and Challenges in Education in Emergencies. New York, NY. <https://inee.org/resources/20-years-of-innee>.

Girls in crisis-affected countries are overall far less likely to complete primary or lower-secondary school than girls in other LMICs (see Figure 4). In crisis-affected countries, fewer than three-quarters of girls reach the final grade of primary education and just over half do so at the lower secondary level.<sup>14</sup> This means that almost one-third of girls who reach the final grade of primary school drop out before reaching the end of lower secondary school.

**Figure 4 - Primary and lower school final grade gross intake ratios in crisis-affected countries, LMICs, and the world, by gender**



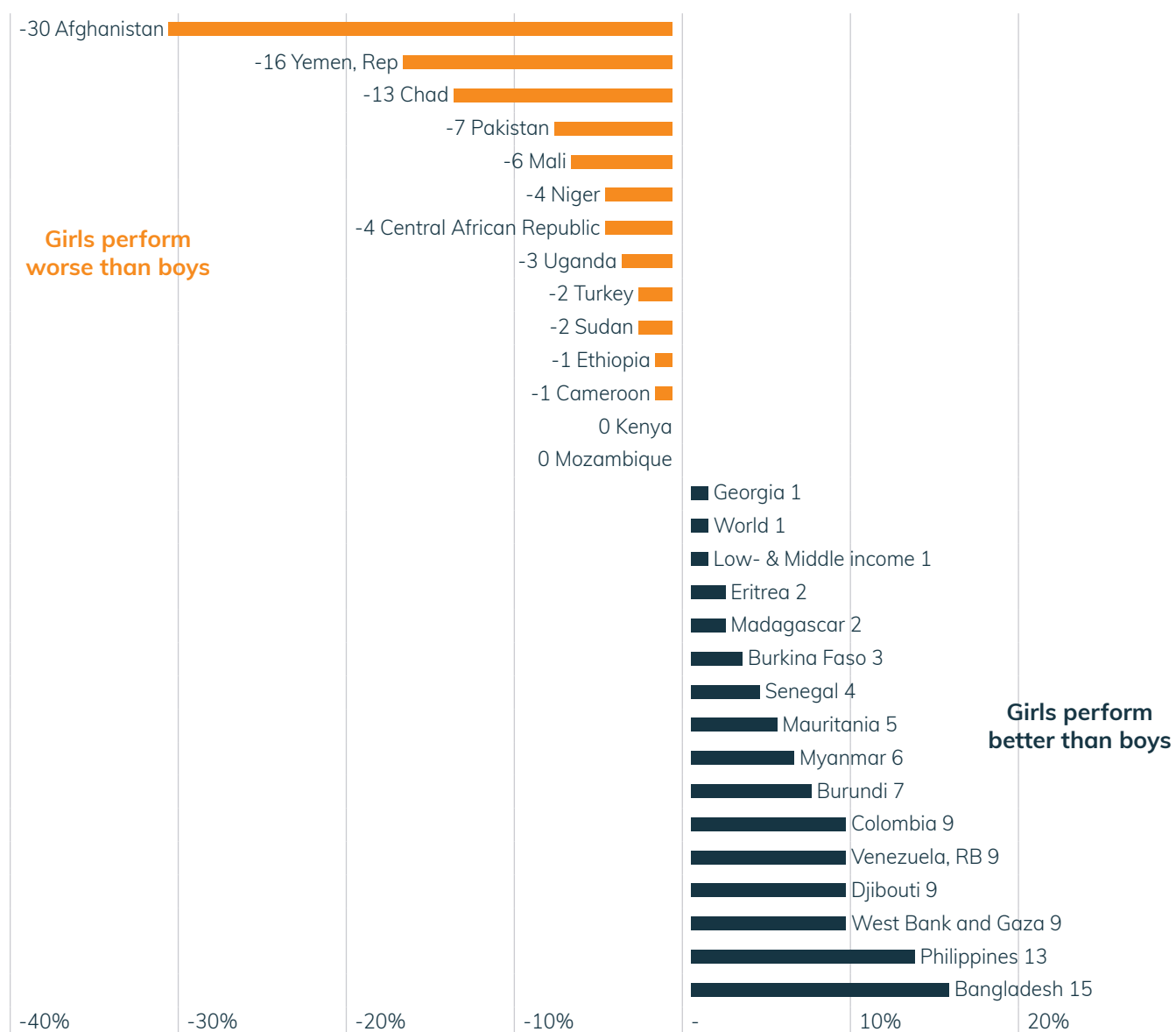
Source: World Bank. (n.d.). Education Statistics (EdStats). Crisis-affected averages based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2019). Retrieved October 16, 2020.

The above analysis is based on averages across crisis-affected countries, which masks some of the inequalities that exist within countries. Figure 5 shows the percentage point differences in male and female lower secondary final grade gross enrollment rates in the crisis-affected countries where recent data are available. In Afghanistan, for example, only 40% of girls reach the final grade of lower secondary school, compared to 70% of boys—a difference of 30 percentage points. However, 87% of girls in Bangladesh reach the final grade, compared to 72% of boys—a 15 percentage point difference.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Some datasets provide information for lower and/or upper secondary education, others provide information for secondary overall. These correspond to the International Standard Classification of Education levels (UIS, 2011)

<sup>15</sup> EMIS data, accessed via World Bank EdStats October 16, 2020. Crisis-affected averages calculated based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2019). Retrieved from <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/>

**Figure 5 - Percentage-point difference in gross intake ratio in final year of lower secondary school between girls and boys**



Percentage point difference in lower secondary final grade gross intake ratio

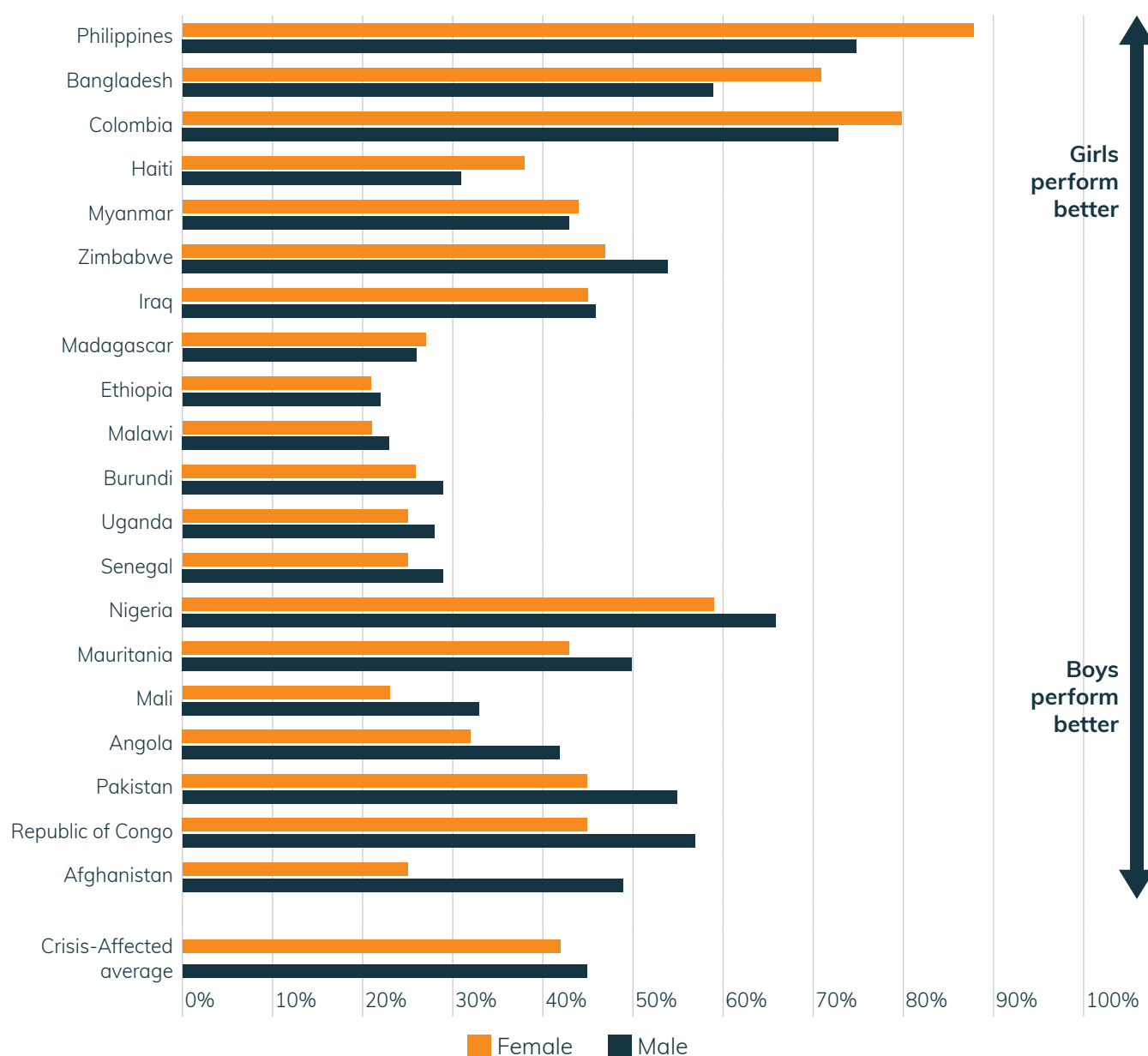
Source: World Bank. (n.d.). Education Statistics (EdStats). EMIS data, retrieved October 16, 2020.

These disparities mirror available lower secondary completion rates in crisis-affected countries.<sup>16</sup> On average, 45% of boys complete lower secondary school, compared to 42% of girls (see Figure 6). However, this conceals differences between countries: girls outperform boys in two countries (Philippines and Bangladesh) by more than ten percentage points, and boys outperform girls by the same amount in two others (Afghanistan and the Republic of Congo).

<sup>16</sup> UIS reports completion rates based on household survey data. These data give a clearer indication of the proportion of girls and boys completing each school cycle than data based on EMIS, but are not reported as widely or frequently.



**Figure 6 - Lower secondary completion rates in crisis-affected countries, ordered by size of gender gap (latest data points 2015 onward)**



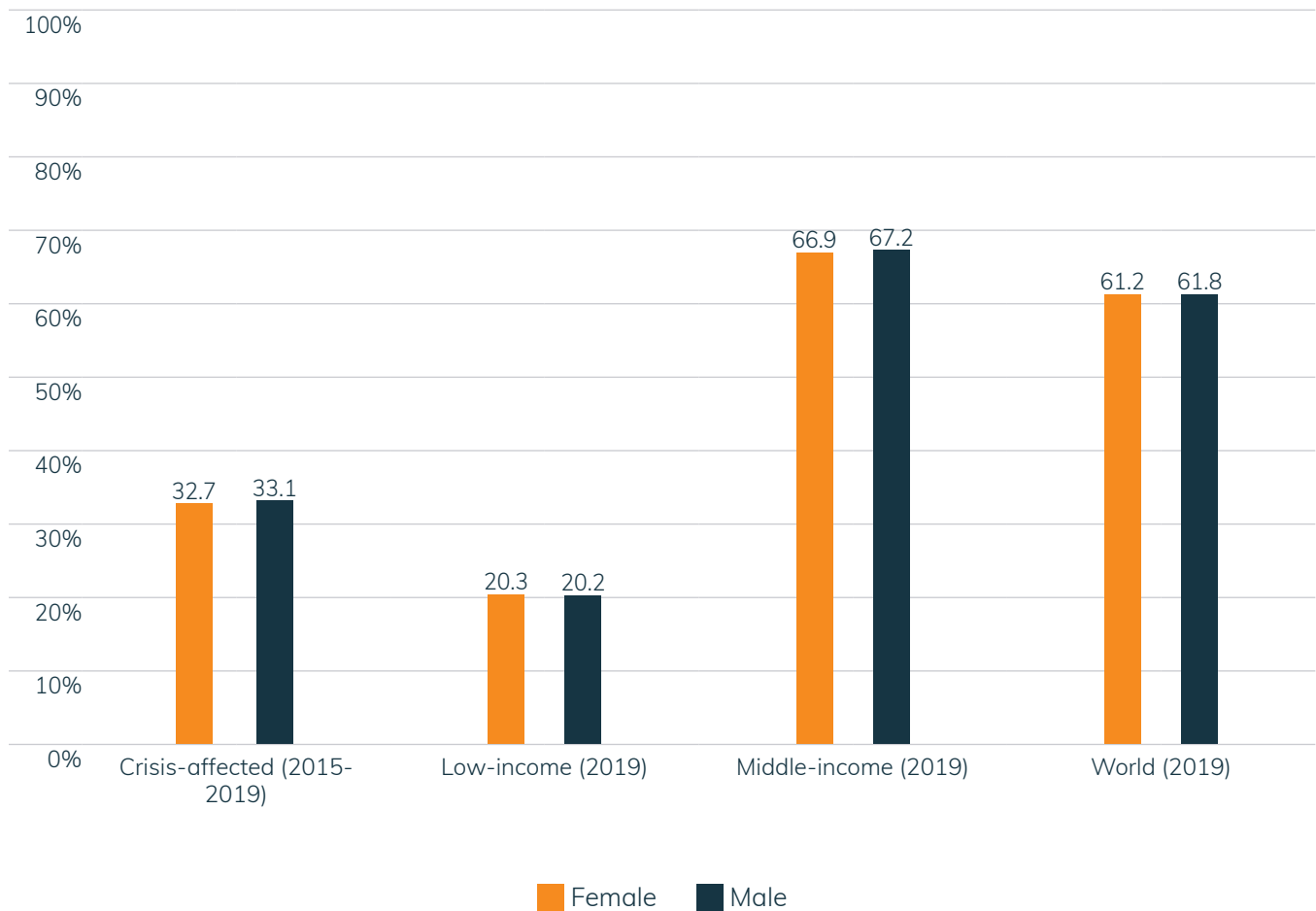
Source: UIS. (n.d.) UIS.Stat. Data on crisis-affected averages based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2019). Retrieved November 23, 2020.

Despite these differences, girls' education has, on average, been making the most progress in these crisis-affected countries. Based on current trends, girls in these countries are on track to reach 100% primary completion in 2038 and lower secondary in 2063. Of course, this is well beyond the 2030 SDG deadline, but girls are ahead of boys, who are projected to reach these targets in 2056 and 2101, respectively.<sup>17</sup> The trajectory does not take into account the gender gaps that could result from COVID-19 school closures, which started in 2020.

On average, only 33% of girls enroll in pre-primary school in crisis-affected countries. This is far above the low-income country average of 20%, but far below the middle-income average of 67% and the global average of 61% (see Figure 7). Although there appears to be parity between girls and boys, this again masks the inequalities in many countries. In Madagascar, 42% of girls enroll, compared to 38% of boys, whereas 75% of girls in Pakistan enroll, compared to 87% of boys.

<sup>17</sup> Authors' linear projections are based on average primary and lower secondary female and male completion rates from 2010 to 2018 in crisis-affected countries.

**Figure 7 - Pre-primary gross enrollment ratios in crisis-affected countries, LMICs, and the world, by gender**

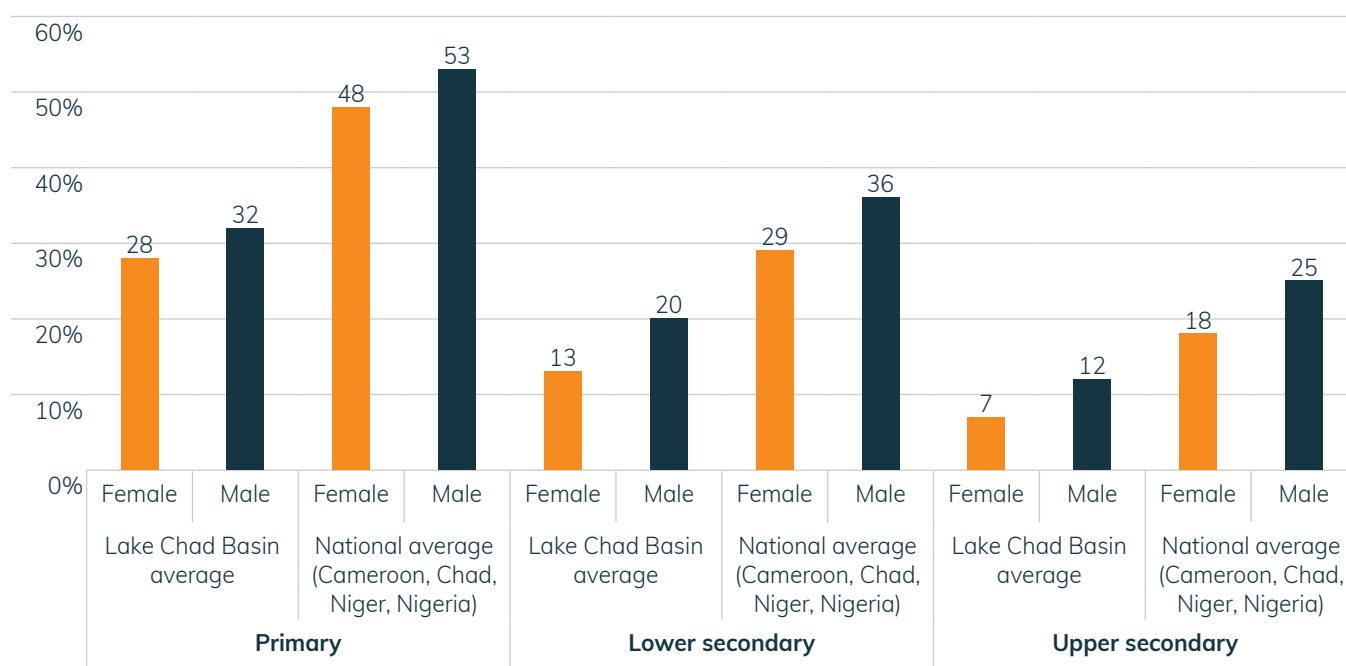


Source: UIS. (n.d.) UIS.Stat. Crisis-affected averages based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2019). Retrieved November 23, 2020.

## 4.2 UNEQUAL ACCESS: CRISIS-AFFECTED REGIONS AND POORER GROUPS ARE FAR BEHIND

A crisis, whether a conflict, disaster, or public health emergency, rarely affects a whole country equally; the poorest regions tend to be the most negatively affected, which means the areas of a country where the provision of education is often weakest. This is illustrated in the Lake Chad Basin in West Africa, which includes parts of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. Figure 8 compares the primary, lower, and upper secondary completion rates for girls and boys in the Lake Chad Basin region to national averages for those four countries. Across all levels, girls complete at lower rates than boys, in particular in the crisis-affected regions of the Lake Chad Basin; only 7% of girls there complete the upper secondary level, compared to 12% of boys in the same region and 18% of girls at the national level (UNESCO, World Inequality Database on Education, 2020).

**Figure 8 - Completion rates in the Lake Chad Basin regions compared to national averages<sup>18</sup>**

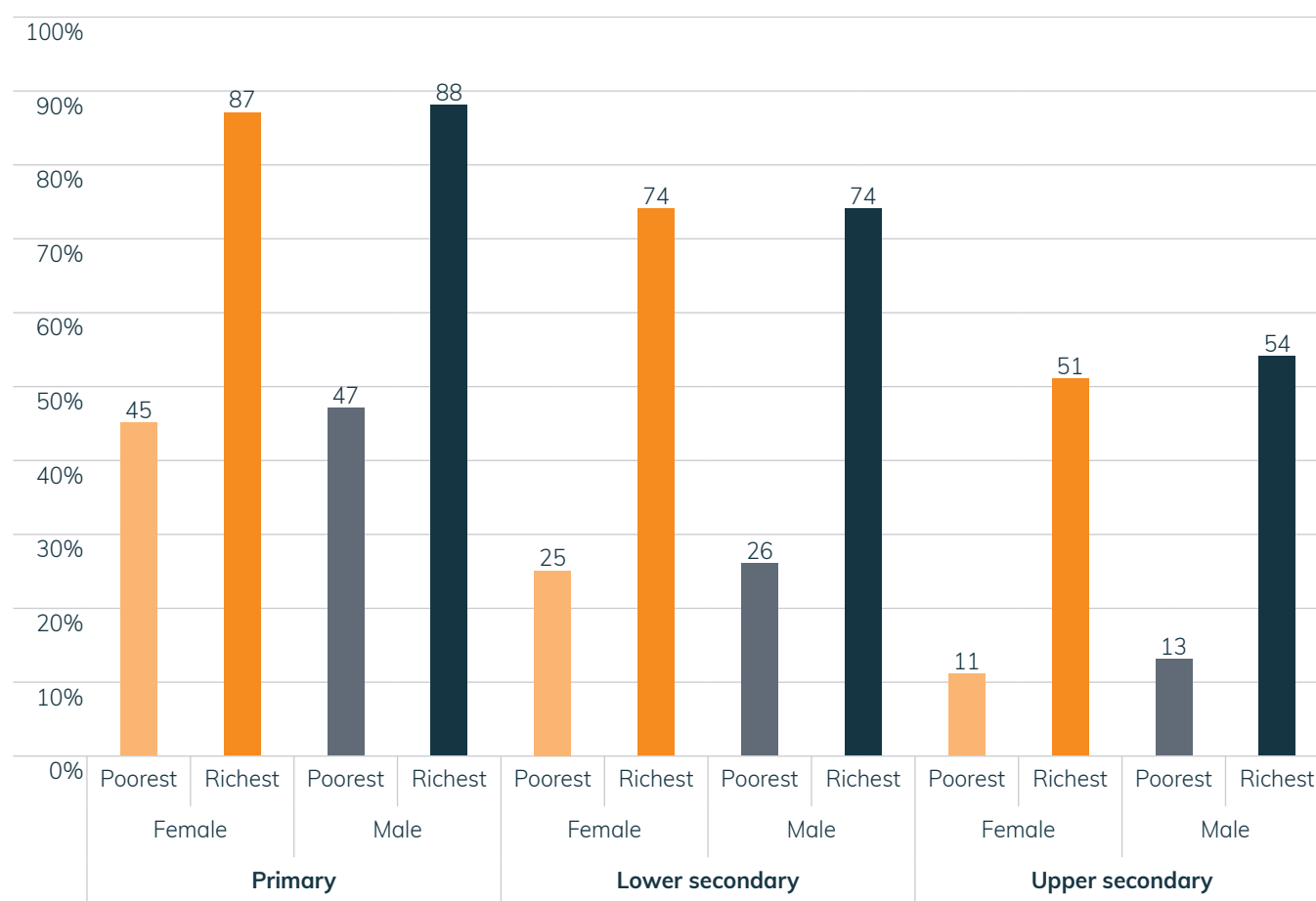


Source: Authors' calculations based on DHS data from UNESCO (n.d.) World Inequality Database on Education. Retrieved August 2020.

National averages mask not only the regional inequalities between girls and boys; wealth is also a factor that correlates strongly with access to education. Figure 9 shows that, in crisis-affected countries, fewer than half of girls and boys in the poorest quintile complete primary school at the correct age, and only 11% of girls and 13% of boys complete upper secondary by graduation age. This compares with nearly 90% of students in the richest quintile for primary school and more than half for upper secondary.

<sup>18</sup> This uses DHS data from Cameroon (2018), Chad (2015), Niger (2012), and Nigeria (2018) to analyze gender disaggregated completion data in the Chad Basin Region versus national averages. The Chad Basin regions used are Far North in Cameroon, Diffa in Chad, Lac in Niger, and North East in Nigeria.

**Figure 9 - Crisis-affected countries' average completion rates by gender and poorest/richest wealth quintiles<sup>19</sup>**



Source: Authors' calculations based on DHS data from UNESCO (n.d.) World Inequality Database on Education. Retrieved August 2020.

The GPE 2020 annual results report (GPE, 2020a) notes that an increasing percentage of GPE partner countries affected by fragility and conflict have achieved gender parity in recent years in both primary and lower secondary completion; 64% of these countries achieved parity in primary education, up from 50% in 2015, and 46% in secondary, up from 32% in 2015.<sup>20</sup> However, these countries still lagged behind non-conflict-affected partner countries in achieving gender parity.

According to GPE, in 2019, many more girls were out of school than boys in conflict-affected GPE partner countries; 28% of primary-age girls and 35% of secondary-age girls were out of school, compared to 24% and 34%, respectively, for all children (girls and boys) in conflict-affected countries (and 22% and 32%, respectively, for girls in all partner countries). Boys' advantage over girls' in terms of school access in this group of countries, as measured by out-of-school rates, has increased at the primary level and remained constant at the lower secondary level since the baseline; girls are now 40% more likely than boys to be out of school at the primary level and 13% more likely at the secondary level (GPE, 2020a). These disparities must be interpreted in light of the absolute out-of-school rates; they are lower at the primary level, so the same, or even smaller, absolute differences can translate into larger gender disparity by proportion. However, among the most marginalized children—that is, out-of-school primary-age children in conflict-affected countries—gender remains a significant factor in terms of intersecting vulnerabilities, which amplifies other disadvantages.

The GPE 2020 annual results report states that “girls are still disadvantaged on average on all of the indicators that measure girls' and boys' outcomes, and the gender gap is narrowing slowly if at all” (GPE, 2020a, p. 26).

<sup>19</sup> Averages produced using DHS and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data from 27 crisis-affected countries with available data from 2013 onwards.

<sup>20</sup> GPE classifies 32 of its 68 partner countries as “partner countries affected by conflict and fragility.” Many of these are included in the list of 44 crisis-affected countries in this report. However, GPE does not partner with upper-middle-income economies, some of which are included in the definition used by this report.

## Box 8 - Reducing barriers and promoting girls' learning via radio in South Sudan

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is an initiative of South Sudan's Ministry of General Education and Instruction, which is funded by UKAID and Global Affairs Canada. The program aims to improve the lives of South Sudanese children by ensuring the provision of equitable, accessible, and essential education, with particular emphasis on reducing barriers and promoting the learning gains of girls. GESS includes a range of integrated activities to tackle barriers to access and retention. The GESS radio program, *Our School*, offers a 15-minute weekly episode in nine local languages; it reaches an estimated two million listeners on 28 local and national partner radio stations. *Our School* features real-life stories and interviews with girls, parents, school managers, and community members that highlight the benefits of staying in school. They also address common challenges, such as negative social and cultural attitudes about the value of girls' education, safety and security while at school and traveling to and from, and the expense of school fees. Community mobilizers bring the radio programs to rural and remote communities through solar-powered wind-up radios that are pre-loaded with *Our School* episodes. The mobilizers also organize radio listening clubs and community dialogues on the importance of girls' education and provide opportunities to seek solutions to safety, learning, and retention challenges. Community dialogue is supplemented by visual storytelling materials. The program intends to reach 2,700 school communities in its second phase of operation.

For full details, see [case study 1 in Annex 2](#)

### 4.3 GIRLS' LEARNING IN EMERGENCIES

Short humanitarian funding cycles, combined with the logistical challenges of administering learning assessments during emergencies, especially internationally comparable ones, means that data on learning outcomes in contexts of crisis, and in particular data disaggregated by gender, are limited. Progress is being made on the availability of learning-outcomes data and increasing numbers of early grade reading assessments are being conducted, often at a sub-national level. The emerging picture is one of very low outcomes for children affected by crisis, with girls often falling farthest behind.

UWEZO,<sup>21</sup> a citizen-led learning assessment program, ran an assessment in the refugee settlement areas in northern Uganda where they found that more than 90% of children in grade 3 were unable to read, comprehend, or divide. The results were equally poor for refugee and non-refugee children. The assessment also noted gender differences in learning outcomes among refugees and non-refugees, in most cases in favor of boys (UWEZO, 2018).

Girls' learning outcomes lag behind those of boys in many crisis-affected contexts, and gender dynamics both in the classroom and at home can limit girls' opportunities to learn. Alternative and complementary learning opportunities, such as girls-only remedial lessons, can help to close the gap by giving girls extra space and opportunity to learn together.

*Remedial [learning] has really helped us. When you've not understood a topic, madam comes and asks which topic you haven't understood and later explains well. But in school you even shy away from asking questions in class because many boys [already] understand, and they ridicule and look down upon you.*

—Female learner, Kakuma, from case study 3 in Annex 2

Source: WUSC & UNHCR (n.d.)

In 2019, six ECW grantees reported on learning outcomes (ECW, 2020). Grantees in Bangladesh conducted a baseline learning assessment of Myanmar refugee children ages 6 to 11 in mathematics, English, and the official Myanmar language, Burmese. The study found major deficiencies in English language skills and mathematics for refugees, and boys slightly outperformed girls in all subjects. In schools supported by ECW in northern Uganda, girls' pass rate in the national primary leavers' examination increased from 68% in 2017 to 81% in 2019; this reduced the gap between girls' and boys' pass rates from 13 percentage points to 6 percentage points. In a non-formal education catch-up program in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria, the percentage of students able to read increased dramatically, from 9% to 43%. In terms of number recognition, girls on average improved slightly more than boys (ECW, 2020).

21 The word "uwezo" means "capability" in Kiswahili.

The case study on the SOMGEP-T project in Somalia (see Box 9) illustrates how programs that address girls' learning need to combine academic support with community engagement in order to challenge deeply held beliefs around girls' potential to learn.

### Box 9 - Holistic support for girls' education in Somalia

Under UKAID's Girls' Education Challenge, SOMGEP-T has developed the capacity of community education committees (CECs) to identify and enroll out-of-school girls in the formal education system, or in either of two levels of AE, thus providing an opportunity for girls, over-age girls especially, to return to school. As part of program interventions, CECs, mothers, and religious leaders were encouraged to challenge negative perceptions about pastoralist girls as being "fated to fail," and to understand the value of education in enabling these girls to play a role in a healthy and thriving community. Tailored teacher professional development and follow-up coaching highlighted tools and techniques for continuous assessment and better support of students struggling with basic literacy and numeracy. The content was made more relevant through a collaboration with the MoE and area teachers, and new thinking on local and regional livelihood opportunities was introduced through entrepreneurship. In addition, to address students' wellbeing, SOMGEP-T worked with the MoE Gender Focal Points and girls' empowerment forums to select a cadre of mentors to develop resilience competencies among pastoralist girls that would combat isolation and exclusion and reinforce peer-to-peer support within and across communities.

The combination of (i) academic support, including remedial classes; (ii) girls' leadership skills development, peer support networks, and girl-led action to support struggling students; and (iii) follow-up visits by CECs to pastoralist households had a positive impact on girls' attendance, learning, and retention. SOMGEP-T improved transition rates by 11 percentage points in 24 months, compared to a gain of 7.8 percentage points in comparison communities (Miettunen, 2020). Even amid unforeseen external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and state-mandated school restrictions, 96% of pastoralist girls tracked by SOMGEP-T continue to learn at home, and 49% are spending more than two hours a day on schoolwork, despite a noted increase in household chores (CARE, 2020).

For full details, see [case study 2 in Annex 2](#)

## 4.4 FORCED DISPLACEMENT: NO PROGRESS FOR GIRLS AND A WIDENING GAP WITH BOYS

Forced displacement can have serious implications for children's education. Although some children may benefit from moving to a country with a stronger education system, the impact of such a move is usually negative, particularly for girls. UNHCR (2020b) reports that at least 85% of refugees are now in LMICs, that 40% of displaced people are children, and that 48% of school-age refugees are out of school (UNHCR, 2020a). In the 12 countries for which there are enough data to monitor refugee education rigorously, 1.8 million children are out of school (UNHCR, 2020a).<sup>22</sup> UNHCR also reports that, while refugee boys' secondary enrollment has improved over the last year, girls' enrollment has stagnated.

At the primary level, 77% of refugees were enrolled in school in 2019, the same as in 2018. Enrollment at the secondary level increased by two percentage points in 2019, to 31%. UNHCR notes, however, that this increase was almost entirely among boys. This means that 36% of refugee boys are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 27% of girls (UNHCR, 2020a). A Malala Fund analysis of UNHCR indicates that half of all refugee girls who were in secondary school before the COVID-19 pandemic are unlikely to return to school once they reopen and that, in countries where fewer than 10% of refugee girls were enrolled in secondary school, all are now at risk of dropping out (UNHCR, 2020a). Higher education rates are unchanged, with 3% of refugees enrolled in technical and vocational education and training or in university courses.

The case study on supporting girls' education in Kenyan refugee camps (see Box 10) illustrates a holistic approach to overcoming the multiple barriers to education experienced by refugee girls.

<sup>22</sup> Chad, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda.

## Box 10 - Integrating complimentary education programs and community mobilization efforts in Kenyan refugee camps

The Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps have existed for 29 years in geographically remote and disadvantaged arid and semi-arid land areas in northern Kenya. The Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP), now in its second iteration, is a five-year intervention implemented by World University Service Canada and Windle International Kenya, and funded by the UK Girls' Education Challenge (GEC). The vision of KEEP II is to create conditions for learning that will enable approximately 20,673 marginalized girls from Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps and the surrounding vulnerable host communities to improve their learning and socioeconomic outcomes. All recipients of KEEP II meet the GEC "highly marginalized" criteria: they are facing significant barriers to education due to poverty, negative sociocultural attitudes, early marriage and early pregnancy, the burden of doing extensive household chores, and/or a lack of parental support.

KEEP II seeks to address both supply-side and demand-side barriers to girls' education, and remains adaptable to a fluid context and lessons learned. KEEP II focuses on adolescent girls, who face the highest risk of school dropout when transitioning from primary to secondary education. The project offers a wide variety of interventions, including teacher training, conditional cash transfers, scholarships, life-skills training, and remedial classes. These interventions address the interrelated challenges of poor academic performance and low levels of community support for girls' education. Community support is essential, and KEEP has reached more than 500 boards of management and parent-teacher associations. Parents are offered one-day information sessions during which they can engage in dialogue with teachers and come to understand the challenges affecting girls' attendance and performance in school. More importantly, KEEP mobilizes community champions, such as local and national government representatives and community leaders, particularly men who are religious or cultural leaders. Young women, whom the adolescents trust and can look to help them think through or address competing concerns and pressures, are engaged as community mobilizers. These young women often are highly effective in tracking potential at-risk girls and those prone to dropout, and in conducting follow-up at their homes if needed, monitoring progress, and linking remedial interventions to the community.

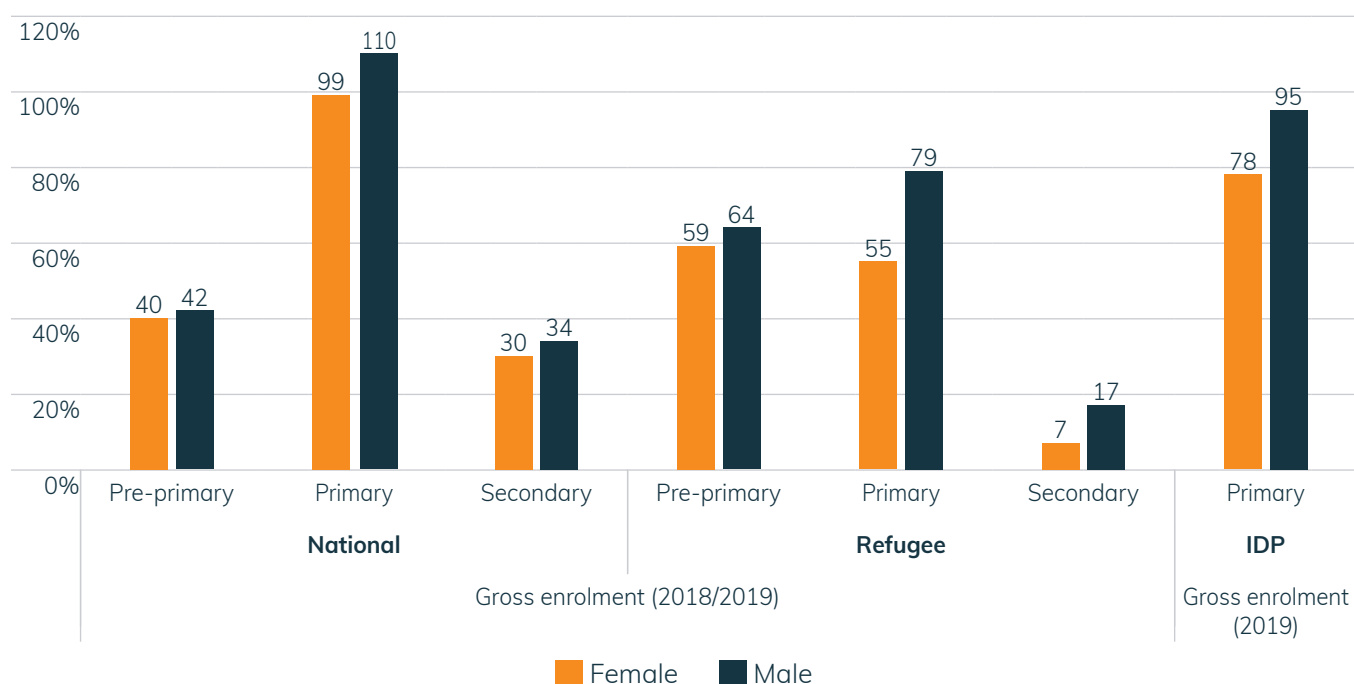
For full details, see [case study 3 in Annex 2](#)

There are few data available on the education situation of IDPs, certainly not enough to make rigorous estimates of their global enrollment rates. However, analysis by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in sub-Saharan Africa indicates that internally displaced girls are again more disadvantaged than boys. For example, among IDPs surveyed in Mogadishu, Somalia, who were over age five, only 22% of girls had ever attended school, compared to 37% of boys and 42% of children overall in the host community. Again in Somalia, among children displaced by persistent drought in 2017 and 2018, although displaced girls had higher enrollment rates than boys before displacement, their enrollment rate fell from 45% to 29% once they were displaced. In contrast, boys' enrollment increased from 29% to 41% after displacement (IDMC, 2020b).

Ethiopia is one of the few countries with relatively strong data available on both refugees' and IDPs' education. Figure 10 shows the gross enrollment ratios by gender at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels, at the national level and for refugees; it includes gender-disaggregated primary attendance data for IDPs. The data from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education (2019) and IOM (2020) show that boys perform better than girls at all stages of education, particularly among refugees. At the national level, there are 11 boys in primary school to every 10 girls; among refugees there are 14 boys to every 10 girls; and among IDPs there are 12 boys to every 10 girls. At the secondary level, among refugees there are 25 boys to every 10 girls in school. Of note is that refugee girls in Ethiopia on average appear to have better access to pre-primary education than the national average. Although it may appear that IDPs have greater access to primary education than refugees, these figures should be treated with caution as they are not comparable: the IDP figure is a measure of access to education, whereas the refugee figure indicates gross enrollment.



**Figure 10 - Access to education for displaced people in Ethiopia by gender, compared to national averages**



Source: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education (2019), and IOM (2020). IDP access is calculated by combining primary access figures with gender-disaggregated enrollment totals.

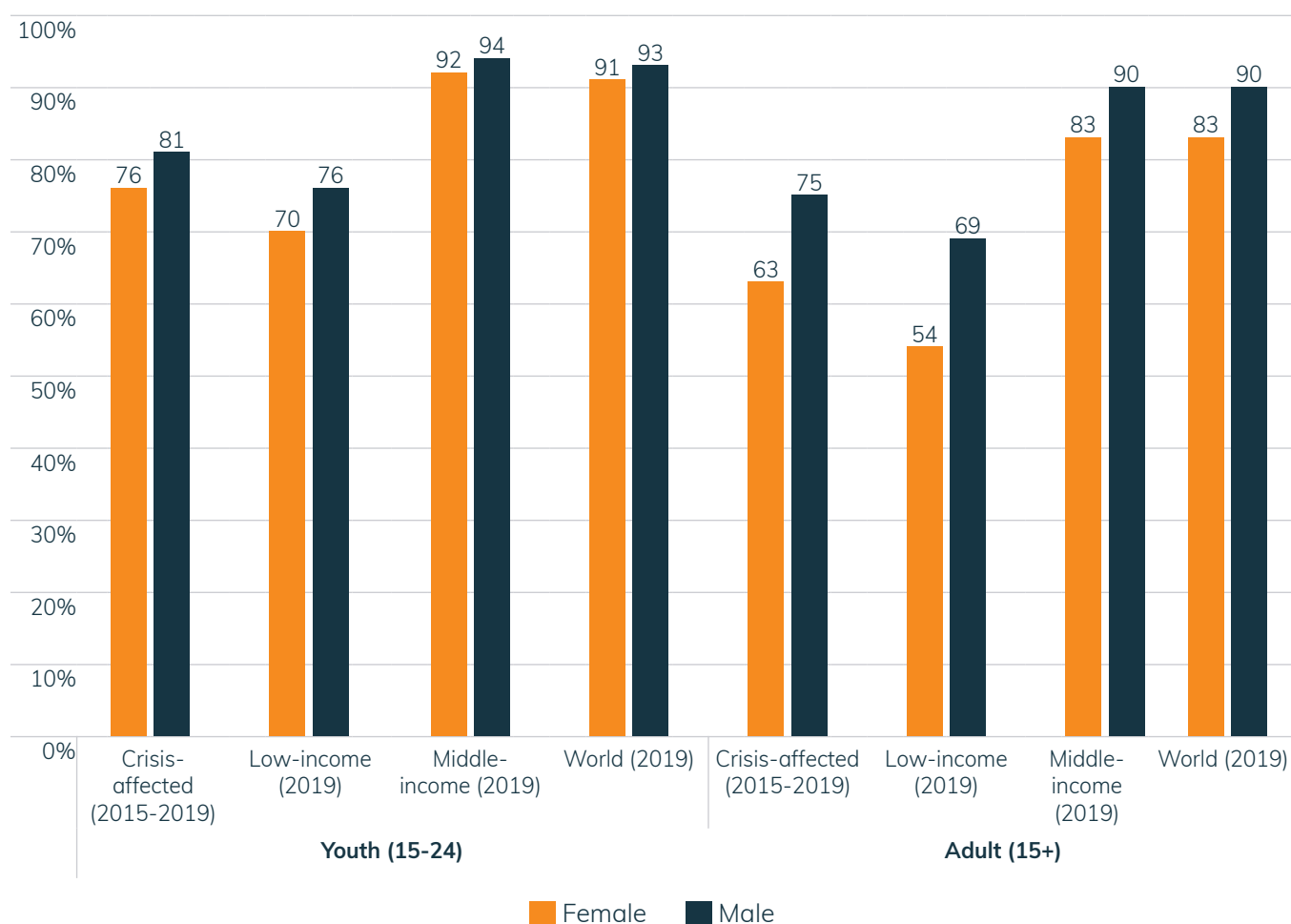
Efforts are under way to improve the sex-disaggregated education data collected on refugees and IDPs; at present, reporting is inconsistent. For example, in its strategy for inclusion, UNHCR is committed to providing MoEs with refugee education data disaggregated by age and sex across the education cycle (UNHCR, 2019b). It has worked with governments to include this in their education management information system data, as was done in Ethiopia. UNHCR is working to address the challenge of collating sex-disaggregated education data for refugees, but gaps remain. In its 2018 global report, UNHCR reported sex-disaggregated data on children and youth enrolled in primary and tertiary education; no data were available on secondary education (UNHCR, 2019c), and the 2019 report did not report any sex-disaggregated education data (UNHCR, 2020c). Challenges include the integration of data on refugees and IDPs into national education management information systems, funding, and information management capacity sector-wide.

## 4.5 ADULT WOMEN AND FEMALE YOUTH LAG FAR BEHIND IN LITERACY

Figure 11 shows literacy rates in crisis-affected countries versus averages for LMICs and globally.<sup>23</sup> Both women and men in crisis-affected countries are slightly ahead of the average in low-income countries but far behind middle-income countries and global averages. Women are behind men in all categories. For youth, the gap is largest in low-income and crisis-affected countries, five and six percentage points, respectively, compared to two percentage points in middle-income countries and the global average. The pattern is similar for adults; the gap is 12 percentage points in favor of men in crisis contexts, 15 in low-income countries, and 7 in middle-income countries and the global average.

<sup>23</sup> Percentage of the age group who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday life.

**Figure 11 - Youth and adult literacy in crisis-affected countries compared to LMICs and globally**

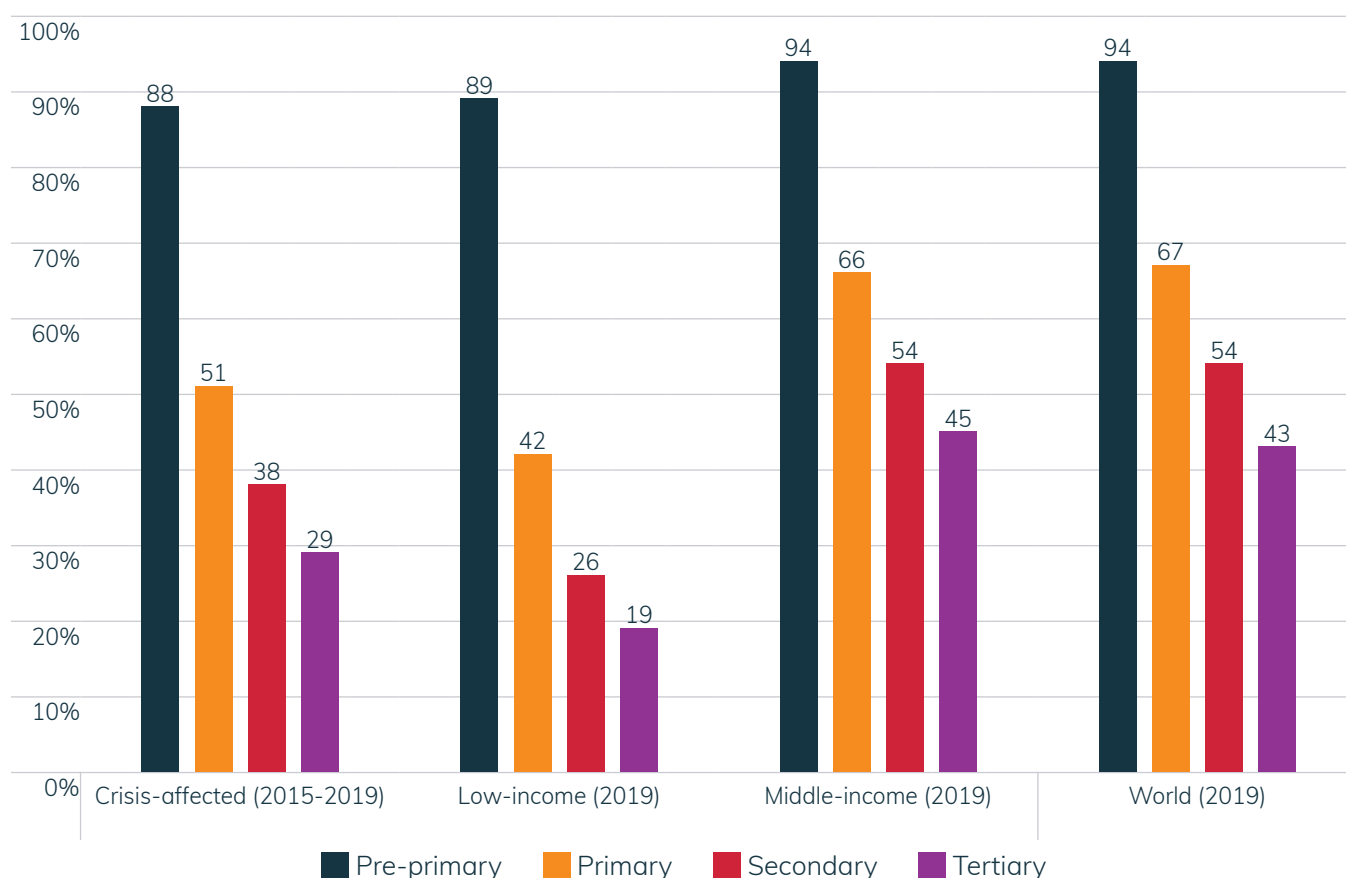


Source: UIS. (n.d.) UIS.Stat. Crisis-affected averages based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2019). Retrieved November 24, 2020.

## 4.6 MORE FEMALE TEACHERS ARE NEEDED AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

The presence of female teachers in schools has been linked to girls' higher enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes (Naylor & Gorgen, 2020). The average percentage of teachers who are female by level of education in crisis-affected countries follows the same pattern as the rest of the world, although there are different absolute levels (see Figure 12). There are far more female than male teachers in crisis-affected countries at the pre-primary level, but their numbers decline to a minority at the tertiary level. Significantly, at the secondary level, only 38% of teachers in crisis-affected countries are female, compared to just over 50% in middle-income countries and the global average. The number in low-income countries is even lower, 26%. Some countries fall well below this level; in Chad, only 7.9% of secondary teachers are female, 11.2% in Mauritania.

**Figure 12 - Percentage of teachers in crisis-affected countries who are female, compared to LMICs and global averages (2015-2019)**



Source: UIS. (n.d.) UIS.Stat. Crisis-affected averages based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2020). Retrieved November 24, 2020.

The situation appears even worse in many refugee camps and settlements. In Kenya, 20% of teachers in the refugee camps at the primary and lower secondary levels are female.<sup>24</sup> In Ethiopia, only around 5% of teachers of refugees in camps in the north and west of the country are female (Bengtsson et al., 2020).

Some agencies have made a deliberate effort to increase the proportion of trained female teachers, but in contexts where few women complete a secondary education, recruiting women into teacher-training courses is an ongoing challenge. In South Sudan, UNHCR worked with the government to enroll 510 teachers, of whom 122 were female, in a pre-service teacher-training program (UNHCR, 2020c). While women made up less than a quarter of all trainees, the proportion of female teachers trained still represented an improvement on the gender balance of teachers in refugee contexts in the region. ECW set a target for 2019 of 47% of female teachers and administrators participating in trainings supported by the fund. It achieved a 44% rate across the 25 countries where it has programs, with some notable successes (e.g., 53% of teachers trained in Afghanistan were female), but it faces ongoing challenges elsewhere: in Chad, only 20% of those trained were female, and in Uganda none of the 514 individuals trained were reported to be female (ECW, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR 2019 country data for Dadaab and Kakuma camps and Kalobeyei settlement.

## Box 11 - Afghanistan MoE and GPE working together on female teachers' and girls' education

In July 2020, the MoE in Afghanistan received support from the GPE to roll out its response and recovery plan to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, particularly for girls and other vulnerable students. This included support for recruiting 1,500 new teachers, in particular female teachers, and the provision of in-service training to support teachers in using child-centered, inclusive methodologies and to assess students' skills continuously. This grant will also support teachers and school *shuras*—school management councils—in carrying out a local campaign to increase access to education for those engaged in child labor and for girls at risk of early marriage, and to provide accelerated and remedial learning classes to 312,500 children, with a particular focus on girls, IDPs, and returnees. These measures reflect a “building back better” approach to gender and equity and could be a turning point for the female teaching workforce, not only by mitigating the effects of the pandemic but also by reducing a historic gender gap in primary education.

For full details, see [case study 4 in Annex 2](#)

## 4.7 WOMEN'S ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN DISPLACEMENT AND CRISIS

Women in crisis-affected countries have significantly lower access to tertiary education than women in LMICs and other countries. Women also have less access to tertiary education than men in crisis-affected countries, with only 20.2% enrolled compared to 21.0% of men. This is better than in low-income countries, where women lag four percentage points behind men; in middle-income countries and world averages, women are five percentage points ahead of men (see Figure 13). Again, inequalities vary from country to country; for example, there is 54% gross enrollment of women in tertiary education in Palestine, compared to 33% for men, and in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea there is 35% enrollment for men but only 18% for women.

Figure 13 - Gross enrollment in tertiary education



Source: UIS. (n.d.) UIS.Stat. Crisis-affected averages based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2019). Retrieved November 26, 2020.

The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) supports thousands of refugees' access to higher education in their host countries. In 2018, 41% of DAFI scholarships supported female scholars, but with big regional differences. In the Middle East and North Africa, 53% of DAFI scholars were female, compared to only 37% in Asia and the Pacific, and in sub-Saharan Africa, where most DAFI scholars are hosted, only 31% were female (UNHCR, 2019d). In many contexts, the low proportion of female refugees who earn the required secondary education credential can make it challenging to achieve gender equality in tertiary scholarship schemes (Grech, 2019).

Common strategies to increase access to higher education in contexts of crisis and forced displacement are the use of connected learning, and of offering courses that blend distance learning from an accredited university

with local face-to-face learning. Relatively little attention has been paid to monitoring the gendered aspects of connected or blended learning in higher education, in terms of both female access to digital technologies and their uptake and use in learning (Naylor & Gorgen, 2020). Opportunity costs are often greater for women (WUSC/EUMC, 2019) and there are cultural barriers to distance higher education, such as higher education being seen to position women as unmarried (Grech, 2019).

Innovations to address higher education opportunities for women in refugee camps include providing spaces for nursing mothers, allowing repeat of grades missed due to childbirth, supporting child care, and providing water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, all in addition to providing a safe learning environment (Grech, 2019). Outreach is often needed to identify potential candidates for continued learning, along with offering mentorship opportunities through peer or older female mentors and, in some cases, lowering formal entrance requirements and taking women's non-academic experience into consideration as part of the selection process (Giles, 2018). In Kibiza camp in Rwanda, a women's leadership program run by Kepler University provides preparatory courses to motivate and inspire young women to continue learning and to apply for degree courses. Kepler's program has achieved gender parity in enrollment in its courses—a considerable achievement in overcoming female disadvantage in education. By comparison, in the same context, only 31% of recipients of the UNHCR DAFI scholarship for higher education studies were female (Dushime et al., 2019).

## 4.8 GIRLS LEFT BEHIND IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Girls and women are also underrepresented in vocational education and training. In crisis-affected countries, just 3.3% of women ages 15 to 24 are in vocational education, compared to 4.1% of men, a difference of 20% (see Figure 14). This is slightly better than in low-income countries, where 25% fewer women than men are enrolled in vocational training, but far behind middle-income countries, which have 11% fewer women, or the global average of 14% fewer. (See Box 12 for a case study on skills training for female refugees in Jordan).

**Figure 14 - Proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education**



Source: UIS. (n.d.) UIS.Stat. Crisis-affected averages calculated based on latest data points for crisis-affected countries (2015-2019). Retrieved January 13, 2021.

## Box 12 - Skills training for young female refugees in Jordan

An estimated 15,000 young Syrian women ages 15-32 currently live in refugee camps in Jordan. Refugee adolescents and youth face multiple barriers to formal livelihood opportunities and have different motivations for learning new skills and competencies. Female youth face social and cultural barriers to education and work, and are often discouraged by family members to look for employment outside the camps.

The NRC Jordan Youth Programme (JYP) is the largest scale structured learning opportunity open to Syrian youth in camps. JYP supports young people above the age of compulsory formal education (16) to follow livelihoods, social engagement, and further education pathways. An independent evaluation of JYP by the Women's Refugee Commission (2016) found that 100% of female participants said their self-confidence had improved as a direct result of this program.

In 2020, NRC piloted a carpentry course for young women. It adapted the curriculum to be more relevant and appealing to female youth, and to inspire them to think outside of traditional roles by showing the utility of learning a skill, as compared to making traditional products to sell or buy (e.g., constructing fences rather than jewelry boxes). JYP youth centers offer female-only learning spaces, female-designated wash and sanitation facilities, and daycare facilities. This increases the number of female youth who participate in the program, as well as the number of female trainers and facilitators available. Older female facilitators and youth graduates engage in significant outreach in the community, holding open days at the centers and meeting with families to talk about the importance of girls learning new skills and competencies, as well as finding peer support and mentorship. Over time, these elements have contributed to an increase in retention and completion rates in NRC's programming. Furthermore, NRC data show that 25% of female program participants are likely to pursue further learning opportunities, 17% report volunteering more in their communities, and 16% report using their skills to find work, although the latter is challenging, given the limited opportunities available in the camps.

For full details, see [case study 6 in Annex 2](#)





# CHAPTER 5. FUNDING TO EDUCATION IN CRISIS-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

## Key findings

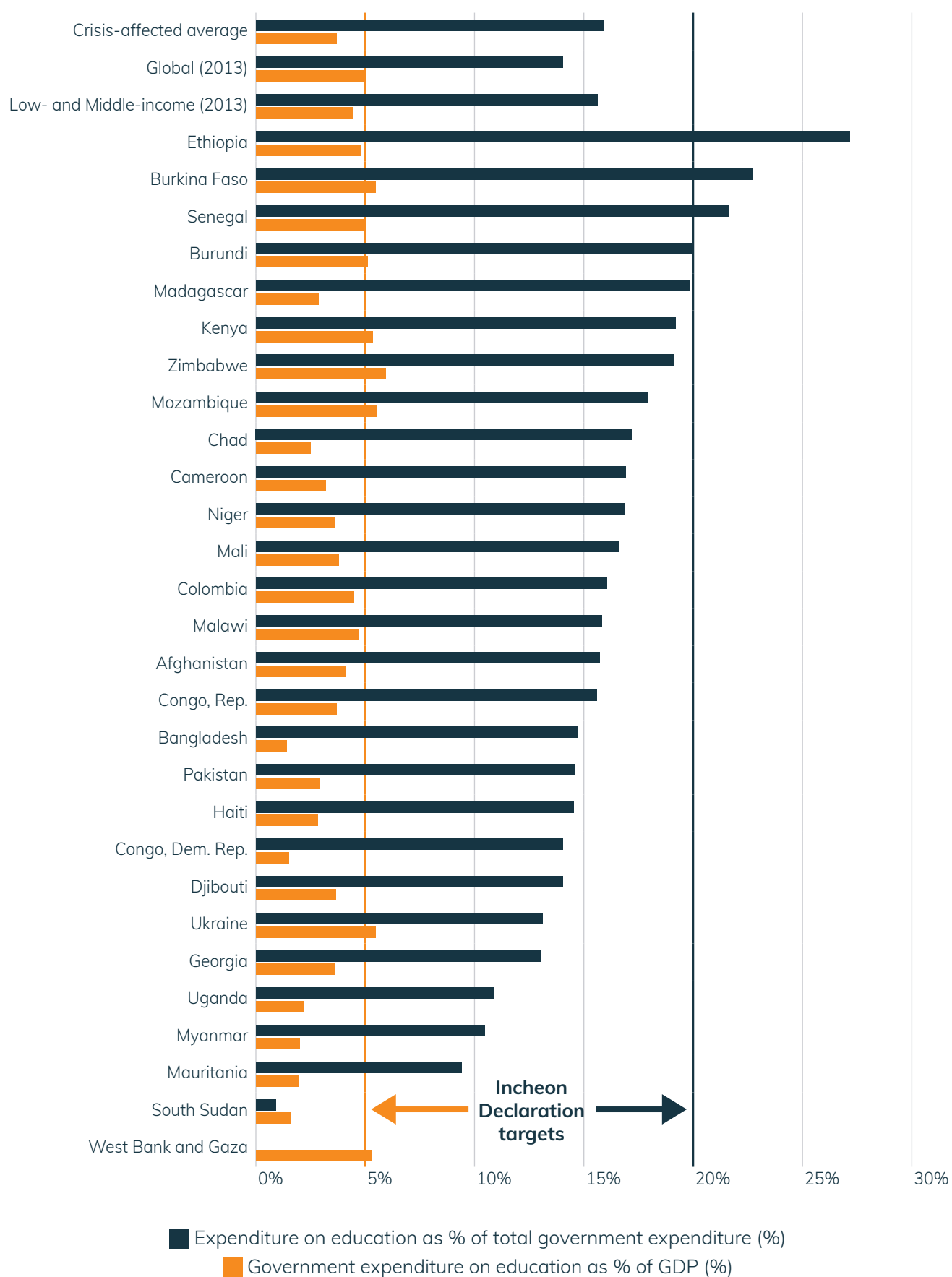
- Few crisis-affected countries meet the education spending targets set out in the Incheon Declaration of at least 20% of government expenditures or 5% of GDP.
- The proportion of humanitarian aid focused on education has increased over the last five years from 1% in 2014 to 2.9% in 2019
- An increasing proportion of aid to post-basic education in crisis-affected countries is focused on gender equality and women's empowerment; more than half the aid to secondary education in these countries is focused on gender.
- The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education has acted as a catalyst in generating international funding that targets girls' and women's education and training in contexts of conflict and crisis.

It is challenging to track total funding to girls' education in emergencies and protracted crises based on national public expenditure and international aid reporting mechanisms. Data are not yet available on how much recent funding, national or international, was directed specifically toward supporting girls' education during crises. This section presents the data that are available on funding for education in crisis-affected countries, first national expenditure, and then humanitarian expenditure. It then tracks international education aid to crisis-affected countries that specifically targets gender equality and women's empowerment. This section also includes examples of multilateral funding mechanisms for education in crises that have prioritized girls' and women's EiE through dedicated funding and internal policies.

## 5.1 NATIONAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Many crisis-affected countries are not reaching international education spending targets. The Incheon Declaration states that at least 20% of each government's expenditures or 5% of GDP should be spent on education (UNESCO, 2015). The Declaration also states that low-income countries may need to supersede these targets. Of the 28 countries with recent data (2015 to 2019), only three meet the first target and only seven meet the second (see Figure 15); only Burkina Faso meets both targets. On average, crisis-affected countries spend 15.8% of their national annual budgets on education, or 3.7% of GDP. This means that, to reach the minimum spending target, crisis-affected countries need to increase government education expenditure by 36%; to reach the minimum proportion of the GDP spent on education, they need to increase expenditure by 27%. Crisis-affected countries on average direct a greater proportion of their national spending toward education than the global or LMIC averages but a lower proportion of their GDP. Only one country has data available for 2019, so it is not yet possible to assess changes since the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education.

**Figure 15 - Government education expenditure in crisis-affected countries versus Incheon Declaration requirements (latest available data, 2015-2019)**



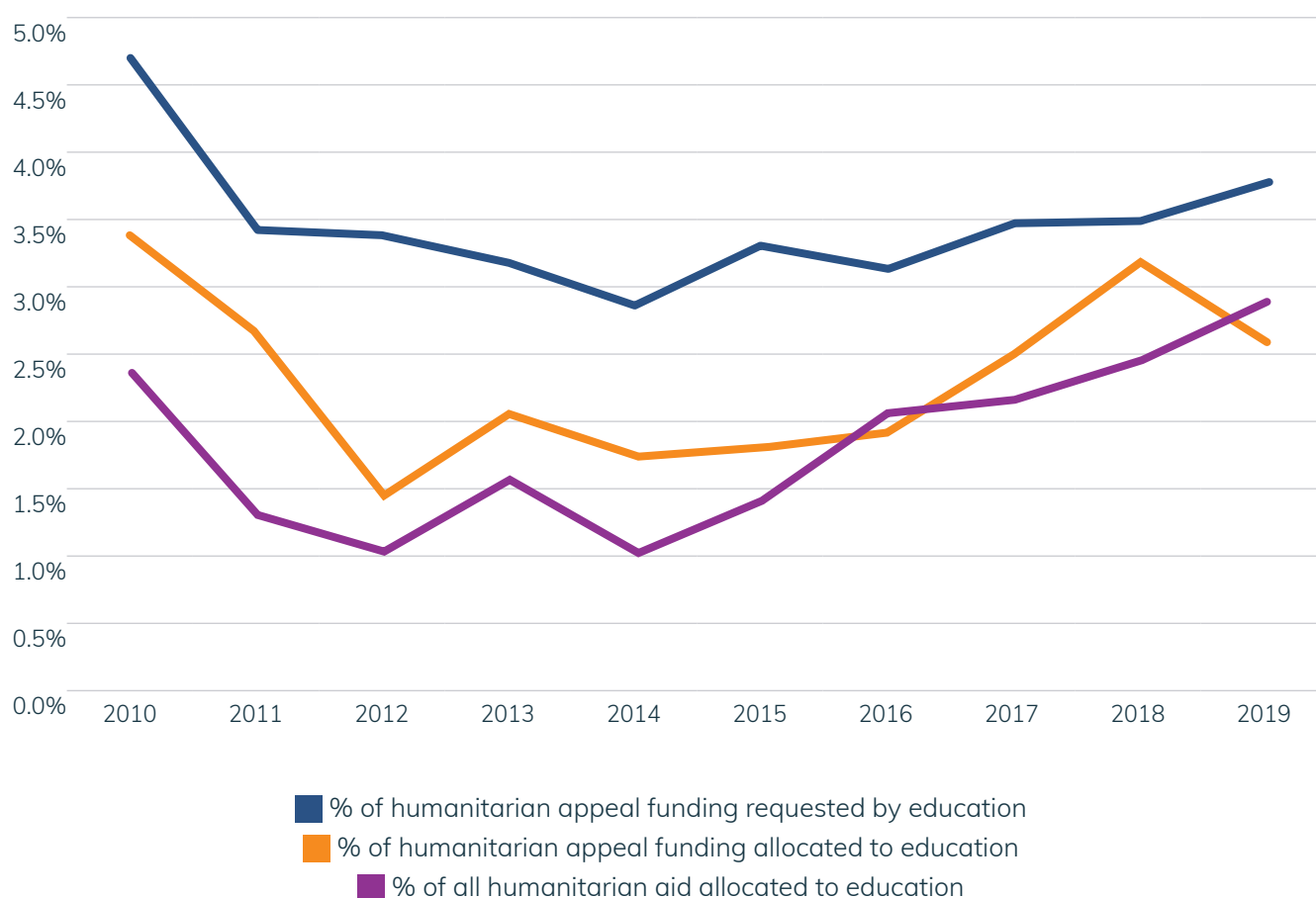
Sources: UIS. (n.d.) UIS.Stat. and World Bank. (n.d.). Education Statistics (EdStats). Both retrieved November 23, 2020.

## 5.2 INTERNATIONAL EXPENDITURE

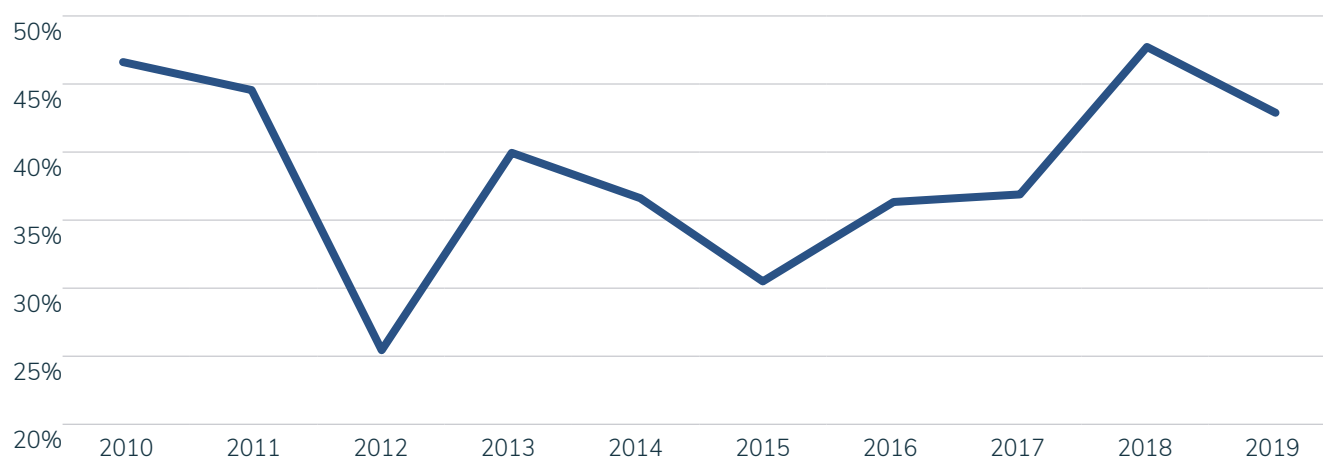
This section analyzes global humanitarian aid to education using data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking Service (UN OCHA FTS), which tracks global humanitarian aid. The challenge in using FTS is that it is a voluntary reporting mechanism, thus much of what is reported is not specified by individual sector. It instead is tagged as multi-sector or sector not specified, or various sectors are grouped together (e.g., when projects combine to address education, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene). Using this database, it is not possible to assess how much humanitarian aid is targeting girls and women. In situations where more boys and men are participating in education than girls and women, as is the case in many contexts of crisis and forced displacement (see section 4), education funding delivered without a strong focus on gender equity tends to benefit boys and men disproportionately.

Humanitarian appeals are increasingly calling for more aid to education than to other sectors. In 2014, 2.9% of humanitarian appeals were for aid to education, compared to 3.8% in 2019 (see Figure 16). However, analysis shows that, although it is rising steadily, the proportion of aid that goes to education has gone from a low of 1% in 2014 to 2.9% in 2019. Moreover, the proportion of the education requests that are met fluctuates from year to year. In 2012, only 25% of requests for aid to education were met, compared to 47% in 2018 (see Figure 17).

**Figure 16 - Proportion of humanitarian aid to education, 2010-2019**



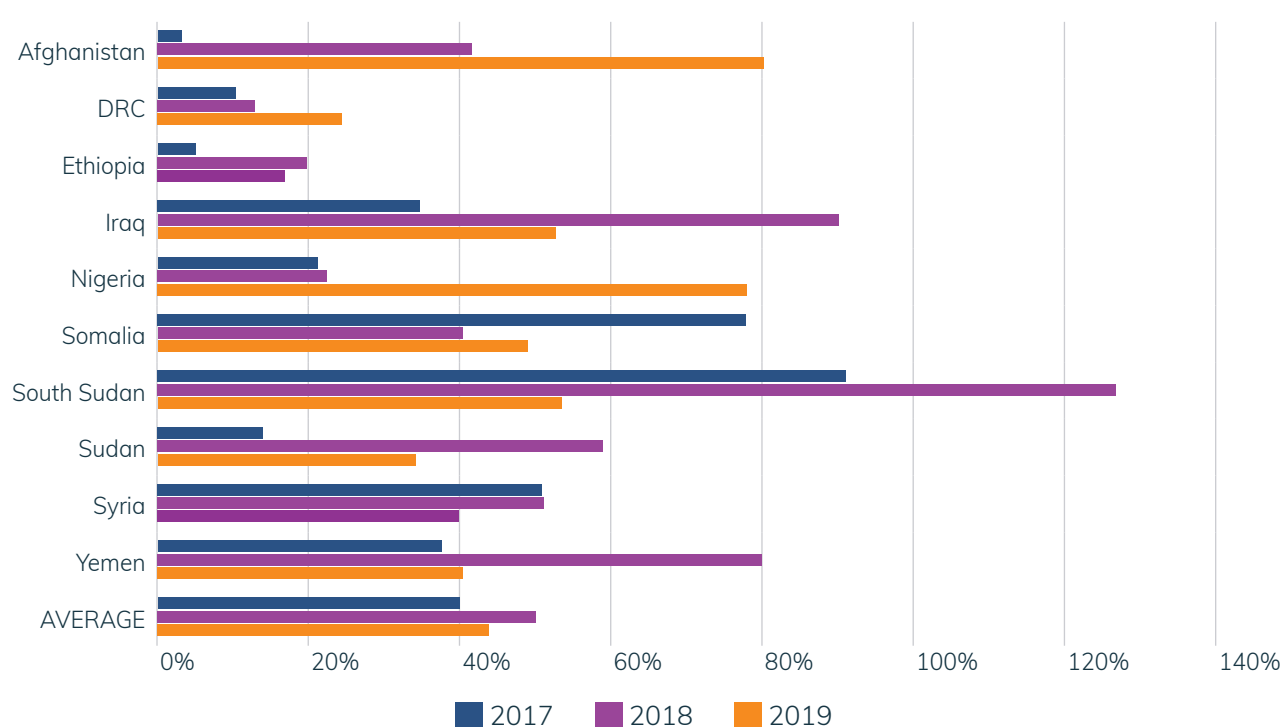
**Figure 17 - Proportion of education humanitarian funding appeals funded, 2010-2019**



Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service (2020a), retrieved October 8, 2020.

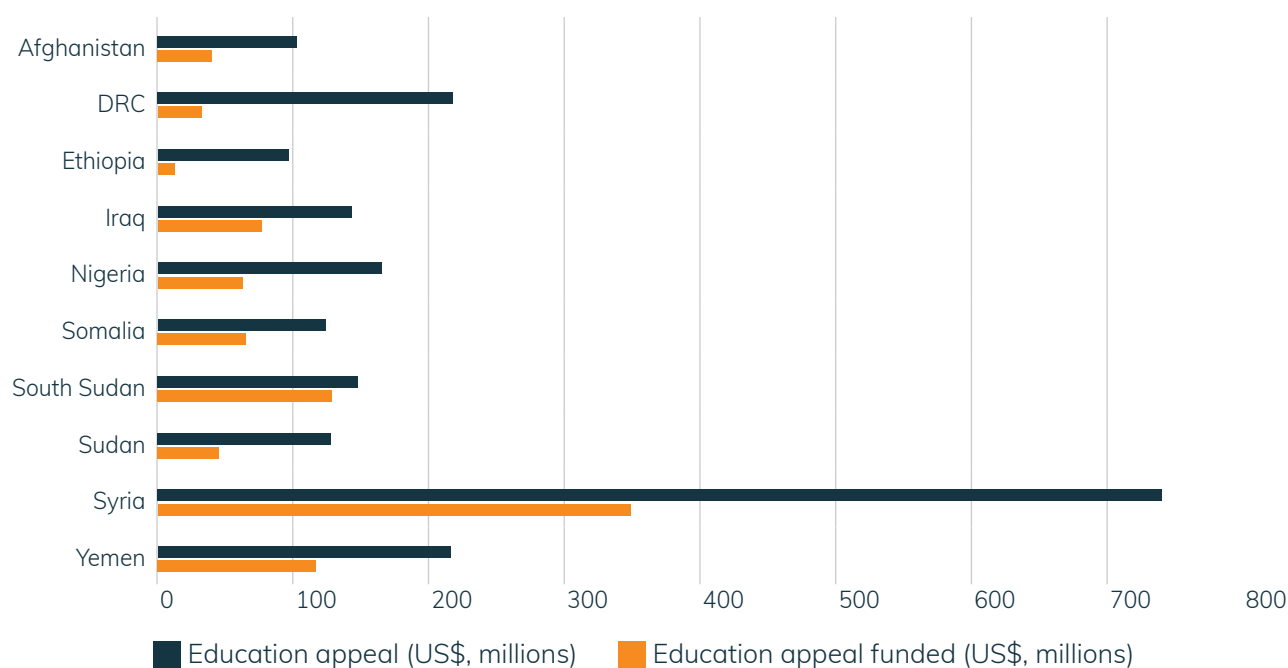
Analysis of trends in humanitarian aid to the ten countries with the largest recent humanitarian appeals shows that the proportion of education appeals funded fluctuates over time and varies greatly from country to country, and some countries are apparently neglected. From 2017 to 2019, the ten countries with the largest humanitarian appeals overall were Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Between them, they requested more than \$2 billion specifically for education, of which less than half (45%) was met overall; the range was from 14% in Ethiopia to 88% in South Sudan. The percentages fluctuated significantly over time within countries; for example, Sudan received 14% of its education appeal in 2017, 59% in 2018, and 34% in 2019 (see Figure 18). The lack of donor coordination and individual prioritization of particular crises means that funding of appeals is often unpredictable; some countries are forgotten almost entirely. The DRC, for example, requested \$218 million in 2017-2019 but received less than \$34 million, a mere 15% of the amount requested. In fact, over the three-year period, only four of the ten countries received half their total requests (Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen) (see Figure 19).

**Figure 18 - Percentage of education humanitarian appeals funded, ten largest appeals, 2017-2019**



Source: UN OCHA (2020a), retrieved July 27, 2020.

**Figure 19 - Total education appeals and amount funded, 2017-2019**



Source: UN OCHA (2020a), retrieved July 27, 2020.

Humanitarian aid during the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be putting a low priority on education. FTS estimates that education makes up 3.3% of all requests under the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, but only 6.7% of the funds requested have been received, which means that only 0.7% of the humanitarian funds requested under the plan have gone to education.<sup>25</sup>

The humanitarian aid architecture is designed to provide immediate support both during and in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. Thus, it is well positioned to ensure that girls do not lose access to the protective power of education during a crisis. However, short humanitarian funding cycles mean that aid can be an inefficient and ineffective means of providing funds to ensure that girls continue and complete their education, especially when a crisis becomes protracted. Remedying this requires coordination of funding within the humanitarian aid sector and coordination between humanitarian and development actors, as well as long-term strengthening of national education systems' ability to respond to shocks.

The creation of ECW (see Box 13) was a major step forward in creating a funding mechanism dedicated specifically to EiE. Its multi-year funding mechanism creates a bridge from humanitarian support to development aid. GPE (see Box 14) has evolved from a fund focused entirely on development that originally was accessible only to relatively stable countries (Menashy & Dryden Peterson, 2015) to a fund that predominantly supports conflict-affected countries. It provides accelerated funding to its partner countries that are responding to emergencies, thereby extending a bridge from development aid to responsive humanitarian support.

A full analysis of the current state of and progress and gaps in the coordination of aid to EiE goes beyond the scope of this report and is documented elsewhere (e.g., see Overseas Development Institute, 2020).

## 5.3 FUNDING GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

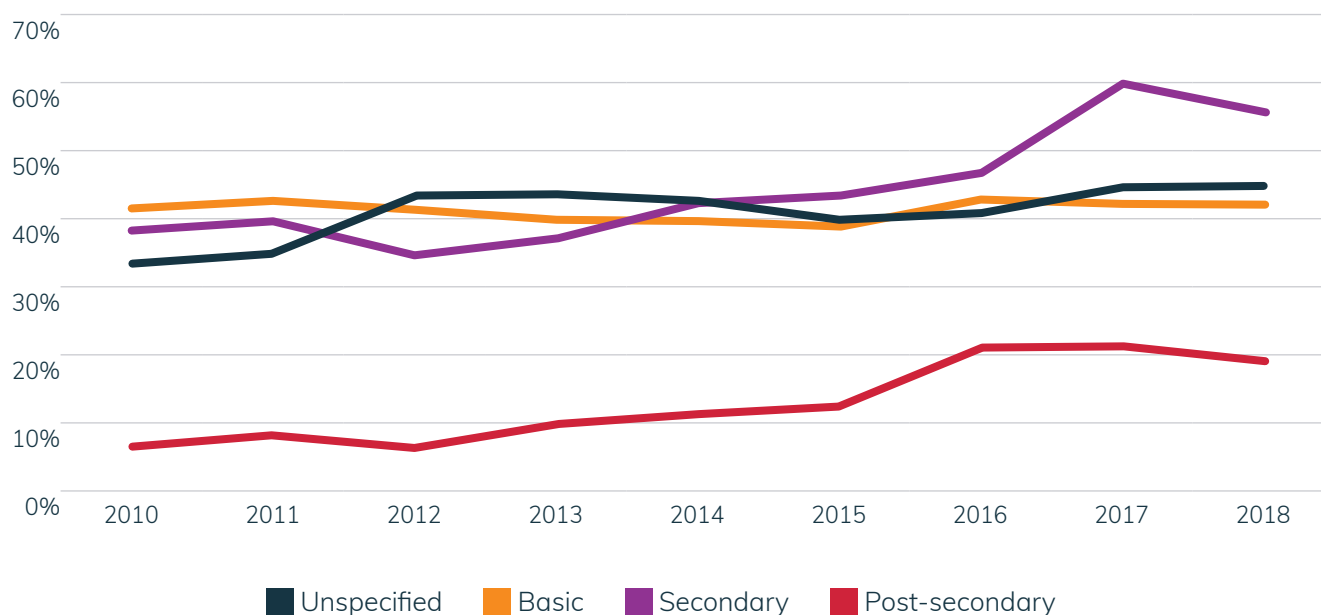
The Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education recognized the need for greater coordination between humanitarian assistance and development. It has inspired a number of governments and multilateral organizations to make a significant financial commitment to supporting girls' and women's education in crises (see section 1.2). Specific funds that support education along the humanitarian-development continuum have a strong focus on gender, thus they track funding and results for girls' education in crises (see Boxes 13, 14). Some donors have funding streams dedicated to girls' education, such as the UK-funded GEC, whose beneficiaries include those living in contexts of crisis or forced displacement.

<sup>25</sup> UN OCHA FTS, accessed October 14, 2020, <https://fts.unocha.org/>.

However, aside from analyzing multiple individual funds, it is not yet possible to track overall international aid to education for girls and women in contexts of crisis, through either humanitarian or development aid tracking systems. The UN OCHA FTS does not include a gender marker. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender marker does use a 0-2 scale to code whether or not a humanitarian project is designed to benefit females and males equally, and also whether it will advance gender equality, which is mandatory in coordinated humanitarian appeals (INEE & UNGEI, 2019). However, this mandate is not yet routinely included in all education cluster response plans. Routine use of the gender marker would generate the data necessary to include it in the UNOCHA FTS and make it easier to track progress on gender-responsive humanitarian aid to education.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Creditor Reporting System (CRS) does track whether development aid targets gender equality and women's empowerment. Analysis of OECD findings shows that the proportion of development aid focused on gender equality and women's empowerment in education in the 44 crisis-affected countries has been rising steadily since 2010. It has risen at the secondary level from 36% in 2010 to 54% in 2018, and at the post-secondary level from 5% to 17% (see Figure 20). The one exception is at the basic education level, which has remained at around 40%. It should be noted that not all 44 countries will have been affected by crisis throughout the entire reporting period, nor is it clear what proportion of this funding is directed to crisis-affected populations within these countries.

**Figure 20 - Proportion of education aid that targeted gender equality and women's empowerment, 2010-2018**



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, retrieved October 10, 2020.

### Box 13 - Education Cannot Wait

**ECW** is a fund that specifically targets EiE. Its aim is to ensure that funding to education can be released as a part of first response, as well as through reliable multi-year funding. Since its inception in 2016, ECW has mobilized around \$600 million to support EiE (ECW, 2020). ECW published a gender-equality policy and accountability framework in which it commits to ensuring that its resources are used to deliver gender-responsive approaches to education (ECW, 2020). All ECW investments require a target of gender parity in enrollment at all levels. In its multi-year programs, ECW has committed to reaching more girls than boys, with up to 60% female beneficiaries. It has also set targets to increase the proportion of female teachers and administrators trained in the programs it funds. Achieving these targets in the face of the large existing gender gaps remains a challenge (ECW, 2020).



## Box 14 - Global Partnership for Education

The **GPE** is the largest global fund solely dedicated to transforming education in lower-income countries. It also puts high priority on supporting conflict- and crisis-affected countries. About half of its partner countries (32 of 68) are classified as “partner countries affected by fragility and conflict,” and they received 76% of all active implementation grants in 2019 (GPE, 2020a). GPE also prioritizes gender equality: in 2019, it allocated \$54.9 million to gender equality, which represents 14.5% of its funding to improve equity. This sum was in addition to GPE funding for other activities that supported girls’ equity as part of a broader group of beneficiaries. GPE has supported 28 partner countries’ engagement in gender-responsive education planning workshops co-convened with the UNGEI and its partners. GPE is also funding an expanded suite of support that includes the development of gender-responsive sector planning tools and minimum standards for gender-responsive implementation grants. This work is designed to complement the G7 Gender at the Centre Initiative (GPE, 2020a).

In summary, neither the UN OCHA FTS nor the OECD CRS is categorized in ways that make it possible to reliably monitor international expenditure on girls’ education in conflict and crisis contexts. Much of the humanitarian aid recorded on the FTS is not disaggregated by sector and there is no gender marker, so while we know spending is going to crises, the extent to which it is targeting education for women and girls it is not clear. While the Common Humanitarian Action Plan and Consolidated Appeals Process seek to harmonize the flow of funding in emergency situations to ensure that the needs of populations are met, appeals often are not fully funded. Other funders also contribute to education in crisis-affected and protracted crisis situations outside the coordinated appeals process, including international and national NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. This complicates the ability to get a full picture of what funding is going where and to which populations.

While the gender marker, as recorded by the OECD CRS, gives an indication of where development aid is targeted toward girls and women, the extent to which it is funding education in crisis contexts it is not clear. The OECD CRS includes humanitarian aid but it is not categorized by sector. Improved tracking mechanisms that are viewable by sector (including cross-cutting sectors such as gender) would provide greater transparency and accountability to affected populations.



## CHAPTER 6. SUMMARY OF GAPS AND PROGRESS

### 6.1 GAPS IN PROVISION

While many crisis-affected countries have achieved or are moving toward gender parity, gender remains a significant determinant of access to education among the most marginalized, especially the lowest income households, people with disabilities, refugees, and forcibly displaced persons. The gender gap in access to education for refugees remains large, and recent data indicate that the situation for girls is not showing the same degree of progress as has been seen at the national level in crisis-affected countries.

Once in school, girls' opportunities to learn may be restricted by gender dynamics in the classroom and at home, which causes them to fall behind boys in learning. More gender-responsive approaches to EiE are needed to address these gaps. Poor learning outcomes in crisis contexts for boys and girls alike indicate a significant gap between the quality of education they receive and the quality of education they need. Moreover, older girls and women in emergency contexts have limited opportunities to acquire new skills through TVET or to make up for missed education through adult literacy classes.

Many countries have not achieved gender parity in teachers, especially in secondary schools. This is a vicious cycle as vulnerable adolescent girls are more likely to complete secondary school when they are taught by or have access to women teachers. In many crisis-affected contexts there are too few female teachers, especially at the post-primary level. This shortage is particularly marked in refugee contexts in Africa. It deprives girls of positive female role models and of teachers who understand their needs; in conservative societies, it can mean that girls are unable to attend secondary school at all.

There also are gaps in the development of legal frameworks and the implementation of other policies that help to protect girls' right to education. Crisis-affected countries have high levels of child marriage and violence against women and girls, which are both causes and consequences of limited access to education.

While education should protect girls' rights, there are still too many situations where girls are not safe in school. In many crisis-affected contexts, rates of SRGBV are high, including sex for grades, teacher-perpetrated rape, and abuse on the journey to or from school. Girls and female teachers in many contexts are at risk of being targeted for attack due to their gender.

## 6.2 GAPS IN FUNDING AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

National governments are not meeting the education spending targets as set out in the Incheon Declaration. As a group, the crisis-affected countries invest a higher proportion of their government spending in education than the global average but a lower proportion of their GDP.

While the proportion of humanitarian aid that goes to education is increasing, huge funding gaps remain, and there is a high degree of unpredictability in the proportion of education appeals that are funded. Funding patterns by country indicate that some crises are being neglected.

It was remarkably challenging to collect examples of large-scale interventions focused on girls' EiE for the purposes of this report. This indicated that, despite the increased proportion of education aid that has a gender focus and improved coordination between national systems, funding for girls' education in emergencies and in contexts of protracted crisis is still largely delivered on a project basis, and outcomes for girls are not consistently monitored.

While international funding bodies have developed tools and strategies to promote gender equity in the delivery of aid to education, many have struggled to reach their gender targets in contexts of crisis and conflict. Many of the potential case studies considered for this report and three of those included were supported by the GEC, a fund explicitly dedicated to girls' education that is funded by the UK government. This fund has enabled a range of holistic and innovative approaches to girls' education to be developed at scale, including in situations of conflict and crisis. Meeting the considerable gaps in the provision of education for girls and women in conflict and crisis contexts may require further international funding streams explicitly dedicated to girls' education.

## 6.3 GAPS IN DATA

Collecting data for this report revealed numerous data gaps around girls' EiE. Data on the education of girls living in situations of forced displacement, particularly IDPs, remains a major gap, and millions of girls living in such situations may be missing from the available data on school enrollment. Other vulnerabilities that intersect with gender, such as disability status, also are often missing from education enrollment data. Those missing from the data are often those most likely to be missing out on education.

Data on girls' learning outcomes, while becoming more readily available at the project level, are still not widely available at the national level in forms that make it possible to track progress and to disaggregate data on girls and boys, and on those directly affected by crises and those indirectly affected.

Systems for collecting data on violence in schools, particularly SRGBV, and on attacks on education are not yet established enough to provide reliable, comparable estimates of prevalence rates in most crisis-affected countries. Moreover, data on humanitarian aid are not as clearly coded and categorized as data on international development aid, which makes it difficult to track trends in humanitarian aid to education, and humanitarian aid to girls' education in particular.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender marker apparently is not being applied consistently to humanitarian education funding, which makes it challenging to assess the extent to which it is addressing gender inequality and benefitting girls and women.

## 6.4 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Through the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education, G7 member states committed to “close the gap in access to education” for girls and women in contexts of conflict and crisis. Significant gaps in access to safe, quality education clearly remain—between girls and women, men and boys, between crisis-affected and more stable contexts, between forcibly displaced populations and those not displaced, as well as overall gaps in the provision of and funding for EiE. In the years leading up to the Declaration, great progress had already been made toward achieving gender equality in education, increasing access to education for crisis-affected populations, reforming humanitarian aid structures, and securing longer term, more reliable funding for EiE. The fact that many countries are now collecting and reporting sex-disaggregated education data is a big step forward in being able to quantify gaps.

Data from the 44 crisis-affected countries identified for this report strongly indicate that the gender gap in access to education is closing, particularly at the secondary level. At current rates of progress, girls in crisis-affected

countries are projected to achieve universal enrollment up to the lower secondary level well ahead of their male counterparts, though still well after the SDG's 2030 deadline. An increasing number of conflict- and crisis-affected countries already have achieved gender parity at the primary and lower secondary levels.

Even in situations where more girls than boys attend school, a strong case remains for targeted investment in girls' education during crises. Investing in girls' education not only provides girls with protection for themselves, it creates potentially huge social and economic returns and enables girls to protect their families and communities from the consequences of future crises. Girls' lack of access to education, even temporarily during an emergency, exposes them to risks that make it difficult to re-enter education, which severely limits their future life chances. It also is worth mentioning that the trends in this report do not take into account the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on girls' education, which is likely to be more severe than for boys' education.

There has been growing awareness among donors, as articulated in the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education, of the urgent need to ensure that all girls, including those affected by crises, are able to get a full primary and secondary education, and that women are able to access technical vocational education and training (TVET), as well as adult literacy and tertiary education opportunities. To achieve this, more aid to education is needed as part of the humanitarian response, and aid to education must have an explicit gender focus. There are indications of positive changes in this direction: an increasing proportion of humanitarian aid is going to education, and an increasing proportion of overall education aid to crisis-affected countries focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The global evidence base and many of the case studies drawn from for this report highlight the need to take a holistic and flexible approach to ensuring that all girls and women in crisis contexts are able to access quality education. This involves overcoming barriers to access and to learning while ensuring that girls are protected. It requires improving the quality and accessibility of the formal education system with the aim of developing a primary and secondary school system in which all girls can learn, while simultaneously ensuring that accredited and recognized alternative learning opportunities are available to the most marginalized girls and young women, for whom the formal system remains inaccessible. It involves working with schools, communities, and governments to overcome negative gender stereotypes and harmful practices, such as child marriage, overburdening girls with household chores, and discriminating against pregnant girls and young mothers. At the same time, education programs must find flexible solutions that enable girls to participate fully in education within the gendered cultural constraints they continue to experience. It involves ensuring that education institutions provide spaces where girls and women not only are safe from GBV and other attacks but safe to share their knowledge, experiences, hopes, and concerns, and to support each other without being judged negatively on the basis of their gender.

Growing awareness of the importance of girls' education and gender equity in and through EiE is reflected in the development of gender strategies and action plans by many of the major multilateral agencies funding education in crisis-affected countries. These agencies have included indicators of girls' education and learning in their results frameworks, thereby increasing the data available for tracking progress.

A further area of progress that should be noted is the increased coordination among donor and UN organizations, and between donors and national governments. Some national governments have tried to improve data reporting on forcibly displaced populations. The reporting of national education data in Ethiopia that includes refugee and IDP data is an example of such coordination. Dedicated funds and funding streams have been established to provide longer term education funding during protracted crises, and to allow national MoEs to access additional funds rapidly in order to respond to sudden onset emergencies.

It is also notable that some legal barriers to girls' ability to access education in crisis-affected countries have recently been dismantled. This includes lifting the restrictions on Rohingya refugees' access to formal education in Bangladesh and on pregnant girls and young mothers continuing their education in Burundi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. A growing number of countries have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and developed national plans to address SRGBV.

**The gaps and progress highlighted in this report represent challenges and opportunities for stakeholders to improve the situation for girls in crisis-affected countries. For recommendations on how to address the gaps and challenges highlighted in this report, please refer to the accompanying policy brief, [“Closing the Gap: Advancing Girls’ Education in Contexts of Crisis and Conflict”](#).**

# ANNEX 1: CRISIS-AFFECTED COUNTRIES LIST AND METHODOLOGY

This section uses two methods to categorize countries as crisis-affected. The first method looks at which countries have had multiple humanitarian appeals in recent years, the second looks at the proportion of people in a country who are forcibly displaced. Using these methods, we created a list of 44 countries.

## METHOD 1: HUMANITARIAN APPEALS

This method looks at countries' number of humanitarian appeals. Thirty-eight countries had two or more humanitarian appeals in the four years from 2016 through 2019. These appeals are listed under either the UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children Appeals or the appeals tracked in UN OCHA's FTS (UNICEF, 2020f; UN OCHA, 2020a). The list includes countries that featured in regional appeals and does not include appeals from countries hosting refugees. As a validation process, we compared the position of the countries on our list with those in the 2020 Fragile States Index and the 2018 Human Development Index (Fund for Peace, 2020; UNDP, 2020). In Table 4, the countries listed in the top 50 of the Fragile States Index have been highlighted in red, as have the countries in the lowest 50 on the Human Development Index. Venezuela is the only country we added that does not meet this criterion. Venezuela made humanitarian appeals in 2019 but not in 2016-2018, but due to the scale of its crisis and the significant displacement of people within Venezuela and to neighboring countries, we deemed it too significant to exclude. This created a list of 39 crisis-affected countries.

**Table 4 - List of 38 countries with two or more appeals in four years from 2016 through 2019**

	Total years with appeals	Fragile States Index position, countries in top 50 in red (of 178 countries)	Human Development Index position, countries in lowest 50 in red (of 189 countries)
	2016-2019	2020	2018
<b>East Asia and the Pacific</b>			
DPRK	4	30	-
Myanmar	4	22	145
Philippines	2	54	106
<b>Easter and Southern Africa</b>			
Angola	4	34	149
Burundi	4	11	185
Eritrea	4	18	182
Ethiopia	4	21	173
Kenya	4	29	147
Madagascar	4	57	162
Malawi	2	43	172
Mozambique	3	27	180
Somalia	4	2	-
South Sudan	4	3	186
Uganda	4	24	159
Zimbabwe	2	10	150
<b>Europe and Central Asia</b>			
Ukraine	4	92	88

Latin America and the Caribbean			
Haiti	5	13	169
Middle East and North Africa			
Djibouti	3	47	171
Iraq	4	17	120
Libya	4	20	110
Mauritania	4	33	161
occupied Palestinian territory	4	69*	119
Sudan	4	8	168
Syria	4	4	154
Yemen	4	1	177
South Asia			
Afghanistan	4	9	170
Bangladesh	3	39	135
Pakistan	3	25	152
West and Central Africa			
Burkina Faso	4	37	182
Cameroon	4	11	150
Central African Republic	4	6	188
Chad	4	7	187
DRC	4	5	179
Mali	4	16	184
Niger	4	19	189
Nigeria	4	14	158
Republic of Congo	2	25	138
Senegal	3	71	166

\* Israel and West Bank

Source: Authors, based on data from UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children Appeals and the appeals tracked in UN OCHA's FTS (UNICEF, 2020f; UN OCHA, 2020a).



## METHOD 2: FORCED DISPLACEMENT

This method looks at the percentage of the population that has been forcibly displaced. Table 5 shows all LMICs where more than 5% of the population has been forcibly displaced. This includes refugees, people in refugee-like situations, asylum seekers, stateless people, and people internally displaced by conflict or natural disaster. There are 18 countries in which more than 5% of the population is displaced. Five of these countries were not among those classified as crisis-affected based on the number of humanitarian appeals—Colombia, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey; of these five, only Jordan and Lebanon do not have large IDP populations, as refugees make up most of the displaced population they are hosting.

**Table 5 - LMICs with more than 5% of population displaced, December 2019**

Country	Percentage of population displaced	Income group
Syrian Arab Republic	38.4	Low
South Sudan	17.1	Low
Somalia	16.9	Low
Colombia	15.2	Upper middle
Central African Republic	14.4	Low
Lebanon	13.8	Upper middle
Yemen	13.1	Low
Afghanistan	12.1	Low
Uganda	8.1	Low
Sudan	7.9	Low
Georgia	7.6	Upper middle
Jordan	7.3	Upper middle
Libya	7.2	Upper middle
DRC	6.9	Low
Turkey	5.9	Upper middle
Ukraine	5.6	Lower middle
Cameroon	5.3	Lower middle
Republic of Congo	5.3	Lower middle

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from UNHCR (2020b), IDMC (2020a), UNRWA (2020), World Bank (2020a).

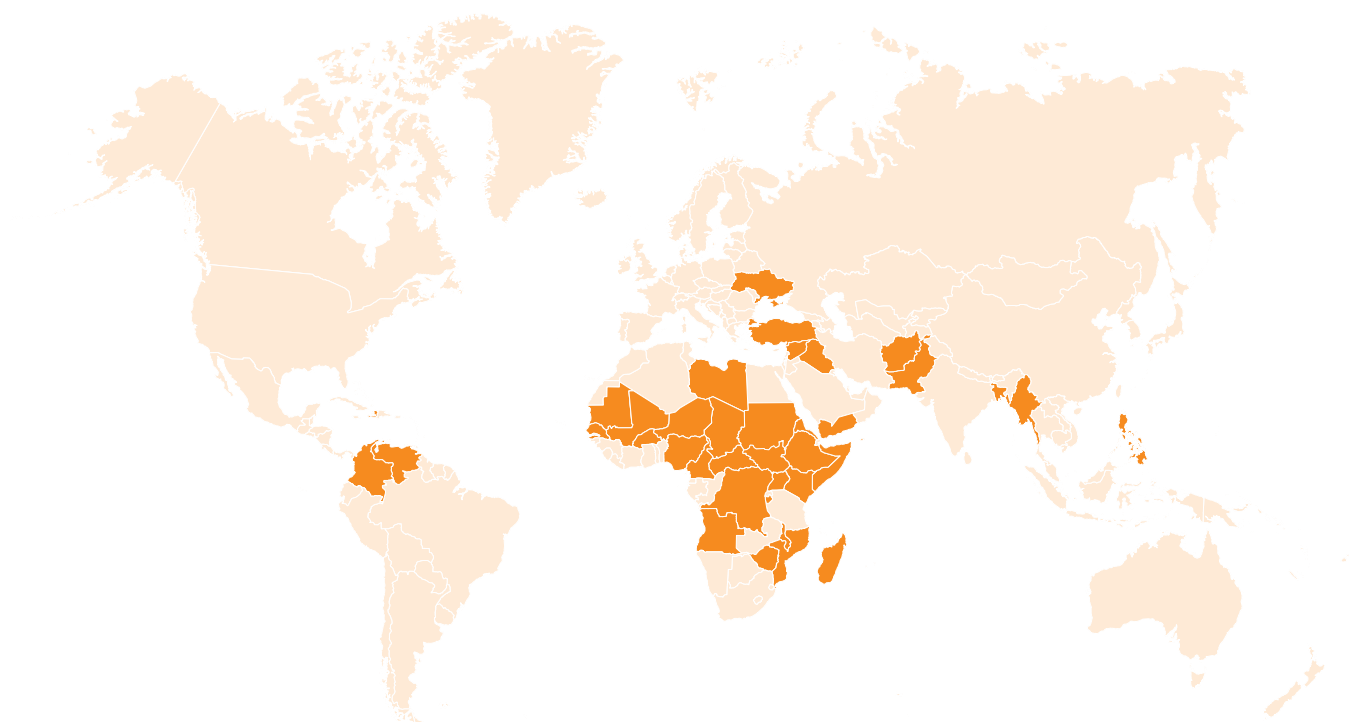
## LIST OF 44 CRISIS-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

Using these two methods, we identified 44 countries that are or have recently been significantly crisis-affected; our analysis in this paper is based on this list. Analysis of national education statistics excludes Jordan and Lebanon, as they are predominantly hosting refugees rather than being affected by their own crises, and data on refugees is often not included in education management information systems. We therefore analyzed refugee education separately.

**Table 1 - List of 44 crisis-affected countries**

East Asia and the Pacific	Eastern and Southern Africa	Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	Central and South Asia	West and Central Africa
DPRK	Angola	Georgia	Colombia	Iraq	Afghanistan	Burkina Faso
Myanmar	Burundi	Turkey	Haiti	Jordan* <sup>26</sup>	Bangladesh	Cameroon
Philippines	Djibouti	Ukraine	Venezuela	Lebanon*	Pakistan	Central African Republic
	Eritrea			Libya		Chad
	Ethiopia			occupied Palestinian territory		DRC
	Kenya			Sudan		Mali
	Madagascar			Syria		Mauritania
	Malawi			Yemen		Niger
	Mozambique					Nigeria
	Somalia					Republic of the Congo
	South Sudan					Senegal
	Uganda					
	Zimbabwe					

**Figure 2 - Map of 44 crisis-affected countries**



<sup>26</sup> Lebanon and Jordan are not included in the aggregate figures of enrolment, intake, and completion rates for crisis-affected countries in this report; they are on this list due to the number of refugees they are hosting. Refugees in Lebanon and Jordan are included in the absolute figures for out-of-school children in this report.

# ANNEX 2: CASE STUDIES

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## METHODOLOGY

We selected the case studies below from the 44 crisis-affected countries identified for this report, based on the following criteria:

- The case study selection should have a balance between new emergencies, sudden onset emergencies, and protracted emergencies.
- The case study selection should include a mixture of conflict, natural disaster, and complex emergencies, and include IDPs and refugees.
- The countries covered should be as representative as possible in reflecting diverse regions of the world.
- The interventions presented in the case studies were designed and/or implemented from 2017 to the present.
- The interventions should reflect some sense of scale in a community, a country, or a region.
- The case study selection should include interventions across a range of education sub-sectors, including early childhood education, basic education, TVET, and/or non-formal educational opportunities.

Once case studies had been identified, respondents from the program staff were asked to provide details of the programs. They were also requested to provide quotes from beneficiaries. Much of the data comes from unpublished program documentation. All beneficiary names given in the quotations are pseudonyms.

It was surprisingly challenging to locate interventions focused specifically on girls' education that were being implemented on a national scale that also had impact data; the GEC was an exception. The case studies presented usually described a gender-sensitive approach to education; in some cases the data had been disaggregated by sex. However, these cases were not designed or implemented specifically to address the unique challenges girls face in terms of enrollment, learning, or retention in school before, during, or after an emergency. Rather, many solid case studies address EiE for all children as part of early childhood development, basic education, TVET, and other non-formal learning opportunities. These cases therefore document the challenges of dealing with contextual risk factors that affect the number of out-of-school children or dropouts, and they flag the vulnerabilities faced by girls. This gap in evidence is a limitation of the case studies provided in this report, but they nonetheless offer critical reflection on how education interventions specifically for girls are being developed, implemented, evaluated, and, ultimately, funded.

One challenge we faced in sourcing the cases studies was that two years after the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education, relatively few programs that explicitly target girls' and women's education in contexts of crisis have, at this stage, well-documented results and evidence of impact. This may mean that girls' and women's education and training programming is still in the early stages; that reporting of documented evidence of impact is weak; that evidence on the impact of the programming will be revealed in the coming years; or that COVID-19 has interrupted the initial gains or the documentation of gains made toward the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education goals.

Please note that these case studies were collected during the period from June to August 2020 and present the situation regarding the progress of the intervention and COVID-related school closures at that time.

# CASE STUDY 1:

## SOUTH SUDAN: INCREASING SCHOOL ACCESS AND RETENTION THROUGH INTEGRATED EXTERNAL SUPPORTS

Girls' Education South Sudan, which is funded by USAID and Global Affairs Canada, is an initiative of South Sudan's Ministry of General Education and Instruction. The program helps to improve the lives of South Sudanese children by ensuring the provision of an equitable, accessible, and essential education, with particular emphasis on reducing barriers and promoting girls' learning. The second phase of GESS, which will run until 2024, is being implemented by a consortium led by Cambridge Education of the Mott MacDonald Group, BBC Media Action, Montrose, Leonard Cheshire, and Windle Trust International.

South Sudan has experienced decades of conflict, which has eroded children's access to education, especially for girls. At least 2.2 million of South Sudanese school-age children, or 62%, are out of school, the highest rate in the world. The out-of-school numbers for girls are far graver; 75% of South Sudanese girls are not enrolled in primary school, and girls are only one-third of the secondary school population (UNESCO, 2018c). Gender inequality in education is pervasive; only one girl in ten completes a primary education and only 2% of these girls complete a secondary education. The barriers restricting girls' enrollment are cultural, financial, and physical.

*A lot needs to be done in communities in terms of quality of and access to education, to ensure that we do not lose the impressive gains in girls' education that we have made in recent years.*

—Honorable Awut Deng Acuil, Minister of General Education and Instruction, on National Girls' Education Day, South Sudan, July 7, 2020, cited in Girls Education South Sudan (2020)

GESS offers a range of integrated activities to tackle the barriers to school access and retention. Our School is GESS's weekly radio broadcast; the 15-minute episodes, which are available in nine local languages, reach an estimated two million listeners on 28 local and national partner radio stations. Our School features real-life stories and interviews with girls, parents, school managers, and community members that highlight the benefit of staying in school. The broadcasts also address common challenges to education, such as negative social and cultural attitudes about the value of education for girls, safety and security both in school and traveling to and from, and school fees. Community mobilizers bring the radio programs to remote rural communities through solar-powered wind-up radios that are preloaded with Our School programs. The mobilizers also organize radio listening clubs and community dialogues on the importance of girls' education, which provide an opportunity to seek solutions to safety, learning, and retention challenges. The mobilizers supplement the community dialogues with visual storytelling materials. The program is aiming to reach 2,700 school communities in the second phase of operation.

GESS also provides cash transfers to eligible girls who are enrolled in primary 5 to secondary 4 and are attending regularly. By supplementing household incomes, the cash enables parents to overcome poverty barriers so they can afford to send their daughters to school. In 2020, more than 374,000 girls received a cash transfer, which they spent on shoes, uniforms, learning materials, and sanitary hygiene items (GESS, 2020a). Program data show that the girls who received the cash attended school more frequently and remained in school longer than those who did not (GESS 2020a).

## Box 15 - Prioritizing inclusion to address multi-dimensional vulnerabilities

GESS seeks to ensure that girls with disabilities, who often are vulnerable in multiple dimensions, are able to access education equally to girls without disabilities. GESS has mainstreamed inclusion by reducing specific barriers that prevent girls with disabilities from enrolling, attending, transitioning, and learning in typical primary schools. This includes consistent targeted messaging aimed at changing social attitudes and entrenched beliefs about people with disabilities, including their right to education and what physical supports they may need in order to have full mobility in and outside of the school. GESS also addresses the leadership and motivation school managers and teachers require to adjust to teaching girls with disabilities, which enables them to learn to support these students and to adopt inclusive classroom policies and practices.

Mainstreaming often requires systems changes, including strengthening teacher professional development to address new pedagogies, developing material supports and other resources for teaching and learning instruction, prioritizing modifications to the infrastructure and equipment in the school, and reinforcing referral pathways between schools and community health and wellbeing service providers.

GESS also has worked with school managers, teachers, and community leaders to identify children with disabilities, especially girls who are both in school and out of school, as a first step to tracking and monitoring their participation (or not) in the system. This helps to inform inclusive planning and annual budgeting and provides the clear data to advocate on behalf of the reforms and supports needed for greater inclusion. GESS has worked with the National Ministry of General Education and Instruction to address policy barriers that can limit a political and financial commitment to inclusive education.

Source: Authors, based on unpublished program document

The Ministry of General Education and Instruction also offers grants to primary schools, while GESS supports secondary schools through grants aimed at improving the education environment. In 2020, 3,899 primary schools and 190 secondary schools received grant support (GESS, 2020a). To qualify for grants, schools must meet a number of governance and reporting requirements, including having a school governance body in place and developing a school improvement plan that includes a budget. Schools may set their own priorities within the parameters of the grants, but they are encouraged to invest in resources and activities that will increase girls' school enrollment and attendance. To ensure accountability for the cash transfers and school grants, GESS uses mobile phone technology to capture individual and teacher attendance through SMS reporting, which is uploaded to a central database. Schools that receive grants are expected to report regularly through the School Attendance and Monitoring System (GESS, 2020b).

### EMERGENCY CASH TRANSFERS DURING COVID-19

*Maybe some girls were thinking about getting married because they cannot afford what they need. With this money, they will buy what they need and also wait for schools to reopen so that they can go back.*

—Esther, 16, Juba, South Sudan, June 2020, cited in GESS (2020c)

# CASE STUDY 2:

## WORKING WITH PASTORALIST GIRLS IN SOMALIA

CARE's SOMGEP-T project, funded by the UKAID GEC global initiative, supports 27,146 adolescent girls in 199 schools in rural and remote areas of Somalia, most of them located along disputed border zones in the states of Somaliland, Puntland, and Galmudug. These areas are affected by a combination of recurrent drought, clan conflict, violent border clashes, and, most recently, the COVID-19 crisis. In 2019 alone, 20% of the schools supported by the project were affected by conflict, which resulted in prolonged school closures. The proportion of pastoralists in the population varies from 19% to 65% in the locations where SOMGEP-T is implemented (UNFPA, 2014). Many of the households supported by SOMGEP-T rely at least partially on pastoralism as a livelihood and for their basic food needs; 64% own goats and/or sheep and 11% own camels (Miettunen et al., 2020).

The national gross primary enrollment rate for pastoralists across Somalia is only 3%, compared to a national average of 32% (MoE, 2017). This population subgroup faces multiple layers of exclusion: 35% of the SOMGEP-T households are food insecure and 62% lack reliable access to drinking water (Miettunen et al., 2020); 23% do not regularly consume protein-rich foods; and their learning outcomes were significantly below the average, which reflects their nutritional deprivation (Miettunen et al., 2020). Recurrent drought caused many families to move to new grazing grounds and water sources, and some lost livestock. The need to migrate, combined with economic losses, reduced the likelihood that their children would enroll and remain in school, particularly girls. At the project's baseline in 2017, 42% of girls ages 10-19 were out of school (Ha & Forney, 2018); 32% of those girls had dropped out of school or did not enroll because the family had moved (Ha & Forney, 2018). Unaccompanied adolescent migration is also common, and the majority of migrant boys and girls do not attend school (Ha & Forney, 2018). On average, 0.4 girls moved out of each household in 2018-2019, or two girls per each five households (Miettunen et al., 2020); of those girls, 25% went to live with other family members, including as domestic helpers (Miettunen et al., 2020). Caregivers reported that a large proportion of the girls suffered from severe anxiety (16%) or depression (13%) (Ha & Forney, 2018). During the COVID-19 crisis, rates of anxiety and depression have soared; 55% of the adolescent girls reported increased anxiety and 53% reported increased depression (CARE, 2020b).

### PASTORALISM, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

*As you know, the community faced a big drought that caused it to lose all of their animals that they were using to feed, and the entire community came back to the town. But they do not have any money to enroll the children. For example, you might see a family who has five children at home and the five of them are not enrolled because they do not have an income to enroll them. And there are 20 to 30 families that have children not enrolled in school because of the economy.*

—Mother, focus group discussion conducted in the aftermath of the 2017 drought, which displaced 926,000 people across Somalia

Source: UNDP, 2017, unpublished program document reviewed for case study

SOMGEP's intervention has been refined progressively, based on the findings from a longitudinal study that enabled the project team to understand the factors affecting pastoralist girls' learning and transition from alternative education programs to formal education or livelihoods, and how they are evolving over time. The project worked with CECs to enroll girls in formal education and in two levels of alternative education, which gave over-age girls an opportunity to return to school. The CECs, mothers, and religious leaders were sensitized to negative perceptions of pastoralist girls as "fated to fail." Teacher training and follow-up coaching helped teachers adopt formative assessments and develop skills to support their students who were struggling with basic literacy and numeracy. Students were also taught financial literacy, which enhanced the relevance of the content and entrepreneurial readiness. To address issues of social isolation, exclusion, and mental health faced by girls, in particular by displaced pastoralist girls, the project worked with MoE gender focal points to train mentors to lead girls' empowerment forums, which aimed to help girls develop leadership skills and provide peer-to-peer support.



## LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO PREVENT DROPOUT

*As the CEC, we help those who need our help. Many nomadic kids left and dropped out of school due to many reasons, but the main reason is the fact that many families move into different areas due to droughts. So, nomadic students drop out of school when their families move. So, what we do as the CEC is to find homes for those who don't want to move with their families in order to pursue education at school.*

—CEC member, focus group discussion at a remote school

Source: CARE, 2019, unpublished program document reviewed for case study

A combination of academic support, including remedial classes, girls' leadership skills development, peer-support networks, and girl-led action to support struggling students, and the CECs' follow-up with pastoralist households to ensure attendance and retention had a positive impact on girls' learning and retention. At the project baseline (2017), owning goats or sheep was a predictor of lower literacy and numeracy scores (Ha & Forney, 2018); at the third evaluation round (2019), girls whose families owned goats or sheep had significantly higher gains than the comparison in numeracy (6 percentage points) and financial literacy scores (9 percentage points) (Miettunen et al., 2020). The project increased transition rates by 11 percentage points in 24 months, compared to a 7.8 percentage point gain in the comparison communities (Miettunen et al., 2020).

SOMGEP-T's intervention prioritized changing social norms and strengthening local and state structures, such as CECs, gender focal points, and regional/district education offices. The project's integrated approach helped communities surface and address underlying causes of poor school performance and dropout, such as GBV, mental health issues, and discrimination. Local gender champions—CECs, mothers, religious leaders, and girls participating in girls' empowerment forums—built strong local networks to support marginalized groups, including pastoralists. These approaches ensured sustainability readiness: for instance, 58% of the CECs are providing financial support to marginalized students and 78% are systematically following up on dropout cases (Miettunen et al., 2020).

## GIRLS SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE ABOUT PASTORALISTS

*I believe she will continue [her education] because she has a lot of support from her friends. If she doesn't understand the lesson, it's better to ask the teachers to make sure she does understand. She learned math since her friends helped her; also, her school teacher helped her, so I think she understood it.*

—Girls responding to a vignette asking what would happen to a pastoralist girl who is struggling with her studies, 2019

Source: CARE, 2019, unpublished program document reviewed for case study

The results observed during the COVID-19 crisis are a testament to the resilience of communities: 96% of girls supported by the project continued to learn at home, and 49% are spending more than two hours a day on their studies—a remarkable figure, considering their added workload at home (CARE, 2020b). Moreover, support from girls' empowerment forum mentors has helped to prevent the escalation of girls' mental health issues. The proportion of girls facing severe depression was 12 percentage points lower among those who received support from a mentor than those who did not (CARE, 2020b). A study conducted in parallel by the Adolescent Girls' Education in Somalia project, which uses a similar approach to that of SOMGEP-T in the conflict-affected areas of Banaadir, Jubaland, and South West, indicated that 53% of girls continued to study at home while schools were closed (CARE, 2020c). Despite facing major challenges during the COVID-19 crisis—33% of households became food insecure and 63% lacked regular cash income (CARE, 2020c)—39% of girls continued to study more than two hours a day, with significantly higher gains in literacy and numeracy scores than among the comparison group (CARE, 2020c).

The importance of CECs in school governance is acknowledged by the federal and state MoEs and included in the education-sector strategic plan. As schools reopened in Somalia in August-September 2020, the CECs' support in following up on dropout cases was key to ensuring that the most vulnerable students—including pastoralist and displaced pastoralist girls—returned to school. The role of mentors is also essential in providing the psychosocial support the most seriously affected girls need. The ongoing response plan includes mobilizing community committees to support sensitization on the return to school and to prepare head teachers and focal points to provide psychosocial support in schools (CARE, 2020c). The resilience of these community structures provides a sustainable option for recovery, as they increase the reach and effectiveness of the response plan, in particular among the most vulnerable girls. They may provide a unique opportunity to offer these girls additional support tailored to their specific needs so they can achieve educational success.

# CASE STUDY 3:

## KENYA: INTEGRATING AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION EFFORTS

The Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP), now in its second iteration, is a five-year intervention being implemented from 2017 to 2022 by World University Service Canada and its main local partner, Windle International Kenya, which have been working in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya and the surrounding host communities since 2011.<sup>27</sup> The vision of KEEP II is to create learning conditions that will give approximately 20,673 marginalized girls from the Kakuma and Dadaab camps and the surrounding host communities better opportunities to learn and to improve their socioeconomic outcomes. All KEEP II participants meet the “highly marginalized” criteria of UKAID’s GEC; that is, they face significant barriers to education due to poverty, negative sociocultural attitudes, early marriage and early pregnancy, significant household burdens, and/or lack of parental support.

The Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps have existed for 29 years in the remote, arid and semi-arid areas of northern Kenya. The Kenyan communities there are disadvantaged as economic growth and social progress have been slow to reach the vulnerable local populations living in these areas. There is extreme poverty, low literacy levels, and very limited access to education. In Kakuma in 2020, UNHCR had registered an estimated 157,755 refugees, mainly South Sudanese, the majority of whom are of school age, including many children repatriated from the Dadaab camps who are living with families, relatives, and friends in Kakuma but are not officially enrolled in school (UNHCR, 2020e). It is estimated that 41.3% of the total population are youths ages 18 to 35, 57.7% of whom are male, 42.3% female. Dadaab’s refugee population is approximately 217,516; 35.7% of the total are youths, 51% of whom are male, 49% female. The population of Dadaab is decreasing, due to a Kenyan government call to fast-track repatriation of the Somali refugee population (UNHCR, 2020e).

The KEEP II theory of change is based on the premise that ideal learning conditions are created by mutually supportive relationships among the learner, the school, and the home. A girl learner who is empowered is better able to advocate for herself. When her parents are engaged in the education process, the school is under pressure to deliver better quality education and improve the teaching quality. This creates a more supportive environment for girls’ learning in the classroom and the school. Lastly, when school boards of management, parent-teacher associations, and local and national education authorities are involved in each of these processes, any gains made are likely to become institutionalized and to outlast project timelines. KEEP II provides scholarships to 178 girls, supports remedial and life-skills programs for out-of-school and at-risk girls, awards cash transfers to vulnerable girls, offers psychosocial counseling, and invests in teacher training to produce quality learning outcomes (KEEP program staff, personal communication, 2020).

KEEP II seeks to address both supply- and demand-side barriers to girls’ education, and it remains adaptive to the fluid context and lessons learned. At baseline, supply-side factors such as school infrastructure, the quality of teaching and counseling services, and effective school governance are less likely determinants of access and retention than demand-side factors, such as poverty, the burden of domestic chores that reduce study time, and early marriage or early pregnancy.<sup>28</sup> Baseline data reveal that certain transition pathways for girls, such as religious and other community training, are often overlooked, and existing pathways such as TVET are over-emphasized, despite their perceived irrelevance. KEEP II initially provided community awareness campaigns through radio, film, and community dialogues, but it found that radio broadcasts alone are not an effective means of social exchange in many parts of the project intervention zone. They instead formed radio listening groups at the community level to increase listenership and provide structured feedback on communities’ understanding of issues related to girls’ education, including what and how messaging to address key barriers should be delivered.

<sup>27</sup> Activities have been expanded under Learning through Education and Access to Employment Pathways, a project funded by Canada, which will support 1,000 young women in school-to-work transition opportunities.

<sup>28</sup> Of those responding to KEEP I’s midline evaluation report, 28.8% said that sending a girl to school was not affordable.

## Box 16 - Selection criteria for remedial programming

The criteria for identifying low achievers by targeting those most in need may have unintended negative consequences. The stigma may cause those identified to have low self-esteem or to resign themselves to being low achievers, which lowers their interest in and commitment to learning. To mitigate this effect, the criterion must be critically examined and options explored for mixing high and low achievers in the classroom. Clear vulnerability indicators other than achievement must be identified as a common entry point. Designing a creative mixed competency approach to basic education content may change attitudes toward remedial classes and strengthen advocacy for extended learning opportunities. In addition, providing learner-centered guidance and counseling services to reinforce students' self-worth and individual competencies is imperative to changing notions about remedial support.

Source: Authors, based on personal communication with project staff

KEEP II focuses on adolescent girls, who are at the highest risk of school dropout when transitioning from primary to secondary education. The project offers remedial classes to address two key challenges—poor academic performance and low levels of community support for girls' education. Community support is essential, and KEEP has reached out to more than 500 school boards of management and parent-teacher associations. Parents are offered one-day information sessions that enable them to speak with teachers and learn about the challenges affecting girls' attendance and performance in school. KEEP also mobilizes community champions, such as local and national government representatives and community leaders, to support the remedial efforts. Young women, whom the adolescents trust and can look to to help them think through competing concerns and pressures, are engaged as community mobilizers. Men and boys also play a critical role. The young women often are highly effective in tracking potential at-risk girls and those prone to dropout. They follow-up at home if needed, monitor the girls' progress, and refer them to the remedial classes where appropriate.

Remedial teachers, who often have no formal training credentials, are hired for after-school or weekend programs. They receive training in basic pedagogy skills, such as planning and preparation, lesson delivery, building safe and inclusive classroom environments, assessment and feedback, and teacher conduct. Formal teachers provide ongoing support to the remedial teachers by visiting their classes to observe instruction and provide feedback on mastery of content, interactive teaching and learning, lesson planning and organization, and pedagogy. The mentorship and coaching component is often the key factor in overall program effectiveness and learning outcomes. The girls also are supported by low-cost offline mobile technology that has teacher-support options; its consistent use has led to improved learner performance. In 2019, 69 female dropouts were re-enrolled after spending time in the remedial classes; they later sat for the national primary exams (KEEP program staff, personal communication, 2020).

*Remedial [learning] has really helped us. When you've not understood a topic, madam comes and asks which topic you haven't understood and later explains well. But in school you even shy away from asking questions in class because many boys understand, and they ridicule and look down upon you.*

—Female learner, Kakuma

Source: WUSC & UNHCR (n.d.)

# CASE STUDY 4:

## GIRLS' EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 37,000 cases officially recorded as of August 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020) and widespread reports of untested cases (World Bank, 2020b). The pandemic has severely impacted the country's economy, with rising food prices and a projected 61%-72% increase in the poverty rate in 2020 (World Bank, 2020b). Primary schools have been closed since March 2020 in response to the crisis. The MoE is providing remote classes to primary and lower secondary students through television, radio, and mobile devices, although access to the classes is limited in rural areas, due to the restricted broadcast coverage, availability of devices, and lack of electricity.

The crisis has had a disproportionately negative impact on girls, whose access to learning opportunities was already severely limited. Despite major gains in access to education since 2001, the primary gender parity index was 0.74 as of 2015; the average school life expectancy was 5.6 years for girls, compared to 9.5 years for boys (Pouras Consultants, 2016). Barriers to education for girls include the following:

- A limited number of options offered
- The distance to school and the threat of violence on the way to or from school
- Heavy responsibility for chores at home
- A lack of adequate sanitary facilities at school
- Teacher absenteeism and a lack of female teachers
- Students' second language used as the language of instruction

Moreover, ingrained gender norms that exclude girls at the household and school levels also contribute to gender bias in classroom practices (Corboz, 2018). Prolonged school closures and limited access to remote learning during the COVID-19 crisis are likely to exacerbate the risk of poor performance and dropout among girls.

The provision of CBE has been a key strategy to increase girls' access to education in rural and remote areas of Afghanistan (Pouras Consultants, 2016). CBE classes take place in adapted spaces in local homes and are led by teachers who have been vetted by the community under the supervision of school shuras (CECs). A special agreement with the MoE to train under-qualified female candidates to teach CBE classes has resulted in a higher proportion of female teachers; the MoE has also made a large investment in in-service training to help these female teachers achieve minimum qualifications. By 2015, CBE classes supported 329,000 students (48% girls) and succeeded in increasing girls' retention and transition to the upper grades in rural and remote areas (Pouras Consultants, 2016). A recent longitudinal study conducted by the Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Educational Success (STAGES) II project, funded by UKAID, showed that 98% of the girls attending CBE classes had remained in school (Wang & McAneney, 2019).<sup>29</sup> Earlier data from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-funded EEA-3 project indicated that 90% of the girls graduating from lower secondary CBE classes had transitioned into high school, indicating a major shift in gender norms and parental support and investment in girls' education (CARE, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of all education institutions, including both regular public schools and community classes. The situation raised concerns about the ability of girls in rural and remote areas to continue to study during the pandemic. CBE providers worked with the MoE to develop alternative solutions, including the provision of inclusive home-learning materials for children without access to television or mobile education. Recent data indicate that these efforts have been largely successful in increasing girls' access to remote education. A study conducted by the STAGES II project with CBE and AE students in rural and remote areas of eight provinces of Afghanistan in June 2020 indicated that 99% of the girls were participating in some form of remote learning (STAGES II, 2020). This is a surprisingly high rate, considering the multiple barriers noted above. It reflects a permanent shift in parental support for education. Among the 99%, 82% were studying by themselves using materials provided by the project, while 10% were using television, 7% radio, and 18% mobile phones; 65% were receiving support from family members (STAGES II, 2020). Gendered patterns are evident in the access to remote learning, with 13% of the boys ages 6-10 having access to television-based learning, compared to 6% of the girls of the same age (STAGES II, 2020). Among those age 11-15, 15% of the boys were accessing educational programs via tv, compared to 9% of the girls in the same households (STAGES II, 2020).

Girls' access to remote learning is also constrained by their household responsibilities: only 43% of the girls ages

<sup>29</sup> STAGES II is led by the Aga Khan Foundation, in partnership with CARE, Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services, Aga Khan Education Services, and the Afghan Education Production Organisation, with additional funding from UKAID and USAID.

11-15 in the STAGES II study were spending more than two hours a day studying at home (STAGES II, 2020). An estimated 26% of the girls reported that the time spent on chores had increased since the COVID-19 crisis started; that proportion was higher in Herat (58%), Takhar (46%), and Ghazni (33%), which could reflect regional differences in infection rates and the economic burden caused by the pandemic (STAGES II, 2020). Despite such barriers, 97% of the parents affirmed that their daughters ages 11-15 would return to school when classes reopened, indicating a shift in support for girls' education (STAGES II, 2020).

Nonetheless, the limited availability of time to study at home will likely result in persistent learning losses for girls. Moreover, the pandemic is having a severe impact on adolescent girls' mental health: 30% of the adolescent girls interviewed in the STAGES II study reported feeling depressed, and 30% reported having a high level of anxiety on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis (STAGES II, 2020). High rates of mental health problems are likely to affect the girls' ability to study at home, as well as the proportion who will return to school. In response to these findings, STAGES II partners adapted their programming to prioritize support for students' and other stakeholders' wellbeing during the pandemic. This included providing core and refresher training in psychological first aid to teachers and shura members.

Reflecting such needs, the MoE's national response plan to COVID-19 includes specific provisions to encourage girls to return to school post-pandemic, including hiring 10,000 female teachers in rural areas and constructing schools for girls (MoE Afghanistan, 2020). In July 2020, the MoE received support from GPE to roll out its response and recovery plan to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, particularly for girls and other vulnerable students.<sup>30</sup> This included support to recruit 1,500 new teachers, in particular female teachers, and the provision of in-service training on using inclusive child-centered methodologies and on continuously assessing students' skills. This grant also will support teachers' and school shuras' local campaigns to increase access to education for children engaged in labor and girls at risk of early marriage, and provide accelerated learning and remedial classes to 312,500 children, with a focus on girls, IDPs, and returnees. These measures reflect a "building back better" approach to gender and equity, and could represent a turning point for the female teaching workforce by not only mitigating the effects of the pandemic but also reducing the historic gender gap in primary education.

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<sup>30</sup> The GPE provided a grant of \$11M (July 2020-June 2021) to the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan as part of its COVID-19 accelerated funding window.



# CASE STUDY 5:

## PLAY-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SUPPORTING ROHINGYA GIRLS AND WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

BRAC's Humanitarian Play Lab model employs a two-pronged approach in the Rohingya communities of Bangladesh: it provides girls and boys ages 0-6 with play-based educational opportunities, and offers experiential learning and employment opportunities for young Rohingya women, many of whom are working outside the home for the first time. The Humanitarian Play Lab model, which has a play-based curriculum rooted in Rohingya social and cultural activities, also has para-counselors who provide psychosocial assistance to members of the community who have suffered a high degree of trauma. Play-based activities are an optimal way to help children learn, to promote the development of linguistic, social, and emotional skills, and to foster creativity and imagination.

The leadership skills and agency girls are able to develop in their early years gives them a critical foundation for future learning and development. The Humanitarian Play Lab model has designed the play-based curriculum specifically to empower girls and boost their confidence. Initially it was observed that many games were gendered, that the boys and girls only played certain games, with the two groups separated. BRAC provided support to create games that would bring boys and girls together, and it coached the facilitators to encourage girls to take charge of the activities conducted in the sessions, as boys traditionally took the lead. This taught the children to accept non-traditional roles and share leadership responsibilities. By the end of 2019, an estimated 20,000 or more girls had participated in the Humanitarian Play Labs in the Rohingya camps in the Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh. Moreover, 1,121 Rohingya women were working as facilitators, called Play Leaders and Mother Volunteers; they were paid according to sector guidelines and Bangladesh government policies.

The Humanitarian Play Lab model is part of the world's largest emergency response operation. In August 2017, almost a million Rohingya people fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh to escape persecution and violence. This created the Cox's Bazar refugee settlement, the largest in the world (UNHCR, 2020d). Literacy rates among Rohingya adults over age 15 are very low, as is school enrollment (Bhatia et al., 2018). From the beginning, the crisis has had a particularly gendered nature. An estimated 52% of the refugee population are women and girls, 85% are women and children, and 16% of the households are female headed. Girls are particularly at risk of child marriage, sexual exploitation, abuse, and neglect (Inter-Sector Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, 2019). According to Tay et al. (2018), traditional Rohingya culture is generally conservative; men are often the key decision-makers, and marriage is the primary way Rohingya women and girls attain social and economic security, as they are traditionally discouraged from working. One of the few acceptable reasons for a Rohingya woman in Myanmar to leave the home is to access health services, particularly for her children. In the camps of Bangladesh, sexual and GBV remain a widespread problem (Tay et al., 2018).

The Humanitarian Play Lab model has been in operation since late 2017, with funding from several donors, including Porticus, the Open Society Foundations, and UNICEF. Since December 2018, BRAC has been working in partnership with Sesame Workshop, the International Rescue Committee, New York University's Global TIES for Children, and the LEGO Foundation to refine and expand the model. The model includes a home-based group intervention for children ages 0-2 and their mothers, which provides sessions on psychosocial wellbeing and child stimulation. The sessions are facilitated by Rohingya Mother Volunteers and para-counselors from the Bangladeshi host community. The Mother Volunteers, many of whom have poor literacy skills and have never worked outside their homes before, are given basic training by a group of para-counselors who are chosen to be developed as Master Trainers. Their training focuses on early childhood development content, program objectives, the volunteers' roles and responsibilities, how to facilitate sessions effectively, and how to provide psychosocial support. The Mother Volunteers are also given monthly refresher sessions. At the end of 2019, 470 Rohingya Mother Volunteers were employed by BRAC.

For girls and boys ages 2-6 who participate in the Humanitarian Play Lab, the intervention operates in local learning centers and home-based groups. The curriculum builds on Rohingya cultural elements such as *Kab-biyas* (rhymes) and *Kissas* (stories), physical play activities, and art. Young Rohingya women, many of whom have completed only primary or early secondary school, serve as Play Leaders. They are given a five-day basic training, followed by a monthly refresher. The training focuses mainly on early childhood development, including playfulness, basic psychosocial support, and child protection. Before June 2018, BRAC employed 268 Rohingya Play Leaders to work in the Humanitarian Play Lab centers; the number rose to 608 in 2019—an increase of 127% in one year. In 2019, 50 young Rohingya Play Leaders facilitated sessions for children



ages 2-4 in home-based groups. The Play Leaders stated that the income they earned through stipends or honorariums helped them contribute to their household income for the very first time. They also are developing skills and experience that may help them find jobs in the future, should they return to Myanmar.

Regular monitoring of the program has revealed the positive impact the Humanitarian Play Lab intervention is having on girls. Parents who were interviewed reported seeing changes in their daughters: “My child Khurshida can speak more, recite Kabbiyas, identify English alphabets, and can play with other children more than before after attending the Humanitarian Play Labs.” “My child [Minara] has grown up both mentally and physically after attending the sessions. Now she can speak well and regulate her emotions better.” Project monitoring also indicates that the Play Leaders show improvement in their knowledge of child development, psychosocial assistance, and play-based learning. Several research studies carried out in 2019 by the James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University, and the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development also found that the Humanitarian Play Lab intervention has had a positive impact on children in an emergency setting, although this research was not disaggregated by gender (Khanam & Afsana, n.d.; Tasnim et al., 2019).

# CASE STUDY 6:

## JORDAN: LEARNING-TO-LIVELIHOODS TRANSITION OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE REFUGEE YOUTH

The NRC's Jordan Youth Programme (JYP) prepares youth above the age of compulsory formal education (16) to follow livelihoods, social engagement, and further education pathways. Established in 2013, JYP remains operational today as the largest-scale structured learning opportunity available to Syrian youth in the four youth centers located in the Al-Azraq and Al-Za'atari refugee camps. The program serves 4,000 young people annually, from age 16, when obligatory formal education ends, up to age 32. While the program continues to deliver key elements of NRC's Youth Education Pack, such as TVET, non-formal education, and life skills, NRC made the strategic decision to expand beyond its standard education portfolio and to approach youth learning and workforce development in a more flexible, holistic manner (NRC program staff, personal communication, 2020).

Almost 30,000 Syrian youth ages 15-32 currently live in refugee camps in Jordan (UNHCR Camp Data, 2019); of these, roughly 49% percent are male, 51% female. Refugee adolescents and youth face multiple barriers to formal livelihoods opportunities and have different motivations for learning new skills and competencies. This may be attributed in part to the introduction of accreditation, to the program's evolution over time to meet the needs of the community, and to the fact that only a minimal number of refugees are returning to Syria.

JYP recruits, trains, and supports both male and female program facilitators from the local community. The core of the programming is the NRC framework, **Wellbeing: Personal, Social and Emotional Youth Development**.<sup>31</sup> The four youth centers offer safe spaces for expression, sharing, and building relationships with peers and facilitators through structured social and recreational activities that are integrated into the youth-centered, competency-based learning. JYP's skills-based curriculum has obtained both national and international accreditation. Accredited higher education opportunities and distance learning courses are offered through strategic academic partnerships, and apprenticeships and incentive-based learning opportunities are made available within the parameters of community participation and sanctioned income generation in the camps. Civic engagement activities also enable youth to use their skills to serve others in practical ways, and to strengthen positive perceptions of and relationships between the youth and their communities. NRC believes that this has brought greater relevance and meaning to addressing education and skills, especially within a protracted emergency context, by situating experiential learning elements as cross-cutting, solutions-oriented tools that are vital to community peace-building, personal and emotional development, and livelihood protection.

An independent program evaluation by the Women's Refugee Commission (2016) found that 95% of JYP participants see the activities as relevant and critical to developing adaptable technical skills; 100% of the female participants, who face social and cultural barriers to education and work, experience marital pressures, and often are discouraged by family members to look for employment outside the camps, state that their self-confidence has improved as a direct result of their engagement at the centers. The JYP gender strategy is modified each year in order to find new ways to attract girls and young women to the centers and keep them involved. In 2020, NRC piloted a carpentry course for young women that adapted the curricula to be more attractive to female youth and to inspire them to think outside their traditional roles by showing them the utility of learning to make traditional products that women may be more likely to sell or buy—such as jewelry boxes rather than fences.

The youth centers offer female-only learning spaces and have female-designated wash and sanitation facilities, as well as daycare facilities. This increases not only female youths' participation in the program but also the number of female trainers and facilitators available. Older female facilitators and youth graduates engage in significant community outreach. They hold open days at the learning centers and meet one-on-one with families to talk about the importance of girls learning new skills and competencies, and of accessing peer support and mentorship. All of these elements reflect the increase in retention and completion rates in NRC's programming over time. NRC data reveal that 25% of females who participate in their program are more likely to pursue further learning opportunities, 17% report volunteering more in their communities, and 16% report using their skills to find work, although the latter is still challenging, given the limited opportunities in the camps (NRC, unpublished program document, 2020).

31 This blended learning approach leverages USAID's best practice Positive Youth Development Framework, as well as socio-constructivist theories of education psychology that learning is best through positive interactions with others, often as part of collaborative experiential learning.

*My mother is a well-known tailor in the camp, the money she makes from tailoring used to be the only source of income for our family. I always wanted to learn tailoring, and I joined NRC's program for that reason. I participated in L1 and L2 of the program where I got to learn and practice my skills and I am now at L3 where I get an income too. Once I had the tailoring skills I wanted, the community began asking for my services regularly, now I'm able to support my mother in providing for our family*

—Fatema, 24, Syrian refugee in Jordan

Source: NRC, 2020, unpublished program document

The JYP components include three distinct levels. **Level 1: Accredited vocational training, English Language, and ICT training courses** last approximately three months and include a variety of competency-based vocations. Language and information and communications technology courses are delivered in conjunction with private-sector partners. For example, English language courses (mainly aimed at preparing for higher education), which are delivered using a blended learning approach, are accredited by Arizona State University. All Information and communications technology courses are accredited by Specto and internationally recognized by the European Computer Driving License foundation. Life skills, soft skills, and the integration of these with the employable skills curriculum are offered in partnership with the International Youth Foundation. The competency-based technical vocational education courses offered are accredited by the Technical Skills Development Commission, which sits under the Jordanian Ministry of Labor and accredits all vocational training in Jordan. NRC has a partnership with Qualifi that endorses the quality of the content and provides international accreditation.<sup>32</sup> This enhances the transferability of training qualifications across borders as part of longer term durable solutions.

Youth at **Level 2: Structured incentive-based learning opportunities** have the opportunity to progress to this level upon graduation from level 1. At this level, they use the skills they have gained to design projects with and for their communities. Examples include making custom-designed furniture for people with disabilities or school uniforms for children attending formal schools. Youth work three hours per day, five days a week for three months and receive a minimal hourly payment. Upon completion of level 2, youth will have gained the skills and competencies they need to transition to jobs. A tailored skills package is provided to ensure that the youth have access to information and support when seeking employment, along with work and career guidance. This guidance and support are essential in helping youth make good life and career choices, even if they choose to leave the program after level 1 or level 2.

Young people at **Level 3: Income generation**, which offers post-level-2 incentive-based learning, have the opportunity to work on discreet, self-led projects in workshops located in the four NRC centers. The centers receive production orders from partners within and outside the camp, and the youth produce the items ordered, which include winter jackets and uniforms for NRC, UN agencies, and NGOs; baby kits UNICEF distributes to newborn mothers; and office furniture for NGOs and school furniture for Jordan MoE schools in and outside the camps. In addition, niche private-sector entities like Turquoise Mountain are partnering with the centers to raise the quality of the jewelry and other products the youth are making, and then to sell the products online. The youth receive 90% of the income, while the remaining 10% goes to maintain the workshops and equipment. Jewelry and garment production in the Middle East is usually a male-dominated market, but young women are increasingly being motivated and trained to enter this space. NRC operates these workshops on a cost-recovery basis, whereby all income from the sale of items goes directly back to the young people in the form of cash payment for work, and to pay for the raw materials and the cost of production and workshop maintenance. Youth work full time, seven hours per day, five days a week, and they earn approximately the monthly minimum wage.

<sup>32</sup> See <https://qualifi.net/>.

# CASE STUDY 7:

## INTEGRATING EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION TO REACH GIRLS AND YOUTH MOTHERS IN THE SAHEL

Since 2013, Plan International has implemented an integrated education and child protection program to provide services to refugee and displaced children in emergency contexts across the Sahel. Plan International created an AEP to respond directly to the thousands of out-of-school children in the region, specifically the disproportionate number of girls who were not accessing education. The approach provides points of reentry into schooling for children whose education was interrupted due to conflict or crisis, or who never had the opportunity to attend and are now beyond the usual age to enroll.

As of 2020, Plan International became one of the largest providers of AE to refugees and internally displaced children in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Their model continues to be refined to respond more directly to the changing nature of the gender barriers girls face. The program incorporates gender issues into all its teacher trainings, and it prioritizes community engagement to ensure a strong and supportive environment for girls' education. The AE model now guarantees that the education of thousands of girls each year is not interrupted or halted because of ongoing conflict in the region. The success of the AE approach has provided an evidence base for scalable responses to the education barriers faced by girls in the Sahel region.

*Most of the problems we are facing is not because we don't want to study but because of cultural practices that are concealed to the outside world, and also because we are given little chance.*

—Young married girl in Niger

Source: Plan International, 2020, unpublished program document reviewed for case study 7 in Annex 2

Beginning in early 2012, an escalation of the conflict in northern Mali between the government and armed groups resulted in a large-scale displacement of people in the southern parts of Mali and the neighboring countries of Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania. Armed groups attacked and looted schools and used them as bases for military operations. Children were systematically recruited into the ranks of insurgent groups, and girls were targeted for forced marriage and sexual slavery (Sarrough, 2013). The conflict intersected with other social-cultural, gender, economic, environmental, and political barriers to education, and by 2015 resulted in almost three million children being out of school across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The complexity of these overlapping barriers to educational access, equity, retention, and completion has affected girls disproportionately. While all conflict-affected and displaced children have faced difficulty in accessing education, the most vulnerable were girl adolescents and girl mothers, as well as girls with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and nomadic groups.

Plan International has identified nine specific barriers to children's access to education in the Sahel, which informed the design and delivery of the AE program:

1. Poverty
2. Ethnic identity
3. Perceptions of the value of education
4. Discrimination against girls
5. Insecurity
6. Physical distance from school
7. Challenges for adolescents
8. Poor learning environments
9. Insufficient teachers

While these barriers are individually definable, they are all interconnected and each one exacerbates the others.

Plan International began its AE program as an intervention in the Manghaize and Tabareybarey refugee camps in Niger. Since then, the approach has been developed, adapted, and expanded to respond to the crisis across the Sahel region. It provides education to refugees, internally displaced children, and the many more children and youth who are denied access to schooling because of conflict and insecurity.

The AE program targets out-of-school children ages 9 to 14, with a particular emphasis on girls. It supports children as they complete the early primary grades and then helps them to reenter formal education in grades 3 and 4. The program runs in nine-month cycles; the initial three months consist of mother tongue instruction, with a focus on developing second language ability in French; the second six months provide core curriculum content in French. Psychosocial wellbeing elements are also included in the curriculum.

Plan International's AE program consists of integrated education and child protection activities. Plan International mobilizes local stakeholders to help raise community awareness and ensure that there is positive recognition, acceptance, and support of learning activities for girls. This includes building an understanding of girls' particular experiences and developing community-level strategies to overcome explicit gender barriers that hinder girls' access to schooling. This integration ensures that the program reaches the more excluded groups, particularly girl mothers who otherwise would not have access to the program.

Parents of refugee children are a particular focus of the community engagement. Mothers' Committees provide a mechanism for discussion, promote the right to education, and organize collective local advocacy.

*I came to know that Fatema's elder sister and her husband were preparing her for marriage when she stopped attending class.*

—Fatema's teacher

Source: Plan International, 2020, unpublished program document

The AE program continually builds on lessons learned in order to improve the safe learning spaces provided for adolescent girls who are fleeing the ongoing conflict in the region, including the Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria in recent years. Children are selected to participate in the program through the school management committees, parents' associations, and mothers' committees in the areas and host communities where AE is delivered. This engagement ensures higher levels of retention and participation, and is critical for addressing parental concerns about the protection and safety of girls in school.

*I am not educated myself and I know how difficult it might be when you are not able to read and write. As a refugee sometimes you are asked to read and sign papers and it is frustrating to always count on other people. Education is empowerment, for that reason I have strongly encouraged my daughter to go to school when the opportunity of the second chance school has come up. I do not regret it and I do encourage her to follow her dream.*

—Refugee mother, Niger

Source: Plan International, 2020, unpublished program document

Since 2013, Plan International has provided access to AE for more than 50,000 girls across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, as well as training in gender-responsive approaches and psychosocial techniques for more than 4,000 AE teachers. These numbers will increase considerably as Plan International develops a new round of programming that builds on the evidence of what has worked previously, and that also contends with the effects of the COVID-19 crisis.

# CASE STUDY 8:

## COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS FOR ROHINGYA GIRLS' EDUCATION

Entrenched sociocultural norms are the cause of changes in social behavior for the Rohingya girls living in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar once they reach puberty, especially in spaces where girls may mix with boys (Inter-Sector Coordination Group, 2019a). It is widely recognized that this is due to the sociocultural practice of *Purdah* to seclude girls and women and separate them from boys upon reaching puberty. In many communities, the practice is considered a sign of prestige for women, as well as a symbol of family pride and status. *Purdah* generally restricts the mobility of young girls and women in the public sphere; they are required to stay at home and adhere to prescribed gender roles.<sup>33</sup>

The impact gendered norms have on Rohingya girls is starkly evident in the more than 3,300 temporary learning centers spread across the world's largest refugee settlement (OCHA, 2020c). Rohingya boys and girls start attending the camp learning centers at the same rate of 78%; from age 6 to 11, girls outpace their male peers, with 89% of girls and 85% of boys reporting regular attendance (Inter-Sector Coordination Group, 2019a). With the onset of puberty, Rohingya girls begin to retreat from public spaces, including the learning centers, and by late adolescence (ages 15-18) only 2% of girls are still attending school (Inter-Sector Coordination Group, 2019a). The precipitous drop in adolescent girls' attendance is striking, as are its implications, which hint at some of the hidden risks girls face when they leave the learning centers, most notably child marriage and its associated risks to girls' bodily integrity and psychosocial wellbeing. The lack of an official pathway to secondary education for Rohingya children, initially in Myanmar and now in Cox's Bazar, has been a significant barrier (Inter-Sector Coordination Group, 2019a). But even so, boys are continuing to learn into late adolescence; they attend the learning centers at six times the rate of girls and madrasas at nine times the rate (Inter-Sector Coordination Group, 2019b). To put the disadvantage of Rohingya girls into perspective, about 24% of refugees globally are accessing secondary education, but "only about seven refugee girls for every 10 refugee boys" (UNHCR, 2019a).

UNICEF and its partners in Cox's Bazar have long sought ways to increase access and retention for Rohingya adolescent girls, as they recognize that girls' right to education has never been guaranteed. Once in Cox's Bazar, and far from the specific persecution that limited access to education in their home country of Myanmar, adolescent Rohingya girls again have found themselves facing restrictive policies, in this case aimed at deterring their long-term integration in Bangladesh, including strict limitations on their education (UNICEF Cox's Bazar, personal communication, 2020).

In January 2020, that barrier was partially removed when the Government of Bangladesh approved the use of the Myanmar curriculum in the camps as a pilot. Using the formal curriculum of the Rohingya home country was the optimal solution for the refugee children's long-term education needs. This move marked a drastic shift from previous policy that allowed only informal instruction for the early primary grades in the camps. The decision outlined an initial pilot phase that would cover 10,000 learners in grades 6-9, thereby offering many Rohingya girls a legitimate pathway to secondary education for the first time in their life. The decision followed years of concerted advocacy efforts—first spurred by the Rohingya communities and carried forward by many donors and education-sector partners, including UNICEF. Introducing a formal secondary curriculum will increase access to learning for all Rohingya adolescents, although it still does not address the top two causes for dropout among girls—64% for cultural reasons and 24% due to marriage (REACH, 2019).<sup>34</sup>

*Once the girls leave education early, they are not only out of learning but also out of other critical service and remain at high risk of child marriage and protection related issues.*

—UNICEF Education Officer, Cox's Bazar, personal communication, August 2020

In October 2019, UNICEF and its local partner CODEC began to provide space for community members to pilot an education model for "girls-only sessions," an idea sparked by the sudden dropout of 12 girls in one community. Consultations started directly with the adolescent girls themselves, as well as their teachers, parents, and communities, in order to understand the main barriers to learning and to identify practical solutions. With the

<sup>33</sup> See more sources on *Purdah* (August 28 2020). Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purdah>

<sup>34</sup> The main reasons cited for dropout among boys of the same age (15-18) are "what is taught is not useful/age appropriate" (52%), "child goes to Madrasa" (14%), and "Child is needed at home to help the family" (14%) (REACH, 2019).



approval of the Myanmar curriculum in early 2020, the sessions soon grew from the original 12 girls to 29, with community members eager to support and add more sessions. CODEC looked at how to systematize the approach. It worked closely with community members to develop a community risk-analysis tool that would first identify clusters of girls at risk of dropout, along with those who already had left school, and then matched the girls to available shifts in the cluster of learning centers. The lack of learning spaces is a perpetual challenge, thus the tool was indispensable in demonstrating that one community's seemingly anomalous solution could be scaled through the calculated use of available space.

*I used to get bullied by the boys in my previous class. They would tease me and ask, 'Why are you coming here to study when you are a girl?' It used to make me very upset, so when I found out there was a girls-only class, I asked the teacher if I could join. I'm very happy here.*

—Shahida, age 12

Source: UNICEF, 2020, unpublished program document

CODEC piloted the new tool in communities across six camps and identified more than 600 girls between age 11 and 14 who had dropped out within a three-month period. CODEC used the analysis to identify the areas where the dropout risk was highest and, in the end, established seven "girls-only sessions" that served 118 girls between the ages of 11 and 14. Piloting the sessions was abruptly paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the anticipated reopening of camp learning services and the launch of the Myanmar curriculum for grades 6-9 offer a strategic opening to underscore UNICEF's commitment to ensuring that learning spaces meet adolescent girls' needs, including gender-responsive water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities and readily available menstrual hygiene products.

While there are concerns that "girls-only sessions" reinforce an inequitable system that continues to marginalize girls, UNICEF and CODEC are working to meet the long-term needs of girls, including engaging with community and religious leaders to advance norms that promote girls' rights to education and protect them from child marriage or other risk factors that lead to dropout. By their nature, girls-only sessions require a female-only environment, including all female teachers, staff members, and volunteers. This encourages girls to build their social networks and offers emotional support and mentorship, as well as a safe space where they can share information and develop critical literacy and problem-solving skills.

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