

A Declaration on Girls' Education: Recovering from Covid-19 and unlocking Agenda 2030

London, May 5, 2021

I. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LEARNING AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

1. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women and girls has been disproportionate and profound. We, the G7, share a commitment to placing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the heart of our work to build back better.

2. Nowhere is our resolve stronger than in addressing the global set-back in girls' education:

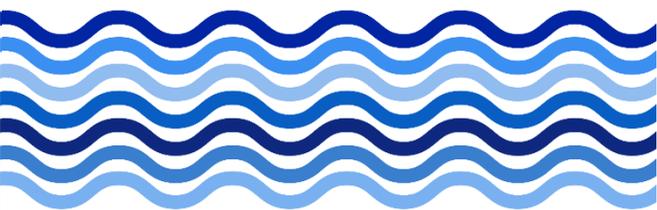
- Millions of girls across the globe have paid the highest price of the Covid-19 school closures: dropping out because they may be caring for others, forced into child marriage, subjected to female genital mutilation at higher rates, or exposed to increased gender-based violence.
- Girls who face conflict, displacement, and natural disasters have least access to school as a place of safety and protection.
- The learning losses from Covid-19 may equal the gains made by girls over the last two decades. This aggravates the existing global learning crisis and hampers our ability to provide inclusive quality education for all.

3. With less than 10 years until the SDG4 target date of 2030, the global advances in girls' education and gender equality since 2000 must not be squandered. Recalling the 2018 Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, and the 2019 Joint Communiqué of the G7 Ministers of Education and International Development, we are sounding a rallying call to national governments and the global community to work together, as never before, to help support formal and non-formal education systems recover Covid-19 losses. We reaffirm our collective belief that:

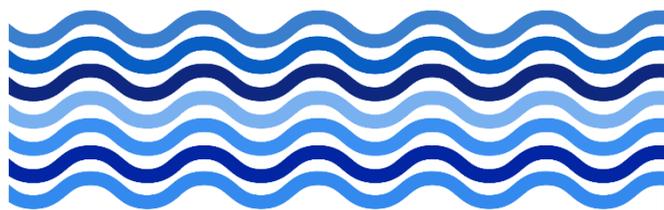
- 12 years of safe and quality education for all children, and specifically girls, is one of the most cost-effective and impactful social and economic investments governments and donors can make.

4. Recognising that time-bound targets help to galvanise international action, we call upon the international community to adopt and rally behind two new, ambitious SDG4 milestone objectives, which will serve as benchmarks in our efforts to reach all children by 2030. We call on the international community to join forces to deliver:

- 40 million more girls in school by 2026 in low and lower-middle-income countries; and
- 20 million more girls reading by age 10 or the end of primary school in low and lower- middle-income countries by 2026.



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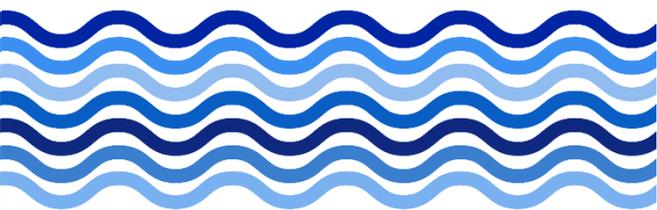
5. At the forefront of our efforts will be the most marginalised and vulnerable girls, most at risk of being left behind - whether on account of poverty, disability or the effects of conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. While our milestone objectives concern low and lower-middle-income countries, we recognise these factors also affect girls in upper-middle-income countries, who merit continued support.

II. DELIVERING OUR 2026 GIRLS' EDUCATION OBJECTIVES: POLITICAL COMMITMENT

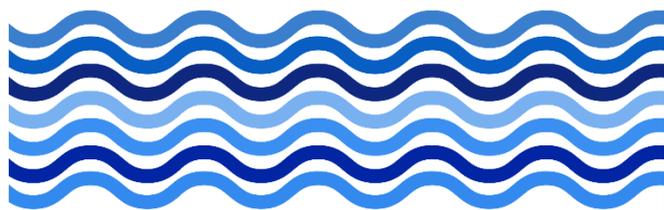
6. In pursuit of these ambitious objectives, we intend to work in collaboration with developing country partners, multilateral institutions, civil society, girl-led groups, and youth leaders, to remove the obstacles to education that stand in girls' way.¹ We want to empower girls to lead change, including in peacebuilding and in efforts to tackle the climate crisis. In particular, we commit by 2026 to:

- Expand 'catch-up' and accelerated education initiatives, with attention to inclusion, gender and equity, including the appropriate provision of technology to enable distance learning.
- Re-open school systems that are more inclusive and resilient, to help ensure that education systems and school buildings are adaptable, accessible, and equipped to deal with the challenges of the accelerating climate crisis and other future shocks.
- Scale up early literacy and maths programmes to help ensure all girls secure foundational learning, with priority to the early years of education and ensuring all children learn in a language they understand.
- Use shared expertise across health, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), nutrition and social protection to address the barriers to education for adolescent girls, by encouraging countries to: dismantle the costs for girls as they progress through education; address distance barriers; reduce violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, in and out of schools, increase access to comprehensive sexuality education, promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; promote access to sanitary facilities, and amend restrictive policies or legislation which prevent girls thriving in school.
- Expand opportunities for girls to obtain Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), including in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), non-formal education and lifelong learning.

¹ This includes: promoting gender-responsive teacher training and recruitment; bridging the gap in access to safe, quality education for children living through emergencies and protracted crises – including refugees, internally displaced, and girls affected by the accelerating climate crisis and increased gender-based violence due to COVID-19; and increasing targeted support for children with disabilities while strengthening education systems to be more inclusive - including improving the availability of accessible learning materials, the supply of assistive technology and training teachers in inclusive pedagogy.



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III. DELIVERING OUR 2026 GIRLS' EDUCATION OBJECTIVES: THE RESOURCES TO DO THE JOB

7. To transform these political commitments into concrete and sustainable action, we commit to play our fullest part in mobilising the financial and technical resources to deliver a coherent and concerted international education effort. We also call on national governments in developing countries to protect domestic spending on school education – from pre-primary, to primary and secondary education - in the face of competing financial demands. We will strengthen efforts by 2026 to:

- Prioritise global ODA for girls' education in low and lower-middle-income countries - sustaining a focus on education financing, recognising key upcoming moments, including the Generation Equality Forum, COP26 Conference and IDA20, and channelling resources to our partners, including developing country governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector and global partnerships such as the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait, their implementing partners, including UNICEF and the multilateral development banks.
- Scale up innovative financing mechanisms that leverage private sector finance to maximise every dollar of ODA - including increased impact investment to drive better outcomes in education, reduce the gender digital divide, and other financial instruments that can accelerate gender equitable outcomes.
- Support countries to monitor and compare national education progress using regional benchmarks and global proficiency standards - lending support to better accountability through the on-going UNESCO-convened process to review and reform the global education cooperation mechanism.
- Drive up the standards of global education assistance at large, by promoting high-quality research allowing governments to take forward gender-responsive education reforms, providing greater transparency on ODA financing, data, and reporting and improving coherence between multilateral and bilateral education efforts.
- Deepen partnerships between G7 members to jointly scope and where appropriate and possible, co-finance girls' education programmes e.g. the Gender at the Centre Initiative.