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# Overcoming Obstacles: Ensuring Equal Access to Education for Girls

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**Abstract:** The development of girl's education is a key catalyst for social progress and plays an important role in promoting educational equity. For a long time, equal education for girls has been facing obstacles. These issues have been receiving increasing attention in contemporary society, prompting governments of global countries to continue paying attention to them and striving to prioritize policies and practices to ensure girls' education.

**Keywords:** Educational equity; Girls' education

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## 1. The Imperative of Girls' Education

The right to education is not only a fundamental human right, but also a key prerequisite for realizing other human rights. It holds an indispensable value in promoting gender equality, achieving peace and stability, nurturing resilient economies, and building a good social environment. Girls' education is a very critical part of education, and it is crucial for girls to integrate into the contemporary society. For women, education plays a key role in promoting knowledge dissemination, enabling girls to fully realize their potential and strengthening women's rights, ensuring that they have the possibility to grasp the future.

Girl's education is a highly rewarding public investment. There is ample evidence to show that addressing the educational barriers faced by girls, enabling girls to acquire knowledge, expanding women's employment opportunities, and supporting women's entrepreneurship are indispensable means for countries to achieve rapid economic development (Oztunc, 2015). A study by the World Bank (2020) shows that illiteracy among adults costs the global economy over £800 billion annually. Of the 750 million illiterate adults, women make up two-thirds. Furthermore, the research findings indicate that for every additional year of education a woman receives, her income increases by 20% and her future career prospects are improved.

Girl education is a catalyst for promoting gender equality in society. The British Prime Minister stressed the need to promote girls' education and women's empowerment globally, emphasizing that it is of great importance to national interests. Furthermore, he believes that improving the education level of girls worldwide can serve as a protective measure against the negative impacts of international conflicts (UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2022). Independent and highly educated women play a crucial role in shaping the nation's image and maintaining social stability. Countries that provide equal educational opportunities for both sexes tend to exhibit higher levels of stability and peace (World Bank, 2020).

## 2. The Barriers to Girls' Education

The access to education for girls is restricted, leading to a significant number being compelled to abandon their own educational pursuits. More than 50% of the world's children are unable to acquire basic literacy and arithmetic skills after completing primary education, with the figure for girls rising to over 70% (World Bank, 2018). By the time they finish primary school, approximately 380 million children worldwide lack basic reading skills; in low-income countries, more than 90% of children are unable to read by the age of 10. Without appropriate interventions, an additional 72 million children will be deprived of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Traditional biases and social norms related to gender have a profoundly negative impact on girls' choices and agency in shaping their own life paths and their freedom to make decisions. Traditionally, it was believed that men who study would create greater economic value, while girls were more likely to take on the responsibility of caring for family members or supporting the family financially. If they were to interrupt their studies, they could provide temporary and most convenient, cheap assistance to the family. Moreover, the expenses related to textbooks, reference materials, study supplies, school uniforms, exams, and other related costs often exceed the economic capacity of many poor families. Based on the idea of preference for boys, families would prioritize the opportunity for boys to go to school, leaving girls to drop

out of school (Tadesse, 2020).

### **3. The path to Improving girls' education**

#### **3.1 Legislative Framework: Establishing Legal Provisions to Guarantee Girls' Education**

In Zimbabwe, the government actively supports the implementation of the Education Act Amendment to ensure that all girls receive comprehensive education, including sexual and reproductive health education. In addition, the government has been working with communities to ensure the physical and mental well-being of schoolgirls, reduce the risk of early marriage and pregnancy, provide safe transport and accommodation facilities, and prevent girls from being subjected to violence on their way to school (UK Department for International Development, 2021). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the government has implemented a very progressive education policy that allows girls to resume their studies after childbirth, and has enacted laws to ensure their right to education. Thus, the creation of robust policies is fundamental to securing the future of girls' education, shaping not only their personal development but also the progress of entire societies. By addressing systemic challenges, these policies lay the foundation for a more equitable and prosperous world.

#### **3.2 Economic Assistance: Providing Financial Support for Equal Educational Opportunities**

The government should enhance the mobilization of international aid funds to bolster girls' education, tackle barriers to girls' education, and mitigate funding shortages. Firstly, ensure targeted allocation of funds for girls' education by allocating funds to specific areas in order to maximize aid effectiveness. The Female Secondary School Stipend Program (FSSP) in Bangladesh, supported by the World Bank and other international donors, targets funds to encourage girls' school attendance and retention. This program covers tuition fees, exam fees, and stipends, significantly improving girls' enrollment and retention rates in rural areas by addressing financial barriers. Secondly, foster innovation in fundraising for girls' education by fully engaging private aid agencies, foundations, and non-traditional donors beyond official fiscal aid, and exploring new sources of funding. An innovative fundraising approach in Rwanda involves collaborations between private foundations like the MasterCard Foundation and USAID, engaging non-traditional donors to develop and expand educational programs for girls, particularly in STEM fields. By ensuring targeted and diversified support, governments can create sustainable pathways for girls' educational success and broader societal development.

#### **3.3 Resource Allocation: Coordinating the Integration of Educational Resources for Girls**

To advance girls' education, a multi-faceted approach that integrates both domestic resources and cutting-edge technology is essential. Firstly, integrate domestic educational departments, enterprises, social organizations, local governments, and other high-quality resource channels to establish a comprehensive network for girls' education. This will effectively mobilize existing domestic resources and minimize the number of out-of-school girls, thereby improving their learning environment. The "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" (Save Daughters, Educate Daughters) campaign in India integrates local government, the education sector and social organizations to address the low enrolment of girls in school. Secondly, leverage artificial intelligence, big data, digital technology, and other technological resources to develop more effective comparative standards for evaluating the learning outcomes, teaching quality, educational performance, and dropout rates of girls. Additionally, the government can support the development and promotion of new educational technology products to provide reliable assistance for girls' education. By establishing a comprehensive support network and leveraging technological advancements, the government can augment the efficacy and inclusivity of girls' education. These endeavors will not only enhance educational outcomes but also diminish the disparity in educational access for girls.

#### **3.4 Collaborative Efforts: Fostering Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Promote Girls' Education**

Girls' education is a comprehensive educational endeavor encompassing politics, society, economy, science and technology, culture, and other domains. The stakeholders involved in this multi-party collaboration are diverse as well. It is crucial to enhance global cooperation in promoting girls' education by fostering extensive partnerships with governments of partner countries, global alliances, the World Bank, the United Nations, and other organizations. This collaborative effort aims to design and implement evidence-based educational policies that can effectively adapt to local contexts while ensuring comprehensive and high-quality education for girls. Moreover, it seeks to address the specific needs of marginalized girls. For instance, the British government has established a collaborative alliance with the World Bank, the United Nations, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and "Building Evidence in Education" organization to conduct empirical research on girls' education. Together they commit themselves to improving testing capabilities and adjusting strategies through empirical research while also addressing political and technical challenges hindering enrollment of girls or their access to quality education (UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2021).

### **4. Conclusion**

Girls' education is not only an educational issue, but also a multifaceted social issue encompassing economics, politics, demographics

and other domains. Enhancing the educational attainment of girls is not only beneficial for their personal development, but also contributes to advancing economic and social progress as well as elevating overall population quality. Nevertheless, girls have long been disadvantaged in education and face formidable challenges and obstacles. Therefore, ensuring equal opportunities and resources for girls has emerged as a crucial concern in contemporary education.

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