



Unlocking potential

Strengthening rights and securing resources for girls' secondary education

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MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-FOUNDERS

Ten years ago, we founded Malala Fund with a dream and a mission to ensure every girl can learn and choose her own future.



While activists, civil society, governments and institutions have made important global progress on girls' education since then, gains have been slow and uneven. Millions of adolescent girls in lower-income countries continue to face tremendous challenges in going to school, unable to complete their education and achieve their dreams.

For us, the movement for girls' education has always been deeply personal, rooted in our experiences in the Swat Valley of Pakistan, where we stood up to the Pakistani Taliban and spoke out for girls' right to learn despite the threats to our lives. We never imagined that such extreme oppression would return. But today the Taliban bans adolescent girls from going to school beyond grade six in Afghanistan, erasing the futures of a new generation of girls under a system of gender apartheid¹.

While Afghanistan is the only country that explicitly denies girls' education, this fundamental right faces threats around the world. Through Malala Fund's work, we are ready to take on the policies and groups that deny girls' rights, restrict their education and limit their futures. Getting all girls in school has always required commitment and resources, but now is the time to ignite the political will to invest in this mission and secure the right to education for all girls.

We have today what we did not have 10 years ago: a deeper understanding of how to direct Malala Fund's resources, voice and influence to strengthen partnerships, complement others' strengths and mobilise to create change. We have built a strong global movement made up of fearless advocates, activists and young women leaders working towards 12 years of education for every girl. And every day, we are grateful for the incredible community of supporters that has sustained this movement.

Throughout a decade of change, girls' unbreakable spirit in fighting for their right to learn has remained constant. Our new strategic plan — designed to match girls' determination and resilience — follows their lead, funds their work and unites people, organisations and governments around a shared agenda for girls' secondary education.

With your support, we can grow this collective power over the next five years, enabling more adolescent girls in lower-income countries to access and complete 12 years of school and shape a better world for us all.

As we enter Malala Fund's next chapter, we hope you will continue to stand with us in our fight for girls' education.

— **Malala and Ziauddin Yousafzai**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, more than 122 million girls are out of school – 88 million of them are adolescents² from primarily lower-income countries.³

Despite global leaders' commitment to ensure all girls can complete school by 2030, progress has stalled in the last decade, and the world is not on track to meet this goal. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of out-of-school girls is rising, a stark reminder that the girls' education crisis demands urgent attention.⁴

Persistent gender inequality — worsened in recent years by the growing influence of anti-rights groups seeking to control girls' lives — underpins the barriers girls face in accessing and completing secondary education. Due to a lack of political will and inadequate resources, governments have continuously underinvested in protecting girls' rights and advancing their futures. The lasting impacts of COVID-19, climate change and conflict are magnifying barriers to education for the most marginalised girls⁵, threatening previous progress and limiting girls' potential to create a more peaceful, resilient and equitable world for us all.

Malala Fund's mission to ensure all girls can access and complete 12 years of education is more at risk and urgent than ever before.

Over the next five years, we will tackle systemic barriers to girls' education by strengthening their right to education and unlocking the resources needed to realise it.

By 2030, we aim to:

- **Award \$50 million in grants** including \$40-45 million to civil society organisations across at least five countries, with 20% reserved for organisations led by girls or young women, and \$5 million to frontline organisations supporting adolescent girls in crises.
- **Contribute to 20 significant policy changes or implementation measures** that strengthen girls' right to secondary education.
- **Help release at least \$36 billion in additional financing for education** and improve how funding is spent to tackle girls' education barriers.⁶
- **Contribute to creating environments that have the potential to support 34 million more adolescent girls** to access or complete secondary school in places where they face the greatest barriers.⁷

To meet this ambition, we will continue to listen to girls, centre their perspectives and partner with those who share our mission.

We must act now to realise the right to education for millions of adolescent girls, unlocking their potential to shape their futures and drive positive change in the world around them.

Leveraging our core strengths in advocacy and grantmaking, we will focus our efforts on marginalised adolescent girls and places where they are most likely to be out of school to:



Strengthen civil society

Through our Education Champion Network, we will provide multi-year grants to civil society organisations to advance, protect and monitor the implementation of policies that dismantle barriers to girls' education at their roots. We will focus on countries where girls face the greatest education barriers and increasingly prioritise girl- and young women-led organisations for these grants over time.



Drive systemic change in Pakistan and Nigeria

We will deepen our work in Nigeria and Pakistan — home to nearly 15% of all out-of-school girls. Complementing our grantmaking, we will advocate alongside partners towards common policy goals that strengthen girls' right to secondary education and free up more resources to realise policy commitments.



Advocate for global policy and funding commitments

We will push global actors, including governments and international institutions, to confront two fundamental obstructions to adolescent girls' right to education in lower-income countries: systemic rollbacks in gender equality and girls' rights, especially in Afghanistan, and unjust global financing systems that restrict the resources available to fund education.



Protect access to education during crises

We will focus a portion of our work on addressing the direct needs of adolescent girls in crises. We will mobilise funding to organisations at the forefront of response efforts and support solutions to keep girls learning through education disruptions to prevent long-term dropout.

THE STATE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION

Over the past decade, progress towards the global goal to ensure all girls can complete secondary school by 2030 has slowed and, in some cases, reversed.⁸

Without drastic measures to change current trajectories, millions of adolescent girls in lower-income countries will remain out of school or drop out early. Girls will miss out on their right to education, and the world will miss out on their potential to strengthen economies and build thriving communities.



Gender norms and limited resources perpetuate girls' education barriers

Since 2020, threats to girls' education have intensified and the challenges to realising girls' right to education and securing the necessary resources have become more complex. Discriminatory gender norms persist in many parts of the world, encouraged in some cases by anti-rights movements and governments. These deep-seated beliefs about girls' roles in society reduce their ability to make decisions about their own lives, particularly in adolescence. They perpetuate child marriage and confine girls to domestic work and early motherhood, and fuel attitudes that drive violence against girls in and around schools.

Afghanistan serves as the starkest example, where the Taliban use a system of gender apartheid to deprive women and girls of their fundamental rights and forbid adolescent girls from going to school with impunity.

At the same time, deepening economic inequality and pressures from COVID-19, climate change and conflict have exacerbated gender inequality, reinforcing barriers to education for marginalised girls. Shrinking education budgets in lower-income countries, combined with consistent underinvestment in girls' education, lead to a lack of secondary schools, trained teachers and high secondary education costs that deter families from investing in their daughters' education. Furthermore, a growing debt crisis — exacerbated by unfair global financial rules that favour high-income countries — traps lower-income countries under heavy debt burdens. With governments using much of their domestic revenue to repay debts, they have little left to spend on education and other critical social sectors.



The girls' education challenge in numbers

122
million

More than **122 million girls** are out of school — **88 million** are adolescents living primarily in lower-income countries.⁹



Globally, only **20% of girls from low-income countries** will complete upper secondary school compared to **90%** of girls from high-income countries.¹⁰



Lower-income countries are spending, on average, **43% of their budgets on servicing debts**,¹¹ almost **three times** as much as they spend on education.¹²



Only **46% of countries** have constitutions that explicitly uphold the right to secondary education for all citizens.¹³

10
million

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to an additional **10 million girls** entering into child marriages by 2030, a key driver of school dropout.¹⁴

12.5
million

Climate change contributes to **at least 12.5 million girls** dropping out of school each year.¹⁵

Educated girls create healthier, more resilient communities

Failing to uphold and resource girls' right to education impacts not just girls, but also their communities and countries. Without 12 years of quality education for girls, inequality deepens, economies weaken and societies grow more vulnerable to crises like climate change.

When girls cannot complete secondary school, the world misses out on \$15-30 trillion in productivity and earnings each year and the potential of millions of girls to become the leaders, innovators and problem-solvers we urgently need.¹⁶

When girls can complete their secondary education, communities are healthier. Children born to mothers who have completed 12 years of education have a 31% lower risk of dying before the age of five, as compared to children born to mothers without an education.¹⁷ Educated girls drive climate resilience in their communities — as they contribute directly to sustainable practices, resource management and community adaptation strategies — and in their countries — as they step into leadership roles and drive environmental protection efforts. Sufficient investment in girls' education contributes to more stable political systems and resilient democracies and reduces conflict risks.



OUR RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE



Our mission to ensure all girls can access and complete 12 years of education is more urgent than ever. We will sharpen our focus on policy change and leverage our strengths in grantmaking and advocacy to drive lasting progress for girls.

We will accomplish this through our own advocacy and by distributing \$50 million over five years to accelerate civil society's advocacy in places where adolescent girls face the greatest education challenges and protect girls' education access during crises.

Our strategic pillars:

Governments have the power and responsibility to uphold and invest in girls' right to education, ensuring no girl is left behind. Consequently, we frame our grantmaking and advocacy within two strategic pillars:

Strengthening girls' right to secondary education

by ensuring governments adopt and protect policies needed to recognise and realise this right — including holding them accountable to implement those policies and ensuring girls can continue accessing this right during crises; and

Securing resources for girls' secondary education

by ensuring governments and institutions increase funding for education systems and these resources specifically contribute to realising girls' right to education.

Our approach



Our primary focus: Policy change and implementation

Policies play a critical role in shifting systems and tackling the root causes of adolescent girls' exclusion from education, particularly for girls from historically marginalised groups. We focus the majority of our grantmaking and advocacy on advancing policies that support girls' secondary education and their implementation — an area where we have a proven track record and can add the greatest value as part of a wider movement for education and gender equality.

Government adoption and implementation of supportive policies — across education and related sectors such as health, economic empowerment and child protection — are essential to helping the majority of girls access and complete secondary education.

Effectively designed and implemented policies can:

- **Directly remove barriers to education:** eliminating school fees, banning child marriage, providing safe transportation to school.
- **Support essential infrastructure and a conducive school environment:** making provisions for school buildings and girl-friendly sanitation facilities, increasing the number and quality of female teachers and school leaders.
- **Disrupt harmful social norms and practices:** promoting young mothers' return to school, tackling sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Promote gender equality:** mandating gender-responsive planning and budgeting, promoting curriculums that challenge discriminatory gender norms.

We direct our efforts to advance new policies that support girls' secondary education, protect existing policies under threat and challenge policies that undermine girls' right to education. Within policies, we include international agreements, resolutions, laws, regulations, guidelines, budgets, agendas and strategies put in place by governments or institutions across various decision-making levels.

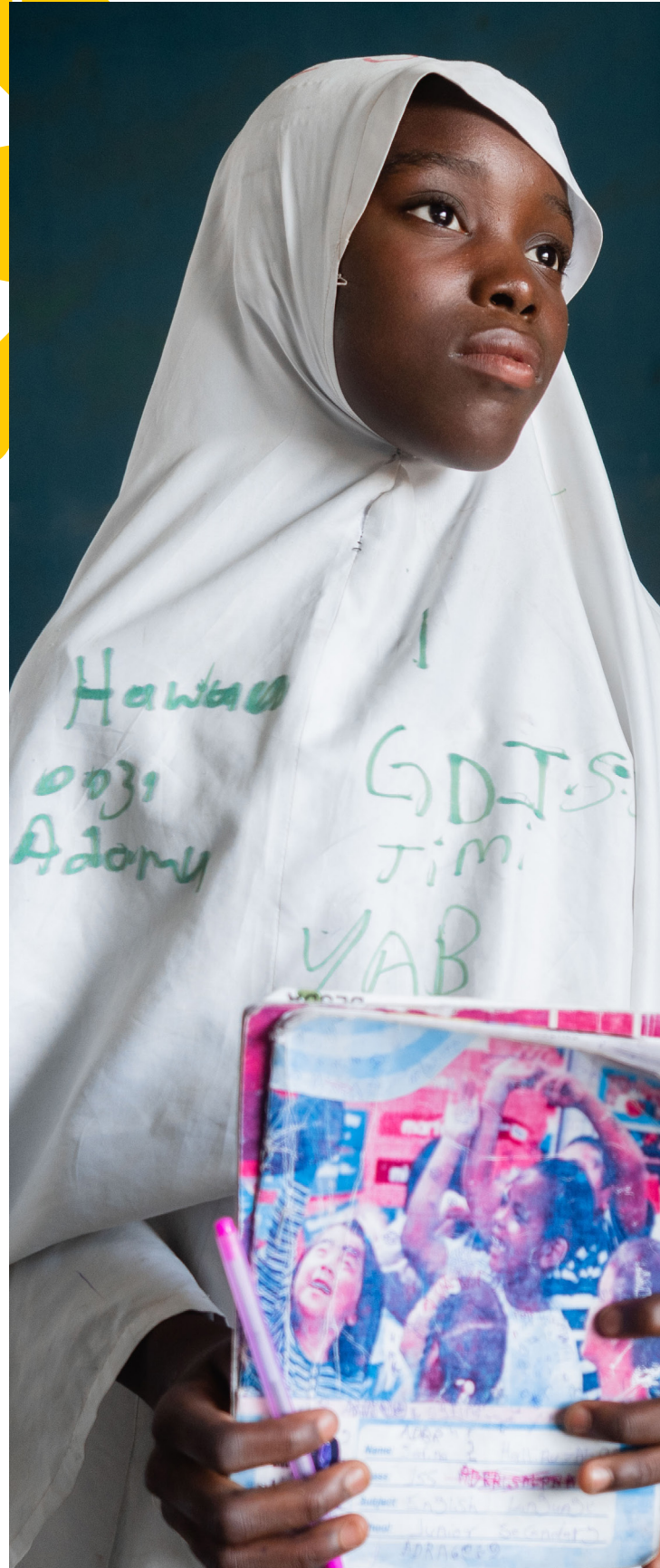
Our focus on policy implementation recognises that governments adopting policies is not enough. Through our direct advocacy and support to grantee partners, we hold decision-makers accountable for fulfilling their commitments. We also address systemic obstacles that prevent policies from translating into concrete changes for girls' secondary education — including social norms, lack of resources and low institutional capacity.

Our emphasis on policy change and implementation includes addressing education quality as a potential barrier to girls' access to learning. The quality of education — its relevance to adolescent girls' lives, the presence of enabling conditions for learning and its role in challenging discriminatory gender norms — is critical to promoting girls' participation in school. More girls will access and complete secondary school in educational environments where they can thrive.¹⁸



OUR OBJECTIVES in 2025-2030

Over the next five years, we are determined to support more adolescent girls in lower-income countries to access and complete 12 years of school — harnessing our grantmaking and advocacy to strengthen girls' right to education and secure the resources needed for all girls to enjoy this right.





Objective 1: **Strengthen civil society**

We will build on our Education Champion Network by providing grants to civil society organisations in places where girls face the greatest education barriers and filling funding gaps for organisations led by girls and young women.

A vibrant, diverse and connected civil society is essential to driving and sustaining change in girls' education. Civil society organisations inform the policy process, monitor government action and protect against rollbacks on girls' rights. Organisations and movements led by girls and young women are particularly powerful forces for change: they challenge deep-seated norms and generate new solutions. Yet they often face the greatest challenges to accessing resources, policy spaces, technical knowledge and connections that can enhance their impact.

In 2017, Malala Fund launched the Education Champion Network to invest in local educators and activists to leverage their collective power to create transformational change for girls' education. Our network has since grown to include over 120 organisations. In the next five years, we will build up this network to strengthen grantee partners' power to advance the adoption and implementation of policies that dismantle girls' education barriers at their roots.



OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE WILL:

- **Award multi-year grants to civil society organisations working to influence policy change and implementation.** We will support partners working from the top down, including those with established relationships with key government stakeholders and policymakers, and from the bottom up, including those working with and advocating alongside communities to effect change.
- **Reserve a minimum 20% of Education Champion Network grants in each country for organisations governed or directed by girls or young women.**¹⁹ Supporting girls' and young women's leadership shifts power to them, improving inclusion of girls' perspectives in decision-making. Through intentional investment, we aim to bridge the funding gap these organisations face and realise the powerful potential of girls and young women to lead change.
- **Encourage collective action by funding organisations to support shared advocacy outcomes** identified with our partners and young women in our existing network. We will seek opportunities to foster collaboration and coordination between our grantees and with other organisations working in and across education and critical adjacent sectors such as health, child protection and social protection.
- **Harness the power of our platforms and networks to support grantee partners,** enhancing the long-term impact of their work. Through Malala Fund's public channels, we will spotlight partners' efforts and help position them as influential stakeholders in shaping policies and driving change in support of girls' secondary education.



Our Education Champion Network countries

We will invest the majority of our funding in the communities, regions and countries where significant numbers of girls are out of school or at risk of dropping out and where progress on girls' education has slowed or reversed. Building on existing work with grantee partners in **Brazil, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Tanzania**, we will target marginalised groups including Indigenous girls, young mothers, married girls, girls in low-income households and rural areas, and girls affected by conflict.

Less than 2% of all philanthropy in the U.S. — where individual charitable giving as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) is highest — currently goes towards organisations and movements dedicated to girls and young women.²⁰



“Malala Fund’s unwavering commitment to amplifying the voices of girls and young women from marginalised communities through its Champions’ network has become a leading example in the education space. Malala Fund built a network of Education Champions across the country who have prioritised girls’ education nationally and in their respective states and are more aligned in their work.”

— **Habiba Mohammed**

Centre for Girls’ Education in Nigeria, an Education Champion Network partner

Collective advocacy to support adolescent mothers’ right to education in Tanzania

While the Tanzanian government ended a policy preventing adolescent mothers from attending public schools in 2021, implementation of the policy change faced significant challenges. In 2022, HakiElimu, an Education Champion Network partner, convened a coalition of 12 civil society organisations with Malala Fund’s support — known as the Girls’ Education Caucus — to advocate for better support for adolescent mothers’ return to school. The coalition directly contributed to the government’s guidelines for young mothers’ school re-entry, helping nearly 8,000 girls return to school and paving the way for thousands more.



Objective 2 : Drive systemic change in Nigeria and Pakistan

We will deepen our work in Nigeria and Pakistan — home to nearly 15% of all out-of-school girls globally — complementing our grantmaking by advocating alongside partners towards common policy goals that strengthen girls' right to secondary education and increase resources for education systems in each country.²¹

Nigeria

In recent years, severe inflation in Nigeria — home to nearly 5 million out-of-school adolescent girls — has led to a cost-of-living crisis that has pushed more people into poverty. These economic conditions have worsened barriers to girls' education such as child marriage, gender-based violence, hidden school fees, decreasing education budgets and reduced climate resilience.²² Across the country, and especially in the northeast, security concerns and attacks on schools have increased, reinforcing girls' exclusion from education. In states with high out-of-school numbers and where conflict often interrupts learning, a pervasive lack of government resources has led to overcrowded classrooms, overworked teachers and widespread inequality in education access, particularly in rural areas.

Since 2014, Malala Fund has invested more than \$7.9 million in grants to Education Champion Network partners in Nigeria and in 2023, we established a resident country team. Together with a diverse set of partners, we have pushed for amendments to the Universal Basic Education Act to recognise girls' right to 12 years of education, advocated for state-level adoption of the national Child Rights Act guaranteeing children the right to basic education and preventing marriage under the age of 18, and helped shape the government's commitment to girls' education in the 2024-2027 National Education Roadmap.

Guided by our partners' insights, our work in Nigeria over the next five years will focus on improving funding for girls' secondary education, supporting efforts to end child marriage to prevent girls' dropout and strengthening the right to education for married girls and young mothers.





Supporting the effective implementation of Nigeria's free basic education policy

In 2022, Education as a Vaccine (EVA) used their Malala Fund grant to tackle the obstacles stopping the Nigerian government's free basic education policy from being effectively implemented in Kaduna state. Working with 41 girl advocates, they pushed the state government to prevent teachers and school leaders from imposing "hidden fees" on their students for uniforms, registration fees, books, learning materials and other items. They also raised the importance of girls' education with community members and leaders to encourage girls' enrolment. As a result of EVA's programme, the rate of out-of-school girls reduced from 73% to 67% across three communities over the course of one year.

Pakistan

Pakistan's education sector faces critical resourcing challenges, made worse by soaring public debts, weak economic growth, ongoing political instability and climate-related disasters, leading to a national education emergency. These challenges have reinforced education barriers for the country's 6 million out-of-school adolescent girls.²³ Lack of government investment in the education system has resulted in a shortage of free, quality schools and teachers for girls. And growing poverty levels have increased demands on girls to contribute to household incomes instead of study and made it more difficult for families to pay for school expenses.

Since 2013, Malala Fund has invested more than \$12.7 million in local activists and organisations working to ensure girls in their communities in Pakistan can attend and complete school, and in 2023, we established a resident country team. Alongside our partners, we have advocated for quality education, improved school infrastructure in rural regions and wider digital inclusion for learning.

Over the next five years, our work in Pakistan will focus on ensuring government funding improves girls' secondary school infrastructure in rural areas and advancing policies to reduce school costs for low-income families in these areas.

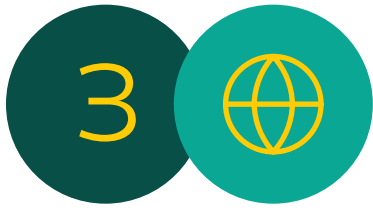


Securing a groundbreaking education policy in Pakistan

Durbeen, an Education Champion Network partner, collaborated with the government of Sindh and local stakeholders in 2023 to develop the landmark Sindh Teaching Licence Policy. Durbeen's advocacy helped Sindh become the first province in Pakistan to require new government teachers to be professionally qualified to teach. Qualified teachers are critical to maintaining high standards of education and providing inclusive, supportive learning environments for girls that encourage them to enrol in and complete school.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE WILL:

- **Test a national impact model of “grantmaking plus” in Nigeria and Pakistan** that we could apply elsewhere in the future. Leveraging the expertise and leadership of our resident teams, we will advocate alongside Education Champions and other partners around a shared set of policy issues. We will also provide more coordination and convening support to drive our shared change agenda.
- **Use national and regional communications channels, including Malala Fund's own channels, to engage public audiences** on relevant policy issues and amplify adolescent girls' perspectives. We aim to build broad understanding of how policy issues affect girls' lives and participation in education in Nigeria and Pakistan, and increase public pressure on decision-makers to act on these issues.
- **Leverage our global access and reach to support national impact where priorities overlap**, for example by coordinating advocacy on education financing across global and national platforms to address obstructions across multiple levels of the financing system.
- **Draw on our co-founders' voices at strategic moments and with key audiences**, including men and boys, to further national change agendas through engaging with important decision-makers in Nigeria and Pakistan and global institutions.



Objective 3 : **Advocate for global policy and funding commitments**

We will focus our global advocacy on strengthening international policy frameworks to expand and protect girls' right to secondary education and increase the funding available to lower-income country governments to realise this right.

Global policy frameworks can set and drive ambitious targets for girls' education, transform global structures that perpetuate educational inequality, enhance funding flows and encourage greater government action and accountability for girls' right to education. Over the past decade, we have used our access to and credibility with influential global actors and our capacity to convene diverse stakeholders to drive successful campaigns for girls' education.

Over the next five years, we will intensify our efforts to uphold girls' right to education and enable more robust education resourcing. We will push international actors — including governments and international institutions — to confront two fundamental obstructions to adolescent girls' education in lower-income countries: systemic rollbacks in gender equality and girls' rights, especially in Afghanistan, and unjust global financing systems that restrict the resources available to fund education.



OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE WILL:

- **Expand and deepen our existing work challenging Afghanistan's system of gender apartheid**, which bans girls from going to school past grade six. Through our Afghanistan Initiative, launched in 2024, we will continue to support, connect and collaborate with Afghan-led organisations and women activists to increase global pressure to codify gender apartheid as a crime under international law.
- **Advocate for reforming international financing systems to unlock sustainable funding for girls' education** in lower-income countries. We will call for changes to outdated and inequitable global systems such as unjust debt frameworks that limit the resources available for countries to invest in their own education systems. Drawing from the findings of our Girls' Vision for Education project and the experiences of girls who work with our grantee partners, we will highlight the impact of these unfair systems on girls' learning and lives.
- **Leverage our co-founders' access and reach to expand and elevate our global advocacy efforts.** We will engage our co-founders to advocate behind the scenes and on public platforms to elevate Malala Fund's policy agenda on rights and resources and girls' priorities at the most influential decision-making levels. At strategic moments, we will leverage our co-founders' voices to deliver clear calls to action and convene new stakeholders around our global advocacy goals.
- **Target grants to support collaborative working where it can enhance impact.** We will provide grants to support collective action around shared global advocacy priorities. This support will predominantly target organisations rooted in lower-income countries²⁴ within the education, girls' rights and gender equality sectors who are engaged in advocacy towards global actors.



Gender apartheid in Afghanistan

The Taliban's ban on girls' secondary education is the clearest violation of girls' right to education in the world today. It is part of a broader system of gender apartheid where laws and policies restrict Afghan women and girls' basic rights, autonomy and participation in public life. Despite the Taliban's egregious human rights abuses, the global community has not held them accountable by political means, emboldening them to continue denying girls' right to education. Codifying gender apartheid as a crime under international law would strengthen accountability for the Taliban's actions and prevent other regimes from attacking gender equality and violating women and girls' rights.

"I dream of a bright future for all Afghan girls, where they can achieve their goals through the power of education and stand resilient against ignorance... I will keep striving until the day I can proudly express my joy, free from oppression, as every human being deserves."

— Marina

26, Afghan education advocate

The benefits of debt relief for girls' education

Lower-income countries are spending, on average, 43% of their budgets on servicing debts,²⁵ almost three times as much as they spend on education.²⁶ Projections show these high debt payments will continue until the mid-2030s in 99 lower-income countries, further squeezing their long-term capacity to invest in education and other public services that girls depend on.

Our global advocacy seeks to reform current multilateral efforts to address the debt crisis, which are slow, partial and unfair, to expand the resources governments have to fund girls' education. The benefits of debt relief for education are well-evidenced: in countries that had their debts cancelled under the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative in the 1990s, primary school completion rates increased from 45% to 66% between 1990-2012.²⁷ One study estimates that reducing debt payments for 88 countries, where debt payments exceed 15% of government revenue, to 5% of revenue could help 5 million more children go to school annually.²⁸





Objective 4 : **Protect access to education during crises**

We will direct funding to organisations on the frontlines of responding to crises that threaten to interrupt secondary education for large numbers of adolescent girls.

In an increasingly volatile world, unforeseen shocks can cause girls to permanently drop out of school after prolonged education disruptions. Today, approximately 31 million secondary school-aged girls are at risk of dropping out of school due to crises related to conflict, health, natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, and political²⁹ and economic instability.^{30 31} These crises worsen existing barriers to girls' learning, including gender-based violence, child marriage and increased household responsibilities. The longer girls are out of school, the less likely they are to return.

During crises, girls need immediate solutions to keep learning as part of a strategy to prevent long-term dropout. However, adolescent girls often fall between the gaps in crisis response services tailored for adult women or young children. To meet this challenge over the next five years, we will continue to focus a portion of our work on addressing the direct needs of adolescent girls in crises, mobilising funding to organisations at the forefront of response efforts that often do not get the timely support they need.



How crises disrupt girls' education^{32 33 34 35}

Crises that impact girls' education include conflicts, natural disasters that are often related to climate change, health, political instability and economic instability. Below are examples of their effects on education:

Reduced availability of schools and teachers

Schools are closed, damaged or destroyed. Teachers become ill, lose their lives or, especially for female teachers, leave their jobs due to additional family demands.

Loss of school access and records as a result of displacement

Displaced girls have to leave school behind or cannot access schooling due to lack of provision, bureaucratic barriers or loss of academic records and other important documentation.

Negative impacts on learning

Crisis-related trauma affects girls' psychological and social wellbeing and negatively impacts academic outcomes. Lack of food, poor nutrition and climate-related impacts, such as excessively high temperatures and pollution, affect girls' ability to learn.

Increased vulnerability to exploitation and violence

Services that help protect girls, such as sexual and reproductive health clinics and girls' clubs, reduce or close. Risks of sexual and gender-based violence rise, increasing early marriage and pregnancy that cause girls to drop out of school.

Reduced resources for and attention on education

Government budgets shrink, decreasing the amount of funds available for education. Governments prioritise responding to the crisis and divert funding from education. Families use resources to survive rather than learn, and cope by taking girls out of school for domestic and income-generating work.

“In our shared mission to protect children’s lives, Malala Fund’s \$100,000 grant to KinderUSA has been transformative. Their commitment reflects Malala Yousafzai’s lifelong advocacy for children’s rights, enabling us to provide relief and critical meals to over 6,500 children in Gaza. This support goes beyond humanitarian aid — it’s a powerful statement of solidarity with children suffering through unprecedented brutality, embodying hope when darkness seems overwhelming.”

— **Dalell D. Mohamed**

Executive Director, KinderUSA

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE WILL:

- **Provide grants to organisations responding to crises that impact girls’ ability to go to school or continue learning** through a discretionary fund advised by our co-founders. Partners will be able to use funds to conduct a range of programmatic and advocacy activities to improve adolescent girls’ access to informal and formal education in a crisis or challenging operating environment.
- **Continue to provide grants to organisations that deliver alternative and digital learning programmes for girls in Afghanistan** while they are banned from secondary schools. Our Afghanistan Initiative’s first group of grantee partners delivered alternative learning programmes through underground schools, online platforms, radio and television capable of reaching more than 2 million girls across Afghanistan.³⁶
- **Call attention to global crises that impact girls’ learning** by amplifying the voices of girls experiencing these learning interruptions firsthand to mobilise additional funds from diverse sources to support girls’ needs.





WHAT IT WILL TAKE

Malala Fund is embarking on an ambitious journey to raise \$100 million over the next five years to fuel transformative action for girls' secondary education. This funding will drive our mission to ensure all girls can access and complete 12 years of education.



We will dedicate \$50 million of this funding to strengthen the essential work of our grantee partners and invest the remaining \$50 million in our advocacy efforts and organisational ability to drive lasting, systemic change for girls' secondary education worldwide.

Over the last 10 years, Malala Fund has built an extraordinary global community of support. But to realise our objectives over the next five years and work towards a world where all girls can access and complete 12 years of education, we are seeking new and sustained partnerships with donors, organisations and businesses who share our passion for uplifting girls through education.

Real change takes time and multi-year contributions are key to lasting impact, giving us the stability and confidence to plan ambitiously, allocate resources strategically and direct our efforts where they are needed most. By minimising the uncertainties of year-to-year funding, we can sustain and deepen our work to create brighter futures for girls everywhere and a more equitable, resilient world for us all.

“Education is the cornerstone of progress, and girls’ education has the power to change the world. Pura is proud to partner with Malala Fund to amplify this truth and advocate for the right of every girl to learn. We’ve seen firsthand how access to education unleashes courage, leadership and innovation, creating ripples of change across generations... This partnership reflects our commitment to building a future where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and where the ripple effects of education transform families, communities and the planet.”

— **Lindsey Kneuen**

Chief Impact Advisor at
Pura, and CEO and Founder
of Pure Impact





OUR IMPACT AND LEARNING

We define impact ultimately as increases in adolescent girls' access to and completion of secondary education.

Understanding that we cannot achieve this impact alone, we will collaborate with partners employing diverse and complementary approaches to reach this shared goal.

We also know that progress is incremental and takes time, so we will track measures that demonstrate how our work is contributing to three building blocks of longer-term change:

1 Civil society strength

We will assess our contribution to supporting the resilience and capacity of civil society organisations so they can better influence, monitor and hold governments accountable for policy change and implementation over the long-term.

2 Policy change and implementation

We will assess how the work of our grantee partners and our own advocacy advances policies and funding that support adolescent girls to access and complete education.

3 Education in crisis

We will track how many adolescent girls impacted by crisis are able to access services funded by our grants to frontline organisations.

At the mid and end points of our strategic period, we will identify any progress towards strengthening or resourcing girls' right to education, and any changes to out-of-school and completion rates for girls at secondary level in our focus countries and beyond. This will help us assess whether short- and medium-term results in the above areas are leading to the longer-term changes we seek.

By 2030, we aim to:

- **Award \$50 million in grants** including \$40-45 million to civil society organisations across at least five countries, with 20% reserved for organisations led by girls or young women, and \$5 million to frontline organisations supporting adolescent girls in crises.
- **Contribute to 20 significant policy changes or implementation measures** that strengthen girls' right to secondary education.
- **Help release at least \$36 billion in additional financing for education** and improve how funding is spent to tackle girls' education barriers.
- **Contribute to creating environments that have the potential to support 34 million more adolescent girls** to access or complete secondary school in places where they face the greatest barriers.



WHAT WE WANT TO LEARN

Malala Fund is committed to continuous learning to better understand how our grantmaking and advocacy contribute to the transformative change we strive for.

To support this, we have identified strategic learning questions which we will review regularly over the next five years to inform our work and enhance our impact:

- What types of policies, and in which sectors, are proving effective in supporting girls' participation in secondary education?
- How are changes in global frameworks translating to changes in countries where girls face the greatest barriers to education?
- How can positive progress in national level policy advocacy shape the global agenda for girls' education?

Our focus on learning allows us to refine our strategies and approaches, enabling us to drive greater impact for girls and make the most of our resources.

CONCLUSION

In the next five years, Malala Fund is determined to accelerate global progress on girls' education.

We are using our biggest strengths — grantmaking and advocacy — to stand up against the forces holding girls back, strengthen girls' right to secondary education and unlock the resources needed for all girls to enjoy this right. We are sharpening our focus on policy change and implementation to impact millions of adolescent girls, ensuring they can access and complete 12 years of school.

Since our founding, we have made listening to girls, in all their diversity, and centring their perspectives core to our approach, and we will continue prioritising girls as we enter our next chapter. We will build bridges between girls' demands for their education and the systems that must deliver on them.

With 12 years of quality education, girls will have the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to choose their own futures and create healthier, more prosperous and more resilient communities. Together we can help unlock girls' full potential to thrive in all areas of their lives and to build a more equitable world for us all. More than 10 years ago, Malala and Ziauddin ignited a movement for girls' education to fight for a world where all girls can learn and choose their own futures. As Malala Fund begins its next chapter, we hope you join us as we grow and deepen this movement.



“For deaf girls, like all girls, education is the key to unlocking opportunities and fostering responsible, contributing members of society.”

— **Bethelhem Shitahun**

25, deaf rights activist from Ethiopia and Young Women Advisory Council member.

ANNEX: ABOUT MALALA FUND

We are driven by the unwavering belief that education is not a privilege for a select few but a fundamental right for all girls.

Our co-founders, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai and her father Ziauddin, established Malala Fund in early 2013. But they began their fight for a world where every girl can learn and choose her own future years before. In Swat Valley, Pakistan, Malala and Ziauddin bravely championed girls' right to education in the face of the Taliban's oppressive rule. Their advocacy came at great personal cost. In 2012, when Malala was just 15 years old, a Taliban gunman targeted and shot her for speaking out.

The surge of public support following the attack propelled Malala and Ziauddin's campaign for girls' education onto the global stage — inspiring the creation of Malala Fund and launching a worldwide movement. From the start, Malala Fund has focused on ensuring all girls can go to school and reach their full potential and supported a new generation of brave activists fighting for girls' rights and futures.

To date, Malala Fund has awarded \$65 million through more than 400 grants to support passionate advocates, activists and initiatives across 27 countries. Leveraging our global reach and influence, we have secured transformative policies and vital funding commitments to advance girls' education worldwide.



10 years of impact

1

Raised the global standard for girls' education from 9 to 12 years

Working with partners, we ensured the global education goal agreed by governments in 2015 matched girls' ambitions to complete a full primary and secondary education. We have also helped build momentum towards a new international treaty that would make the right to 12 years of education free for all.

2

Helped unlock billions in girls' education financing

In collaboration with other organisations, we mobilised nearly \$7 billion in commitments from donor countries and institutions to fund education.³⁷ We played an instrumental role in designing and realising the Global Partnership for Education's Girls' Education Accelerator, their first funding initiative dedicated specifically to girls' education.³⁸

3

Supported our partners to deliver concrete policy change in six countries

From passing a constitutional amendment supporting free basic education in Brazil to eliminating hidden school fees in Nigeria's Kaduna state, our grantee partners' advocacy efforts have broken down education barriers for millions of girls.

4

Supported access to learning for nearly 13 million students during education disruptions

With our grants, frontline organisations delivered programmes capable of helping nearly 11 million girls and boys continue their studies during COVID-19 school closures and 2 million girls in Afghanistan access alternative and digital learning.



Our vision: A world where all girls can learn and choose their own futures

We want all girls to enjoy their right to 12 years of education, setting them up to thrive in all areas of their lives.

Our mission: To ensure all girls can access and complete 12 years of education

We believe that by completing 12 years of quality schooling, girls will have the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to reach their full potential, make their own life choices and engage meaningfully with the world around them.

Our approach: Advance policies that support girls' secondary education through grantmaking and advocacy

To create sustainable change for the largest number of girls, we use grantmaking and advocacy to push for policies that strengthen girls' right to secondary education and unlock the resources needed for all girls to enjoy this right. We focus on secondary education³⁹, when gender discrimination magnifies the physical, financial and social barriers to attending and completing school for adolescent girls, especially those living in lower-income countries.

As we strive for change in the world, we know it is also important to strive for change within our organisation. We aim to increasingly align our organisation and work with decolonial and feminist principles, reflecting them in our values, our approaches and our commitment to actively redress power imbalances within and outside Malala Fund.

Our values:⁴⁰ They are at the heart of who we are as an organisation, defining what we do and how we do it.

We set ambitious goals.

We focus on long-term change that promotes gender equality in education and transforms unequal systems keeping girls out of school.

We dare to be brave.

We invest in challenging contexts even when this means a slower path to impact, and we hold leaders accountable, supporting our partners to speak truth to power and standing with them when they face backlash.

We seek and amplify diverse perspectives.

We aim to reach girls in all their diversity, centre the expertise of girls and local activists in our work and through our platforms, and strengthen collective action for girls' secondary education.

We think creatively.

We support partners to test innovative tactics and strategies and use our networks, funds and influence flexibly and nimbly to react to new challenges. We use creative approaches to communicate across different audiences.

We act with integrity.

We hold ourselves ultimately accountable to girls, prioritising meaningful impact for them when deciding how we invest our time and money. We shift power and resources to work that centres their priorities and enables them to drive change.



Our cross-cutting priorities: Centring girls and building alliances

Our work with girls and young women has consistently shown us that their expertise, creativity and activism drive real, transformational change for girls. We will continue to centre girls in our work by funding the organisations they lead through our grants; calling attention to their challenges and activism through our public platforms; and reflecting their priorities in our advocacy. We will use our networks and influence to open doors for girls to better engage with policymakers and influence decision-making processes. We will regularly consult with our Young Women Advisory Council, composed of young women leaders from our focus countries, to help inform and actualise our commitment to centring girls.

Our decade of experience has also demonstrated that no organisation can effectively address the complex threats and barriers to girls' secondary education on its own. Our Education Champion Network testifies to the power of collaboration and collective action to drive change. We are committed to building alliances by developing relationships, strengthening partnerships and complementing others' strengths as part of a wider movement for education and gender equality.

Working with a diversity of allies through different methods will help us build the political pressure needed to address the systemic barriers to girls' education. These allies include civil society organisations working on education and related sectors, community groups, governments and other funders. We also recognise the importance of men understanding girls' experiences with education barriers and actively supporting their rights to reinforce our efforts to advance gender equality in education.



Girls' Vision for Education⁴¹

Informed by girls' own vision for their education, Malala Fund wants to see education that supports girls to develop independence, confidence, self-expression and the practical skills they need to thrive and lead.

Through the Girls' Vision for Education project in 2024, Malala Fund worked with young women leaders and partner organisations to consult with nearly 800 adolescent girls and young women from 30 countries to define their vision for their education. Girls told us they want their schools to be free from violence, nurture creativity and equality, and ensure teachers and peers treat girls with dignity and respect. These findings inform our own understanding of education quality and our approach to addressing access and completion challenges.

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ENDNOTES

1. "Gender apartheid" refers to a system of governance that uses laws and policies to oppress one gender group. In Afghanistan, the Taliban uses gender apartheid to exclude girls and women from public life and spaces, depriving them of their rights and dignity.
2. Throughout this document, "adolescent" refers to girls aged 10–24. In this instance, the figure captures girls of official secondary school age (determined by country) who are not in school.
3. "Lower-income countries" refers to low- and low-middle income countries under the World Bank's classification system.
4. UNESCO (2023) *Global Education Monitoring Report VIEW database*. <https://education-estimates.org/out-of-school/data/>
5. "Marginalised girls" refers to girls who have not enrolled in, have dropped out of or are at risk of dropping out of secondary school, and who experience enhanced education barriers due to a range of intersecting identities and social statuses. This includes girls living in poverty or conflict, ethnic and religious minorities, girls with disabilities and LGBTQ girls.
6. The \$36 billion figure for financing represents a reasonable estimate of how much funding could be freed up to promote girls' education from 2025–2030 across different strategies that Malala Fund, grantee and other partner advocacy have verifiably contributed to. These include sub-national and/or national education budget increases in Nigeria and Pakistan and additional funds available for education as a percent of total funds generated through debt relief initiatives.
7. The 34 million estimate represents potential reach: the number of girls who could gain access to secondary education due to systemic policy and advocacy efforts in Malala Fund's focus countries from 2025–2030. The estimate is based on U.N. population projections and the most relevant secondary out-of-school rates per country, aligned to past rates and government targets for 2030.
8. The U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education includes a 2030 target that "all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes".
9. UNESCO (2023) *Global Education Monitoring Report VIEW database*. <https://education-estimates.org/out-of-school/data/>
10. Ibid.
11. Debt servicing comprises interest payments and principal repayments on loans.
12. Development Finance International (2024) *Solving the New Debt Crisis: a Debt Service Watch Briefing for the G20*. <https://www.development-finance.org/en/news/864-24-october-solving-the-new-debt-crisis-a-debt-service-watch-briefing-for-the-g20>
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19. These grants will prioritise funding for organisations led by girls and young women aged 18–25. Organisations led by young women aged 18–40 will also be eligible for this funding. This funding approach builds on insights from our Girl Programme, which supported girls' activism under our previous strategic plan.
20. Women's Philanthropy Institute (2024) *The Women & Girls Index 2024: Measuring Giving to Women's and Girls' Organizations*. <https://equitablegivinglab.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/WPI-Women-and-Girls-Index-2024-Research-Brief-Final.pdf>
21. UNESCO (2023) *Global Education Monitoring Report VIEW database*. <https://education-estimates.org/out-of-school/data/>
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Organisations rooted in lower-income countries are headquartered and have the majority of staff in a lower-income country, or have long-term presence in a lower-income country and commit to investing in local talent (or in closed regimes, in members of the diaspora) for leadership positions.
25. Debt servicing comprises interest payments and principal repayments on loans.
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29. We use "political instability" to refer to situations where a government or political system is at risk of or experiencing severe disruption to its normal functions, possibly leading to substantial changes in policies or the political order.
30. Calculated from Education Cannot Wait (2025) *State of Education for Crisis-Affected Children and Adolescents: Access and Learning Outcomes – Global Estimates 2025 Update*. <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/new-global-estimates-study>
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36. Malala Fund has provided grants to civil society organisations in Afghanistan since 2016. Under our Afghanistan Initiative, we shifted our grants to support adolescent girls' continued learning while the Taliban regime bans them from secondary education.
37. The largest global commitments included in this figure are \$3.5 billion as part of the G7's 2018 Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls, and Women in Developing Countries; \$2.57 billion as part of the Global Partnership for Education's replenishment in 2021; and \$607 million as part of the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in 2016. Other commitments totalling \$275.6 million were secured in 2019–20 from donor governments and the European Union through multiple forums. The access and influence of Malala Fund co-founders and staff significantly contributed to wider sector advocacy for these commitments.
38. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a multi-stakeholder partnership and fund that aims to strengthen education in lower-income countries. It brings together lower-income country governments, donors, international organisations, civil society, the private sector and private foundations.
39. Typically grades 7–12.
40. Our values reflect our commitment to increasingly align our organisation and work with decolonial and feminist principles.
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**Your support
is more than
a contribution
— it's a catalyst
for change.**

By partnering with us, you become a vital part of a global movement to create a brighter, more equitable future for girls everywhere. Your investment fuels the fight to protect and advance girls' right to education, setting them up to thrive in all areas of their lives and shape their own futures.

When girls are educated, they transform their families, communities and the world. Together, we have the power to make this a reality — supporting millions of girls to realise their potential and drive change that will echo across generations.



Support girls'
education

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