

Policy Paper

# Closing the Gap 2: Delivering Safe and Sustainable Solutions for Girls' Education in Crises



Inter-agency  
Network for Education  
in Emergencies

**The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)** is an open, global network of representatives from non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, donor agencies, governments, and academic institutions, working together to ensure the right to quality and safe education for all people affected by crisis. To learn more, please visit [www.inee.org](http://www.inee.org)

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# Introduction

At the 44th Group of Seven (G7) Summit hosted by Canada in Charlevoix on June 8-9, 2018, the leaders of seven of the world's largest economies<sup>1</sup> adopted the [Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women in Developing Countries](#) (hereafter “the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education”), collectively committing themselves to investing in quality education for girls and women during conflict and crisis, including refugees and internally displaced persons. The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) [Reference Group on Girls' Education in Emergencies](#) commissioned a series of global monitoring reports to chart progress against the stated goals.

This policy paper summarizes the findings of the second INEE monitoring report: *Mind the Gap 2: Seeking Safe and Sustainable Solutions for Girls' Education in Crises*.<sup>2</sup> It tracks progress made in the same set of 44 crisis-affected countries identified in the first [Mind the Gap report](#),<sup>3</sup> and focuses on three themes:

- **Distance learning for girls:** how interventions can support distance learning when girls can't access schools, and strategies to overcome gendered barriers, including the gendered digital divide
- **Gender-based violence (GBV) and girls' education:** strategies to monitor and reduce GBV in schools, and how education providers can contribute to prevention, protection, and recovery from GBV in the community during a crisis, including periods of school closure
- **Girls' education and climate change:** how girls' education is impacted by climate change; how girls' education can support resilience in the face of climate change and mitigate the effects of climate change; and how to enable girls to find their voices to address climate issues.

This policy paper begins by summarizing the progress made since 2020, when the first [Mind the Gap](#) report was written. It then considers the gaps in provision, data and evidence, and funding relating to these three thematic areas. Finally, it recommends actions to assist a range of stakeholders in addressing these gaps. (For a broader analysis of progress and gaps in girls' and women's education in contexts of crisis and conflict, including contexts of forced displacement, and the actions needed to address those gaps, see the first [INEE Closing the Gap policy paper](#).)

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1 The Charlevoix Declaration was adopted by Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

2 INEE (2022). *Mind the Gap 2: Seeking Safe and Sustainable Solutions for Girls' Education in Crises*. <https://inee.org/resources/mind-gap-2-seeking-safe-and-sustainable-solutions-girls-education-crises>

3 INEE (2021). *Mind the Gap: The State of Girls' Education in Contexts of Crisis and Conflict*. <https://inee.org/resources/mind-gap-state-girls-education-crisis-and-conflict>.

# Summary of progress

Colombia. 2016 © Edgar León, NRC

There is some evidence of progress towards meeting the goals of the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education since the first *Mind the Gap* report was published in 2021. Global data indicate that in the period just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation was improving and gender gaps in access to education and learning were becoming significantly smaller. In early 2020, girls' primary completion rates were similar to or greater than those of boys in 20 of the 33 countries for which data were available. And in early grade (grade 2 or 3) reading assessments, girls outperformed boys in most of the crisis-affected countries with data available (15 out of 17 countries). Directly comparable data for earlier years were not available at the time of writing of the first *Mind the Gap* report. But comparable data on the average intake rate into the final grade of lower secondary school in crisis-affected countries indicate an increase from 51% in 2019 to 53% in 2020 for girls and boys alike.<sup>4</sup> Analysis of learning outcomes data available at the time of writing of the first *Mind the Gap* report indicated that girls' learning outcomes had previously lagged behind those of boys in many crisis-affected countries.

There is emerging evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to significant and long-term setbacks in this progress, but it is still too early to reliably estimate their scale. For example, a study in Bangladesh found that one in ten girls aged 12-15 reported not going back to school after reopening; and a study in four counties in Kenya found that 16% of girls and 8% of boys aged 15-19 did not re-enroll during the first two months of school reopening in 2021.<sup>5</sup> UNESCO's global monitoring of school closures shows that, between March 2020 and November 2021, crisis-affected countries experienced full national school closures for an average duration of 25 weeks, compared to an average of 18 weeks for other countries.<sup>6</sup>

There has also been **improvement in the availability of data**, with data on school completion rates and learning outcomes now available for many more crisis-affected countries,<sup>7</sup> along with better data collection techniques supporting the collection of sensitive data, such as surveys relating to violence in schools.<sup>8</sup>

4 Averages were calculated by the author using data retrieved from the UIS database in October 2021 and October 2020. Averages are not weighted. Data for Jordan and Lebanon are excluded from these calculations.

5 UNESCO (2021). When schools shut. Gendered impacts of Covid-19 school closures. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000379270>.

6 Authors own calculations based on UNESCO global dataset on the duration of school closures (n.d.) <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse#schoolclosures> accessed 19th January 2022

7 See INEE (2022) *Mind the Gap 2*, Section 6.1.2.

8 Examples include use of audio computer-assisted self-interviews. See INEE (2022) *Mind the Gap 2*, Section 4.1.

One of the most significant areas of progress has been the **increased awareness** - particularly among donor governments - **of the importance of ensuring that all girls, including those living in crisis situations, are able to complete 12 years of safe and quality education.** This is evident through commitments made at the 2021 G7 Summit, and the willingness of development partners to unite behind joint goals for girls' education, which include an explicit focus on girls impacted by conflict, displacement and natural disasters.<sup>9</sup>

Mass school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have raised awareness of the vital protective role that schooling provides for girls, and of the need to develop education systems to protect girls from GBV during such school closures. It has also become evident that **gendered barriers to distance learning approaches need to be addressed.**<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the increasing frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters is a clear sign of the climate emergency facing our planet, underscoring the significant role that **girls' education should have in climate change resilience and mitigation efforts.**<sup>11</sup>

There are encouraging signs that some donors are increasing their funding as they become more aware of the importance of girls' and women's education during crises. In order to promote transparency and accountability of the commitments made by G7 donors and funding partners as agreed under the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education, the INEE Reference Group on Girls' Education in Emergencies developed a public-facing interactive dashboard, which visualizes funding pledged and disbursed as a result of the Charlevoix commitments. The dashboard shows that all Charlevoix donors have either met or are on track to meet their pledged Charlevoix commitments, and many have already exceeded their commitments.

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9 See Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (2021). Declaration on girls' education: Recovering from COVID-19 and unlocking agenda 2030. [Policy Paper]. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communicue/declaration-on-girls-education-recovering-from-covid-19-and-unlocking-agenda-2030>

10 See UNESCO (2021). When schools shut. Gendered impacts of Covid-19 school closures.

11 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 5.5.

# Gaps in provision

Pakistan, 2014 © S Fayyaz, IRC

## Gendered gaps in the provision of distance education during school closures

Many education emergency responses do not sufficiently address gender gaps in their design. For example, in the rush to provide distance education alternatives in the face of school closures related to Covid-19, **education providers often did not take a gender-sensitive or inclusive approach in the design and planning of their responses.**<sup>12</sup> The approaches most widely adopted by national education systems were reliant on access to technology, even in contexts where students and teachers had only limited access to basic technologies, such as radios and television, let alone to more advanced internet-dependent technologies. Globally at least 222 million girls could not be reached with remote learning.<sup>13</sup>

Barriers to distance education for girls include gendered attitudes and practices that can limit their access to electronic devices, and a disproportionate burden of household chores and caring responsibilities that can limit a girl's time to study at home. Gendered gaps in digital skills can further limit their access. Where these barriers are not addressed, distance education programs risk widening gender gaps by excluding many girls from opportunities to learn.<sup>14</sup>

### Low-tech and no-tech remote learning approaches

There are many examples of programs that have provided education and learning support for girls in their homes and local communities without relying on digital technologies.<sup>15</sup> Promising examples identified in Mind the Gap 2 include:

- interactive radio instruction;
- working with community leaders and community-based workers to distribute learning resources;
- learning groups in the community facilitated by volunteers;
- safe community-based spaces with learning resources located within the community; and
- advice to parents on how to support girls' learning, including raising awareness of learning resources available.

12 UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and OECD (2021). What's Next? Lessons on Education Recovery: Findings from a Survey of Ministries of Education amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

13 UNICEF (2020a). COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures? A global analysis of the potential reach of remote learning policies. [COVID-19 and School Closures: Are children able to continue learning - UNICEF DATA](#).

14 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 3.1.

15 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 3.3.2.



## Gaps in prevention of school-related gender-based violence

Most of the 44 crisis-affected countries have national programs to reduce violence by school staff, and national action plans to reduce violence in schools.<sup>16</sup> However, a growing body of data available on the prevalence of violence in schools within this same set of countries indicates **weak policy implementation for reducing violence in schools, particularly school-related gender-based violence** (SRGBV). One of the implementation gaps identified is that education leaders at the district and school level had not been given sufficient training or resources to monitor and respond to cases of GBV in schools. They had very limited capacity to enforce laws and enact policies. As a result, policy awareness and implementation at the school level were limited.

### Safe to Learn: Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool

“Safe to Learn” is a global initiative dedicated to ending violence against children in and through schools. The coalition has translated its five-point Call to Action into a [Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool](#), and has conducted diagnostic exercises using this tool in Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan, and Uganda.

The diagnostic exercises engaged stakeholders at the national, district, and school level and involved a desk review of laws, policies, and guidelines, as well as interviews. Examples of good practice were found in all countries, such as strong legal and policy documents that prohibit violence, as well as the inclusion of violence prevention in education sector plans. South Sudan’s general education sector plan, for example, includes a strategy for providing safe spaces, promoting schools as zones of peace, and sensitizing communities about SRGBV.

The diagnostic exercises found that all countries needed improvement in the following areas: coordination, dissemination, monitoring, and evaluation of violence prevention initiatives; a stronger role for district officials; and greater integration of strategies to prevent violence in and around schools, and including these strategies in education sector plans, along with indicators, action plans, and budgets.

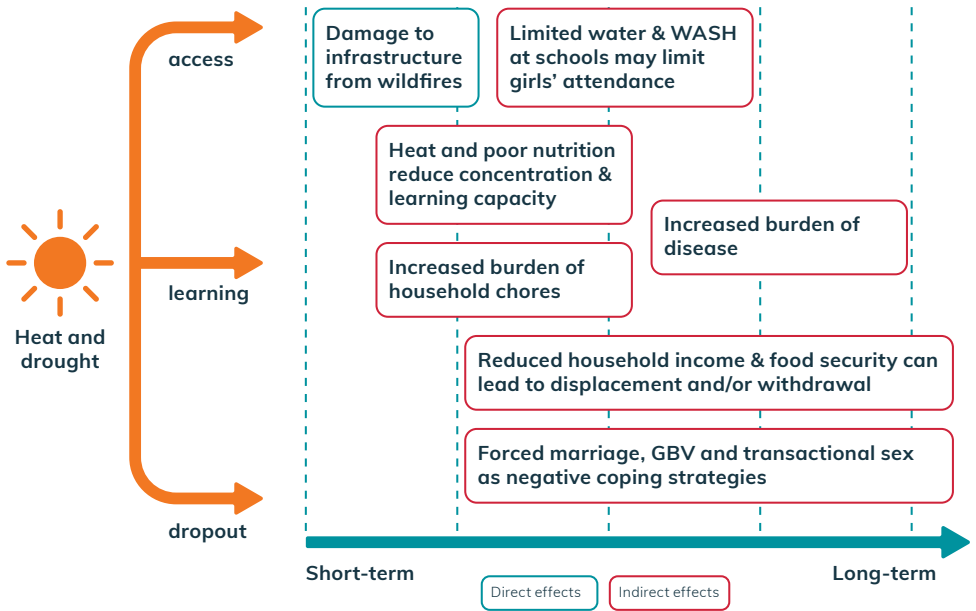
*Source: Safe to Learn. (2020). [Safe to Learn diagnostic exercises in Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda: Synthesis report](#). Safe to Learn.*

<sup>16</sup> See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.

# Gaps in girls' education related to climate change

Climate change is leading to increased frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters, the impacts of which are most acutely felt by low and lower-middle income countries, with girls and women often the most vulnerable. Weather-related disasters can lead to destruction of school infrastructure and forced displacement. The effects on households, including loss of household income and food security, which often lead to gendered coping strategies such as forced marriage, can also indirectly affect girls' ability to attend school, learn and complete their schooling (see figures 1-2). The Malala Fund estimated that at least four million girls in 2021 were prevented from completing their education due to climate change.<sup>17</sup>

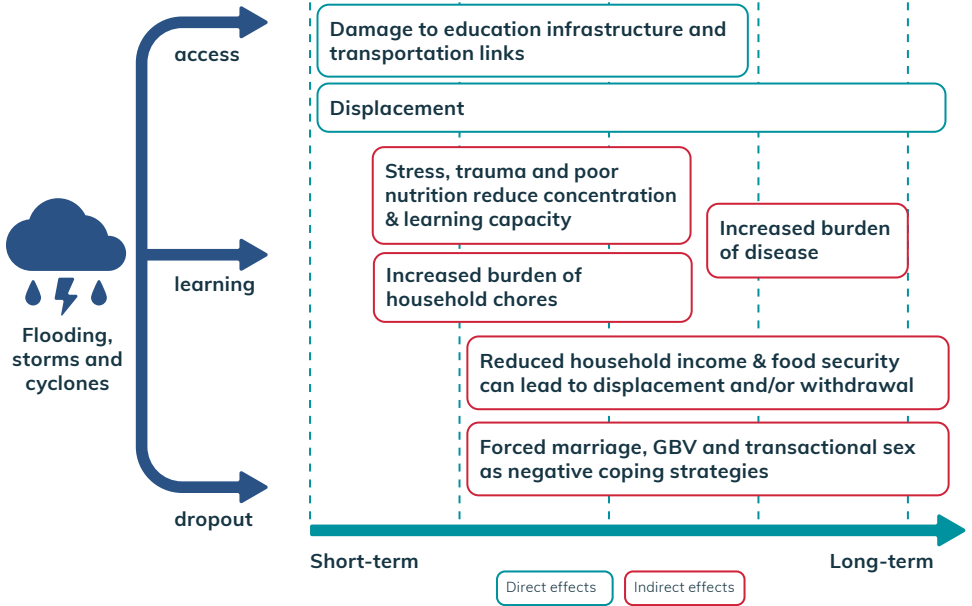
Figure 1: Direct and indirect impacts of heat and drought on girls' education.



Content adapted from: Sims, K. (2021). *Education, girls' education and climate change (K4D Emerging Issues Report No. 29)*. Institute of Development Studies.

17 The Malala Fund (2021). A greener, fairer future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education.

**Figure 2: Direct and indirect impacts of floods, storms and tropical cyclones.**



Content adapted from: Sims, K. (2021). *Education, girls' education and climate change (K4D Emerging Issues Report No. 29)*. Institute of Development Studies.

Girls' education can play an important role in climate change mitigation and resilience. There is emerging evidence and growing political interest in the role of girls' education in addressing the climate crisis, through increasing climate resilience and adaptive capacity, empowering women and girls to participate in decision-making forums to address the impacts of climate change, and through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and green skills.<sup>18</sup> Calls by donors to equip girls as agents of change in the climate crisis have not yet resulted in funding and programming to support this.<sup>19</sup> Because climate change is a global problem, the education response needs to be global as well. Educating children about climate change is an important strategy to mitigate the risks they face, especially girls living in crisis-affected and high emission countries.

<sup>18</sup> See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 5.3.

<sup>19</sup> See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 5.4.

# Gaps in data and evidence

Jordan, 2016 © Hussein Amri, NRC

The second Mind the Gap 2 report has identified a number of key data and evidence gaps for distance education, GBV in schools, and education for climate change mitigation that need to be addressed in order to improve policy, planning, and programming in these areas.

- Regarding **distance and remote education**, the proliferation of approaches taken during school closures stemming from COVID-19 provides a unique opportunity to research at scale how different approaches have contributed to girls' continuity of learning, retention, and re-entry into school. But the findings of this report also indicate a greater need for quantitative and qualitative data on girls' access to and engagement with communications technologies for learning, including radio, television, mobile phones, and devices with internet connectivity.<sup>20</sup>
- There remain major data gaps on the prevalence of **SRGBV**, particularly among forcibly displaced populations.<sup>21</sup> There are also evidence gaps on what works to prevent SRGBV, particularly in the area of effective implementation of government policies. There has been progress in generating evidence on the effectiveness of whole school approaches to reducing SRGBV, but studies remain small scale and rarely measure longer term impacts.<sup>22</sup> There is also a need to improve data collection methods so that the privacy of survivors is respected.<sup>23</sup>
- **Girls' education and climate change** is a relatively new area of interest and discussion among researchers and the international community. There remain fundamental data gaps on forced displacement resulting from extreme weather, with a lack of data disaggregated by age and sex in many contexts, making it difficult to estimate the global impact on girls and women.<sup>24</sup> There is also a lack of evidence on which curricular and pedagogical approaches are most effective at promoting sustainable behaviors, and how education systems can be made more effective at preparing the next generation to better address climate change.<sup>25</sup>

20 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 3.1.1.

21 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.1.

22 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.2.

23 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 4.1.

24 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 5.2.

25 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 5.4.

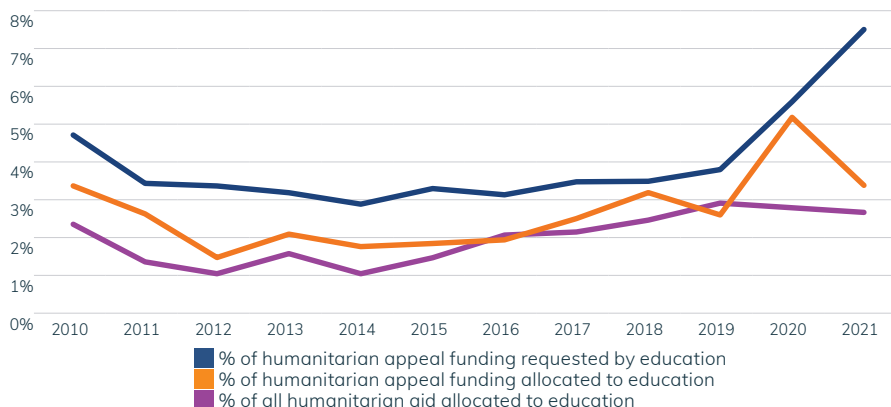
# Gaps in funding

Iraq, 2018 © Tom Peyre-Costa NRC

In 2020, only three crisis-affected countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Senegal) met both of the international benchmarks for public spending on education: 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 20% of national budgets. Data indicate that between 2016 and 2020, many crisis-affected countries reduced the proportion of GDP going to education.<sup>26</sup>

While the specific funding commitments made by donors in response to the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education have been met, a broader analysis of aid to education indicates that the international donor community is still not prioritizing education enough within humanitarian aid, and development aid to education is not targeted to counties where the need is greatest in terms of the number of out-of-school girls.<sup>27</sup> The proportion of humanitarian aid requested for education has increased from 3.8% in 2019 to 7.6% in 2021, indicating that it is a growing priority for humanitarian actors. Yet the proportion allocated to education by donors remains low, at around 3% of humanitarian aid.

**Figure 3: Proportion of humanitarian aid to education, 2010-2021**



Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service. (n.d.) Retrieved January 22, 2022.

Chad, Madagascar, and Sudan all have very high numbers of out-of-school girls but receive far less aid to education than some middle-income countries hosting large refugee populations. In 2019, Jordan received US\$35 education aid per capita, compared to less than US\$1 per capita aid to education in Sudan.

<sup>26</sup> See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 7.1.

<sup>27</sup> See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 7.2.

# Recommended actions

Jordan, 2016 © Hussein Amri, NRC

## Actions for national governments of crisis-affected countries

International development partners should support national governments to implement the following recommendations:

- Governments should meet their commitments to allocate to education at least 20% of government expenditure, as set out in the Incheon Declaration (2015), the Kenyatta Declaration (2021)<sup>28</sup> and the Paris Declaration (2021).<sup>29</sup>
- Governments should ensure that an up-to-date and thorough gender and inclusion analysis of national education is available, and that it includes populations in situations of chronic crisis and draws on data of barriers to distance education as well as in-person learning opportunities.
- Governments, collaborating with their partners in local education clusters and working groups, should design and adapt education sector crisis responses based on the findings of gender analyses of learning, also ensuring access to remote learning when schools close.
- Governments and their partners should establish school- or community-based focal points responsible for maintaining contact between the education system and girls' households.
- Governments and their partners should coordinate across sectors to deliver, monitor and support girls' learning, protection and well-being during crises.
- Governments and their partners should work with parents and caregivers to help them understand the value of girls' education and the importance of enabling them to continue to learn remotely when schools close. They should also provide parents and caregivers with practical guidance on how best to support the learning of girls in their care.
- Governments should support schools, non-formal education providers, and district education offices in their efforts to develop robust safeguarding systems, as well as train and resource district and school staff to implement them.

<sup>28</sup> Endorsed by Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>29</sup> Endorsed by Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar, Philippines, Syria, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

- Governments and their partners should improve the quality, content, and gender responsiveness of climate change education and education for environmental sustainability.

## **Actions for governments of countries with high carbon emissions**

- Countries with high carbon emissions should invest in researching and delivering education that is effective in developing skills and changing behaviors to mitigate climate change.

## **Actions for bilateral and multilateral donors**

- Donors should work with national governments to support them in implementing the actions listed above.
- Donors should support national youth and young feminist organizations working on gender, education and climate change.
- Donors should respond to the increased prioritization of education in humanitarian appeals by increasing their humanitarian spending on education, either overall at best, or as a percentage of humanitarian spending at the very least.
- Donors should prioritize countries and contexts of crisis, especially those with large populations of out-of-school girls, when allocating official development assistance (ODA) to education.
- Bilateral donors should continue and, where possible, increase their support to multilateral funding mechanisms with a strong focus on support to girls' education in crisis, such as the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) girls' education accelerator.

## **Actions for civil society**

This is a critical moment for the education in emergencies (EiE) community to act and capitalize on raised awareness of the importance of quality, safe and inclusive EiE for women and girls.

- INEE and other global networks should use their convening power to bring donors, policy makers, implementers, and affected populations together to drive improvements at scale for girls' education in crisis-affected contexts. This will require thorough assessment and compilation of evidence of what works, together with coordinated approaches to funding and implementation.
- Civil society in donor countries must hold donor governments to account on meeting their spending commitments on education for girls and women in crisis, especially wherever politicians seek to justify reduction in ODA to education on the basis of the need to prioritize domestic expenditure.

## **Actions for collectors and collators of data**

These actions are addressed to a wide range of stakeholders involved in the collection and collation of data, ranging from those conducting rapid assessments at a local level, to international organizations responsible for collating data at the global level.

- Collectors and collators of global monitoring data, including governments and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), should review the relevance of current global data sets on digital access and skills of children and young people, taking into consideration the need to monitor gendered digital divides and online safety.
- Collectors and collators of data on violence against children should improve the collection of data on SRGBV, by ensuring that data are collected on where violence takes place, and ensuring the privacy of those reporting experience of violence, especially sexual violence. More data collection of SRGBV is needed in contexts of forced displacement.
- Governments and humanitarian actors should ensure that data on forced displacement due to weather-related disasters are disaggregated by age and sex at a minimum, and by other intersecting factors where possible.
- International collectors and collators of data, as well as organizations that implement donor-funded programs should collaborate with local actors, such as community-based organizations, women's rights groups, and girls themselves, to collect and analyze data on girls' education.
- Collectors and collators of data should seek out research partnerships across sectors, such as education, social welfare and child protection, health, justice, finance, and planning in order to develop a holistic picture of girls' education, protection, and wellbeing.
- Organizations should prioritize capacity building and exchange on gender-responsive data collection and analysis to improve the quantity and quality of data and evidence on girls' EIE.

## **Actions for funders of research**

- Donors and other education research funders should invest in rigorous empirical studies of the effectiveness of different approaches to remote learning for girls' learning, access, and retention in education, taking into account other intersecting factors affecting access to technology.
- Funders of programming and research should invest in longer-term evaluations of the effectiveness of SRGBV prevention programs.
- Donors and development partners should invest in research on the gendered impact of climate change and the effectiveness of climate change policies and programming for girls' access to education and learning outcomes.



- Donors and development partners should explore how education can equip girls as agents of change in the climate crisis and provide funding for this research, as well as funding for the development and piloting of effective approaches in this area.
- Funders of research should encourage and fund research partnerships that stretch across sectors and actors, and between international institutions and organizations, national organizations, and individual researchers based in crisis-affected areas.

## **Actions for teachers and other education personnel**

- Teachers and other education personnel should advocate for the development, implementation, and monitoring of gender-responsive codes of conduct and referral mechanisms for SRGBV, targeting their efforts at school heads in particular.
- Teachers and other education personnel should advocate for comprehensive professional development of gender-responsive pedagogy for both in person and distance education, targeting their efforts at school heads in particular.
- Teachers and other education personnel should work with parents and caregivers to break down gendered barriers to distance learning for girls; and they should provide parents and caregivers with practical guidance on how best to support the learning of girls in their care.
- Teachers and other education personnel should promote the development of climate resilience and “green skills”, and support students to become agents of change in the climate crisis.



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