



## Summary Brief

# GIRLS' EDUCATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Investing in education for resilience

This brief was developed to support dissemination of key messages in [Mind the Gap 2: Seeking Safe and Sustainable Solutions for Girls' Education in Crises](#). It provides an overview of evidence and gaps on the relationship between girls' education and climate crises, and recommends actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change on girls' education and promote resilience.



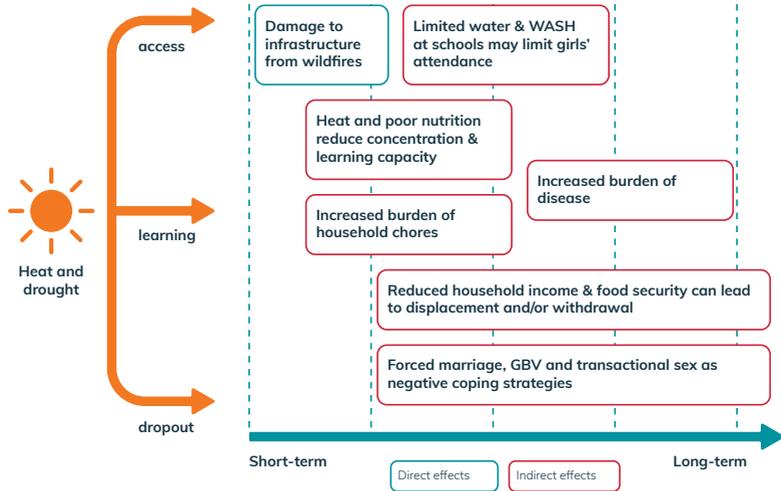
## Climate change exacerbates barriers to education for girls in crisis-affected contexts.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters, with low and lower-middle income countries bearing the brunt of the effects, and girls and women being particularly vulnerable.

Weather-related disasters, including drought, heatwaves, heavy rainfall, and tropical cyclones, have direct and indirect effects on girls' education, as summarized in Figures 1 and 2. These effects are likely amplified for girls in crisis-affected contexts. It is estimated that at least four million girls in low- and lower-middle-income countries will be unable to complete their schooling due to the impact of climate change.<sup>1</sup> Urgent action is needed to minimize learning loss during and after weather-related disasters.

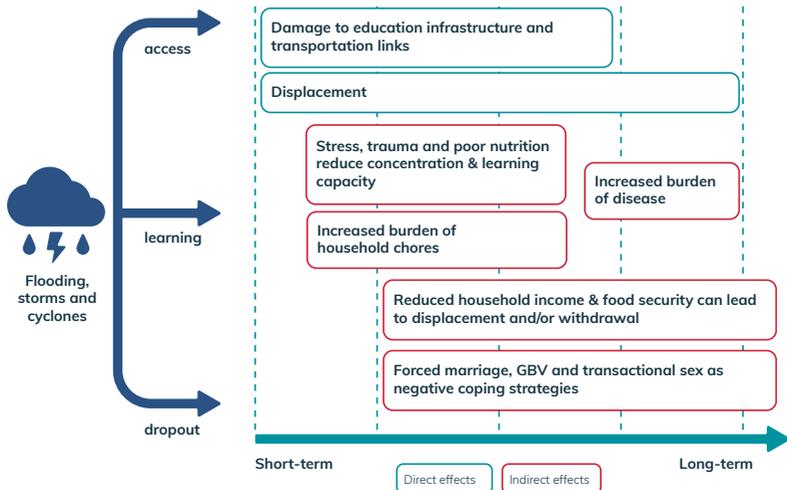
1 Malala Fund. (2021). A greener, fairer future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education. Malala Fund. <https://malala.org/newsroom/malala-fund-publishes-report-on-climate-change-and-girls-education>

Figure 1: The direct and indirect effects 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.

Figure 2: The direct and indirect effects 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.

## Investing in girls' education to address the climate crisis

There is emerging evidence on the role of girls' education in supporting resilience towards and mitigation of the impacts of climate change.<sup>2</sup>

- Education can reduce girls' vulnerability to the effects of climate change by increasing their resilience, adaptive capacity, and disaster preparedness,<sup>3</sup> with these benefits extending to girls' families and communities and across generations.<sup>4</sup>
- STEM education and TVET can support girls to develop green skills and enable countries to transition to a low-carbon economy.<sup>5</sup>
- Girls' education that promotes leadership skills and encourages girls to participate and engage with politics and civic society can generate positive outcomes for the environment.<sup>6</sup>

### Gaps

The Mind the Gap 2 report highlights the following gaps in evidence and actions on climate crisis and girls' education.

- **Disconnect between policy and practice:** There is increasing attention on the inter-relationship between girls' education and climate crisis, as highlighted by the 2022 COP 26 conference. However, there are few large-scale programs, data and research activities in place to operationalize these calls.<sup>7</sup>
- **Insufficient data on the gendered impacts of climate-induced displacement:** There are still significant data gaps on forced displacement caused by extreme weather, with many contexts lacking age and gender disaggregated data, making it difficult to assess the gendered impacts of climate crisis. Where sex-disaggregated data is available, it suggests that women and girls, particularly those in crisis-affected contexts, are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis.<sup>8</sup>
- **Lack of attention towards climate education and resilience:** Climate education is still not prioritized in crisis-affected countries: only 13 out of the 44 crisis-affected countries report data against SDG 4.7.1 (Education for Sustainable Development),

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2 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Section 5.3.

3 Muttarak, R., & Lutz, W. (2014). Is education a key to reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and hence unavoidable climate change? *Ecology and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-06476-190142>

4 Striessnig et. al (2013). Effects of Educational Attainment on Climate Risk Vulnerability. *Ecology and Society*, 18(1), art16. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05252-180116>

5 UNICEF. (2020). Towards an equal future: Reimagining girls' education through STEM. <https://www.unicef.org/media/84046/file/Reimagining-girls-education-through-stem-2020.pdf>

6 Lv, Z., & Deng, C. (2019). Does women's political empowerment matter for improving the environment? A heterogeneous dynamic panel analysis. *Sustainable Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1926>;

Norgaard, K., & York, R. (2005). Gender equality and state environmentalists. *Gender and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204273612>

7 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Sections 5.5 and 8.2.4.

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

and only 2 report against [Indicator 4.7.5](#) (Percentage of students in lower secondary showing proficiency in knowledge of environmental science and geoscience).<sup>9</sup>

- **Missing women's and girls' voices in climate decision-making:** Even when countries have gender-specific climate change policies, women, girls and young people are generally acknowledged as vulnerable groups rather than as agents of change, and their voices remain missing from the decision-making processes that affect them.<sup>10</sup>

## Recommendations

The impacts of the climate crisis are not distributed equitably. High- and upper-middle-income countries are contributing the most to the crisis - they are home to just under half (48%) of the world's population but are responsible for 86% of global carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>11</sup> But low and lower-middle income countries are bearing the brunt of the crisis.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the policy discourses on climate action should build on climate justice and take into account the following considerations:

- High-emitting countries need to take a greater share of the responsibility and financial commitments for climate action, and should support low-emitting countries to mitigate the impacts and consequences of the climate crisis.
- While women and girls should be empowered for resilience and engaged in the decision-making for climate action, they should not be made to shoulder the burden of fixing the climate crisis.

Global problems require global solutions. The following actions are suggested in order to address the impacts of climate change on women's and girls' education in crisis-affected contexts.

## Programming

- A gender-responsive approach should be integrated into programming for climate action at local, national, regional and international levels to ensure that climate policies empower women and girls, protect their rights, and address the gendered impacts of the climate crisis.<sup>13</sup>
- Governments should work within the UNFCCC COP process to take coordinated action on gender equality, education, and climate justice.<sup>14</sup>

9 See INEE (2022) Mind the Gap 2, Sections 5.4 and 5.5.

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

11 Our World in Data. (2021). Population by income level, 1960 to 2020. Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/population-by-income-level?stackMode=relative>

12 Malala Fund. (2021). A greener, fairer future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education. Malala Fund. <https://malala.org/newsroom/malala-fund-publishes-report-on-climate-change-and-girls-education>

13 UNHCR. (2019). Analytical study on gender-responsive climate action for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women. UNHCR. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/26>

14 Malala Fund. (2021). A greener, fairer future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education. Malala Fund. <https://malala.org/newsroom/malala-fund-publishes-report-on-climate-change-and-girls-education>

## Policy and planning

- Governments should adopt gender-responsive approaches for climate action,<sup>15</sup> and put in place policies and programmes for transition to a low-carbon economy.<sup>16</sup>
- Governments, international actors, and civil society should meaningfully engage women and girls in decision-making processes for climate action.
- Governments should invest in girls' education and address the social, economic and other barriers that climate crises pose to the continuity of their education and learning.
- Governments should ensure that girls have access to information, training, and skills they need now and in the future;<sup>17</sup> this includes prioritizing climate education in the curriculum, and empowering girls with skills for resilience and to act as agents of change, and the skills/trainings to participate in the green jobs and economy.<sup>18</sup>

## Funding

- Governments and donors should invest in and support the collection and analysis of data on the gendered impacts of climate change on education and the effectiveness of policies and programs that address the impacts of climate change.
- High-emission and high-income countries should make available more and better financing to lower-income countries affected by climate change so they can adapt to new realities and transition to low-carbon economies.<sup>19</sup>

## Data collection, monitoring, and analysis

- National data systems, with the support of the international donor community, should collect more and better data disaggregated by gender and intersecting inequalities to understand the gendered impacts of climate change on girls' education.

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

16 OECD. (2015). Three steps to a low-carbon economy. The Goal of Zero Net Emissions can be Achieved. Policy Brief. OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/policy-briefs/Three-steps-to-a-low-carbon-economy.pdf>

17 See Plan International. (2019). Girls' Rights in Climate Strategies. [https://plan-international.org/uploads/2021/12/publication-girls\\_rights\\_in\\_climate\\_strategy-v5.pdf](https://plan-international.org/uploads/2021/12/publication-girls_rights_in_climate_strategy-v5.pdf)

18 See: Malala Fund. (2021). Change the subject: How leaders can take action for climate education at COP26. <https://malala.org/newsroom/change-the-subject-how-leaders-can-take-action-for-climate-education-at-cop26>

19 Malala Fund. (2021). A greener, fairer future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education. Malala Fund. <https://malala.org/newsroom/malala-fund-publishes-report-on-climate-change-and-girls-education>

## Further resources on climate change:

- **Malala Fund (2021). [A greener, fairer future: Why leaders need to invest in climate and girls' education](#).** This report offers recommendations for governments on improving girls' access to education and transforming education systems to help all students thrive in a climate-affected world and create a greener, fairer future.
- **Malala Fund (2021). [Change the Subject: How leaders can take action for climate education at COP26](#).** This briefing paper offers recommendations on how governments can incorporate gender-responsive climate education in their COP26 climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation strategies.
- **Plan International (2019 ). [Girls' Rights in Climate Strategies](#).** This advocacy brief offers calls-to-action to ensure girls' rights are included in climate action.

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