Girls' Education Report Cards

Grading governments' progress towards getting every girl in school

GIRLS' EDUCATION REPORT CARDS

MALALA **FUND**

Contents

Introduction

In 2015, world leaders pledged to achieve universal quality education by 2030 as part of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1] Fifteen years to ensure every child can complete free, safe, quality education.

As we approach the halfway point to the 2030 deadline, Malala Fund evaluated governments' progress to see every girl in school against their commitments, looking at both low- and lower-middle-income countries' efforts and support from donor countries. By considering current education data and policies, our report cards identify the ways leaders around the world are supporting or failing girls in low- and lower-middle-income countries, and recommend what policies they can change and resources they can provide to help girls thrive.

The first report card examines the current status of education in 75 low- and lower-middle-income countries based on benchmark data and assesses whether or not their policies help girls complete their education and realise their ambitions. The second report card tracks the progress (or lack thereof) that donor countries have made against their pledges to global education.

Malala Fund's report cards reveal that 18% of low- and lower-middle-income countries — which are home to 4% of the world's school-aged girls — score less than 50% in our assessment of their efforts to get girls in school. Additionally, 72% of donor countries are not prioritising girls' education.[2]

At this pace, leaders will not achieve universal quality education by 2030 and will instead contend with a global education emergency that will have devastating impacts for generations to come, particularly on girls and women.

Our report cards show that inadequate government action on education, lack of solidarity between higher- and lower-income countries and weak policies are preventing girls in low- and lower-middle income countries from learning on equal terms with boys.

Girls' education is in a state of emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, conflict, poverty and gender discrimination are preventing millions of girls from learning. Leaders are exacerbating the situation by failing to work together to devote the attention and resources girls need. To achieve universal quality education in our lifetime, governments must raise their ambitions for girls, beginning by rectifying policy and resource gaps identified in these report cards.

Malala Fund's girls' education report cards
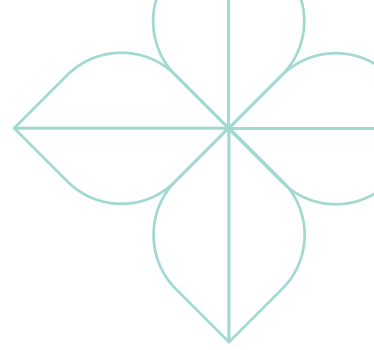
Our girls' education report cards analyse countries' progress to see every girl in school by evaluating current education data and policies.

Low- and lower-middle-income countries

Our first report card examines the current status of education in low- and lower-middle-income countries based on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 indicators — including completion and participation rates, proportion of qualified teachers, education expenditure and equity. It also evaluates countries' policies based on what has proven to be effective in helping girls go to school and realise their ambitions — including cash transfers for school attendance, bans on child marriage, programmes to reduce violence by school staff and laws preventing gender discrimination in employment (see "Determining policy score" box for more). By improving their performance against these measures, low- and lower-middle-income countries can achieve 12 years of quality education *and* help ensure that girls and women are able to live on equal terms with boys and men.

This report card reveals the ways that leaders in low- and lower-middle-income countries are failing girls. We find that 14 countries — who together are home to 38 million school-aged girls — earn below 50 in an average of their data and policy scores.

Generally, countries that have better benchmark indicator scores than policy scores — such as Nepal, Swaziland and Uzbekistan — need to strengthen legal frameworks to create gender-equal environments outside of the classroom to ensure that girls can go to school and freely realise their ambitions. Similarly, where benchmark indicator scores lag behind policy scores — for example in Angola or Uganda — governments must assess why their policies aren't effective and address implementation gaps to improve education outcomes for girls. And for countries where multiple crises intersect for girls and women, there needs to be a coordinated approach by states to invest in education, strengthen systems and enact gender-equal legislation.

Even strong performers show room for improvement. For example, while Vietnam registers high scores for girl-specific and equity-focused pre-primary indicators, trained female teachers and labour market opportunities, it still has a ways to go in improving school safety and ensuring that girls have positive role models.[3][4]

Rwanda, which performs strongly among the low-income group, has managed to bring down out-of-school rates for girls and train the majority of female teachers. But it still scores poorly when we consider the policies necessary to reduce financial barriers to education, such as government expenditure on education per child, the existence and coverage of cash transfers that incentivise attendance for girls and removal of school fees.

Determining policy score

To determine low- and lower-middle-income countries' policy score, we looked for policies that are proven to help girls to thrive in school and the workforce. These include:

Removal of financial barriers

- Is schooling fee-free?
- Are there cash transfers in place to incentivise school attendance for girls?

Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)

- Is child marriage banned?
- Is contraception safe, legal and freely available?
- Is comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) mandated in schools?

Child safety

- Is corporal punishment banned?
- Are there programmes to reduce violence in schools?

Labour market opportunities

- Does the law mandate non-discrimination and equal pay regardless of gender in employment?
- Is sexual harassment explicitly prohibited in the workplace?

Role models

- What proportion of teachers are female?
- What proportion of public sector workers are female?
- Are there quotas in place for female parliamentarians?

Some countries such as the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone and South Sudan have dismal performances in both measures. In South Sudan only 3.8% of girls complete upper secondary school, in Sierra Leone almost half of all girls are not enrolled in lower secondary and in the Central African Republic only 9% of the total budget is spent on education. On the policy front, the coverage of free school meals is low, availability of water and sanitation (WASH) facilities in schools for girls is limited and child marriage laws are weak. Notably, these countries contend with climate shocks, conflict and poverty, which disrupt, directly attack and limit resources available for education. These factors — coupled with high levels of debt and the risk of distress that redirects valuable revenues to repayments — accentuate the need for coordinated action and renewed commitment to support girls' education in these countries.[5][6][7][8]

In Afghanistan, the Taliban regime shut secondary schools for girls in September 2021. Even prior to that the quality of education was poor; girls' secondary schools in Afghanistan were under-resourced — lacking qualified teachers and access to WASH facilities — and early marriage prevented girls from enrolling in and attending school. The de facto ban on girls' education in 2021 almost doubled the number of girls out of secondary school and has cost Afghan girls more than 430 million days of learning.[9] The international community must agree on concrete steps to hold the de facto authorities accountable for violating Afghan women's and girls' rights. Additionally, they must fund the Afghanistan Education Sector Transitional Framework and the Humanitarian Response Plan to keep the education system afloat as well as identify and implement a longer-term solution to the financing challenges facing the education sector.
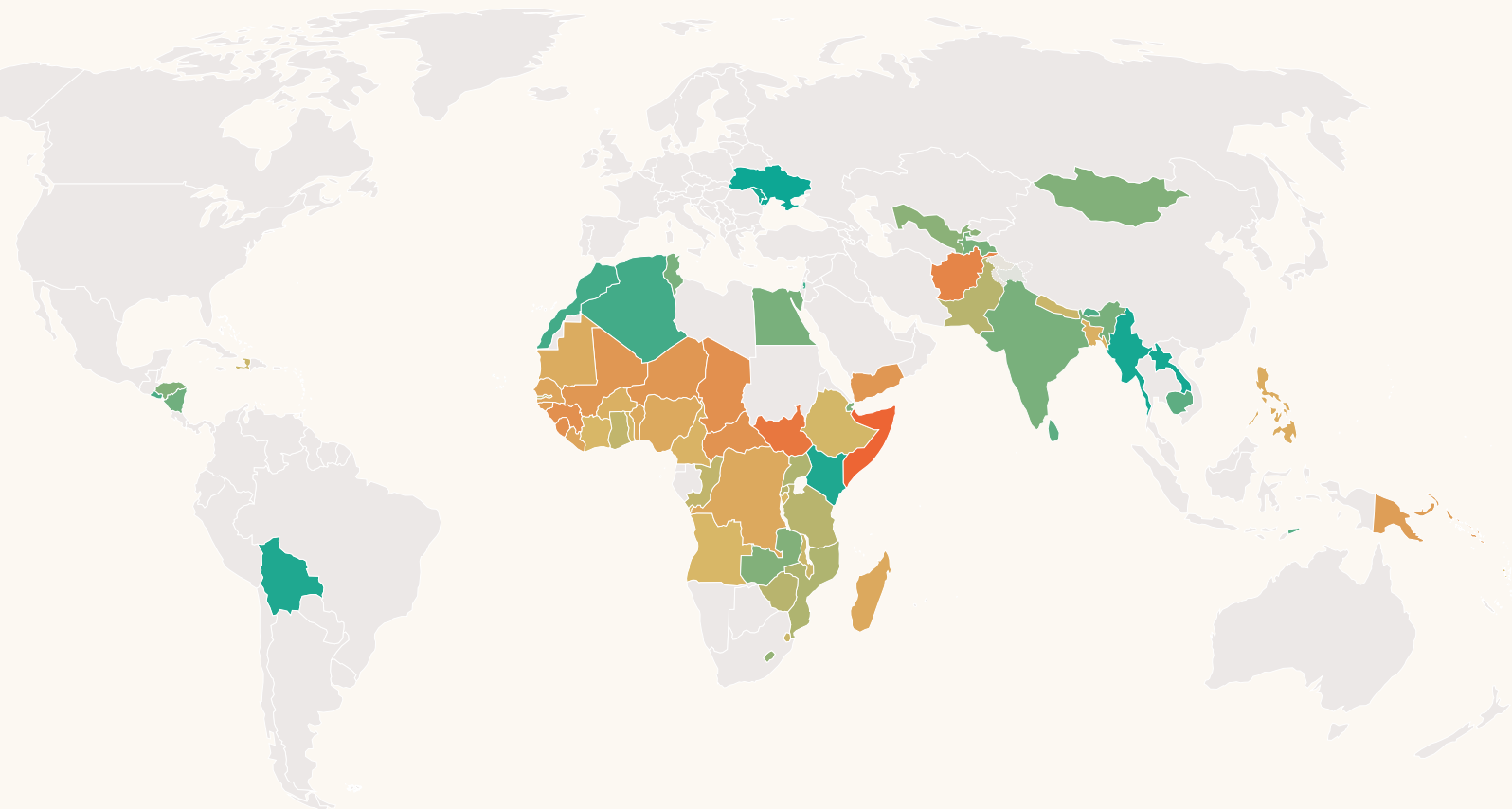
32	**78**
LOWER AVERAGE SCORE	HIGHER AVERAGE SCORE

Low- and lower-middle-income country scores

This heat map provides a visual representation of country scores. Green figures indicates a higher average score across SDG 4 benchmark and policy indicators, while orange figures represent a lower average score.

Report Card
Low- and lower-middle-income countries

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

COUNTRY	SDG SCORE	POLICY SCORE	AVG SCORE
ANGOLA	48	62	55
BENIN	57	46	51
BURKINA FASO	55	52	53
BURUNDI	64	45	55
CABO VERDE	77	64	70
CAMEROON	60	49	54
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	50	40	45
CHAD	41	47	44
COMOROS	64	31	47
CONGO	68	47	58
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	54	56	55
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	57	46	51
DJIBOUTI	73	56	65
ESWATINI	64	50	57
ETHIOPIA	60	53	56
GHANA	67	49	58
GUINEA	48	40	44
GUINEA-BISSAU	54	41	48
KENYA	75	76	76
LESOTHO	64	62	63
LIBERIA	54	47	50
MADAGASCAR	49	53	51
MALAWI	53	61	57
MALI	52	41	46
MAURITANIA	59	44	52
MOZAMBIQUE	62	59	60
NIGER	40	53	46
NIGERIA	59	43	51
RWANDA	61	58	59
SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE	70	40	55
SENEGAL	54	46	50
SIERRA LEONE	57	31	44
SOMALIA	45	19	32
SOUTH SUDAN	41	34	37
THE GAMBIA	70	45	58
TOGO	61	51	56
UGANDA	56	65	60
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	55	63	59
ZAMBIA	69	61	65
ZIMBABWE	58	61	59

OCEANIA

COUNTRY	SDG SCORE	POLICY SCORE	AVG SCORE
KIRIBATI	81	73	77
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	60	36	48
SOLOMON ISLANDS	59	33	46
VANUATU	56	54	55

Report Card
Low- and lower-middle-income countries

ASIA

COUNTRY	SDG SCORE	POLICY SCORE	AVG SCORE
AFGHANISTAN	● 49	● 32	● 41
BANGLADESH	● 61	● 45	● 53
BHUTAN	● 74	● 68	● 71
CAMBODIA	● 73	● 65	● 69
INDIA	● 78	● 55	● 66
LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC	● 81	● 73	● 77
MONGOLIA	● 69	● 62	● 65
MYANMAR	● 83	● 72	● 77
NEPAL	● 69	● 44	● 57
PAKISTAN	● 70	● 47	● 59
PHILIPPINES	● 58	● 47	● 52
SRI LANKA	● 78	● 61	● 69
TAJIKISTAN	● 71	● 60	● 66
TIMOR-LESTE	● 77	● 63	● 70
UZBEKISTAN	● 65	● 63	● 64
VEITNAM	● 81	● 41	● 61
YEMEN	● 60	● 33	● 46

THE AMERICAS, CARRIBEAN AND EUROPE

COUNTRY	SDG SCORE	POLICY SCORE	AVG SCORE
BOLIVIA (PLURINATIONAL STATE OF)	● 82	● 69	● 76
EL SALVADOR	● 77	● 66	● 71
HAITI	● 58	● 56	● 57
HONDURAS	● 68	● 61	● 65
NICARAGUA	● 69	● 65	● 67
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	● 85	● 69	● 77
UKRAINE	● 85	● 72	● 78

WESTERN ASIA AND NORTHERN AFRICA

| COUNTRY	SDG SCORE	POLICY SCORE	AVG SCORE
ALGERIA	● 83	● 61	● 72
EGYPT	● 75	● 57	● 66
MOROCCO	● 73	● 71	● 72
PALESTINE	● 93	● 54	● 73
TUNISIA	● 80	● 51	● 66

Donor countries

The second report card assesses the progress donor countries made compared to their commitments to education.[10] We examine the extent to which countries are meeting their pledges to spend 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) on aid, and how much of this aid goes to the least developed countries and to programmes that specifically address gender inequality.[11]

Donor governments have not stepped up to fill the education funding gap in low- and lower-middle-income countries, despite repeated commitments to doing so.[12] [13] [14] Only one in six OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) countries met the global commitment to spend an equivalent of 0.7% of their GNI on aid in 2021.[15] Additionally, fewer than 18 donor governments matched national budget targets to put 15–20% of ODA towards education, and only 21 allocated more than 10% of this to projects that specifically address gender inequality.

While leaders must correct the current state of aid, they must also implement measures on debt, tax and special drawing rights (SDRs) to improve governments' ability to provide stimulus spending for education.[16] In 2019, 24 countries spent more money repaying outstanding debts than on education.[17] In 2020, Africa and Latin America lost over $27 billion and $43 billion respectively due to a system that enables multinationals to avoid tax.[18] And although the International Monetary Fund issued $650 billion in SDRs in August 2021, this translated to just $21 billion for low-income countries, underscoring the need for reallocation of resources.[19] High-income countries must act to increase lower-income countries' fiscal space for education.
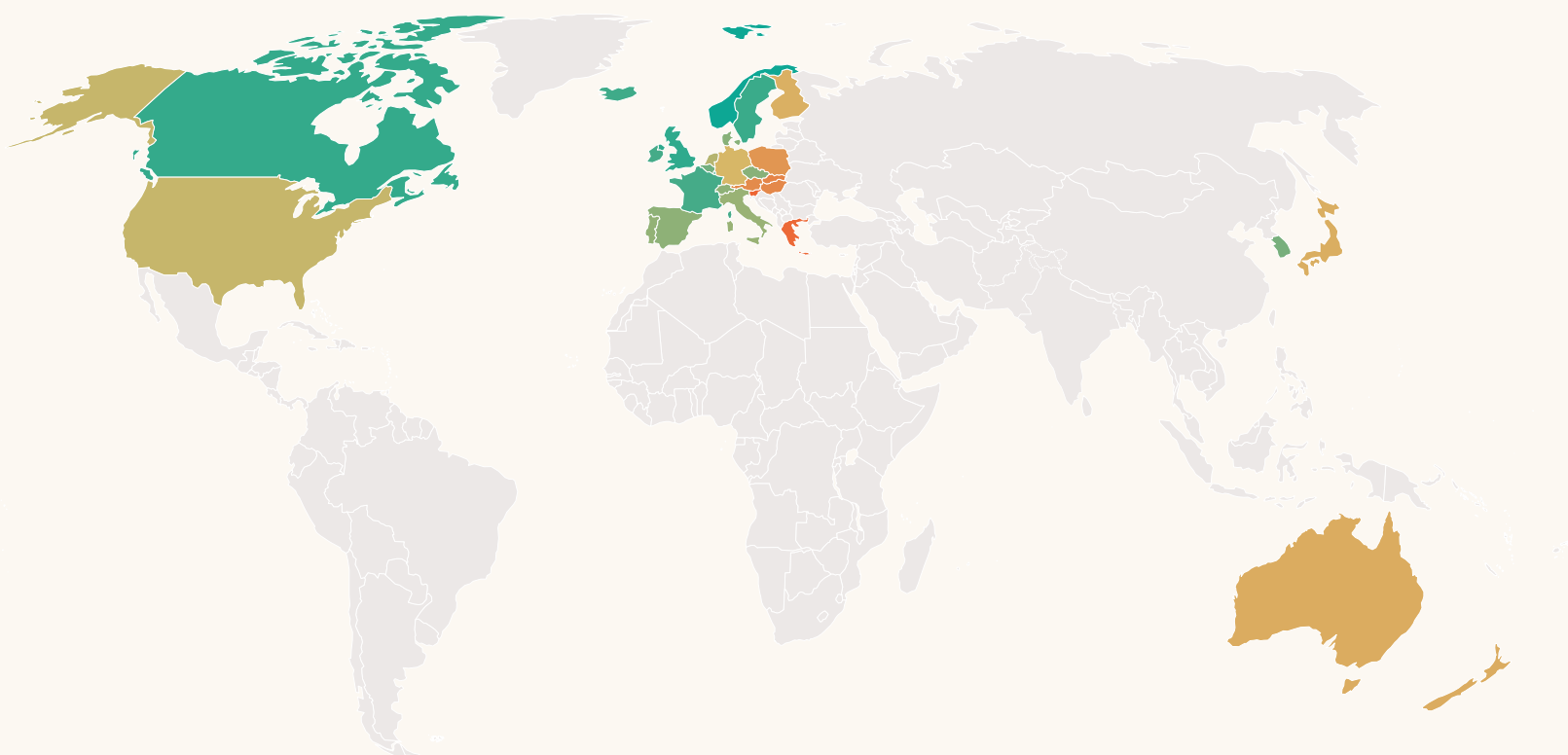
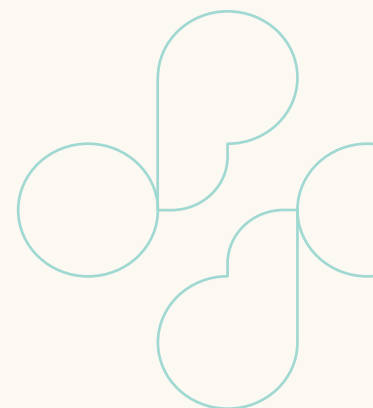8   82

LOWER AVERAGE SCORE   HIGHER AVERAGE SCORE

Donor country scores

This heat map provides a visual representation of donor country scores. Green figures indicates a higher average score across a selection of equity- and girls' education–focused aid indicators, while orange figures represent a lower average score.

Report Card
Donor countries

DONOR COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE
AUSTRALIA	● 40
AUSTRIA	● 25
BELGIUM	● 64
CANADA	● 75
CZECH REPUBLIC	● 60
DENMARK	● 60
FRANCE	● 72
FINLAND	● 42
GERMANY	● 46
GREECE	● 10
HUNGARY	● 24
ICELAND	● 73
IRELAND	● 72
ITALY	● 57
JAPAN	● 41
LUXEMBOURG	● 72
NETHERLANDS	● 52
NEW ZEALAND	● 40
NORWAY	● 82
POLAND	● 30
PORTUGAL	● 58
SLOVAKIA	● 22
SLOVENIA	● 8
SOUTH KOREA	● 63
SPAIN	● 59
SWEDEN	● 74
SWITZERLAND	● 59
UNITED KINGDOM	● 76
UNITED STATES	● 49

Conclusion

Our girls' education report cards show why governments will not achieve universal quality education by 2030. Lack of commitment, solidarity and coordinated action will prevent the international community from delivering on their promises to girls.

In order to achieve the ambitions set out in SDG 4, leaders of low- and lower-middle-income countries and donor countries must establish a **fair global compact on education**. They must make — and bring together — commitments that reflect their differing contexts and abilities to ensure that all countries have the funding and policy frameworks needed to achieve universal quality education, and rectify the policy and resource gaps identified in the report cards. Specific recommendations include:

Leaders of low- and lower-middle-income countries should:

- Adopt and implement stronger policies that have been proven to improve girls' opportunities for the future — including those that broaden sexual and reproductive health rights, ensure their safety from violence in schools and secure their future in the job market;

- Recommit to spending 20% of budgets and 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) to education, as well as expanding the revenue base for public services through progressive taxation and redistributive spending; and

- Redouble efforts to reach low-income and marginalised girls, pledging to make education plans and budgets gender-responsive and to eliminate cost barriers to education such as school fees and uniform charges.

Leaders of higher-income countries should:

- Increase lower-income countries' fiscal space for education through the reallocation of Special Drawing Rights and cancellation of unpayable debt; and

- Renew — and set out a timeline to reach — the global commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on aid, allocating at least 10% to education and ensuring that all aid is gender-responsive.

Leaders of all countries should:

- Extend the right to education to include one year of pre-primary education and 12 years of secondary education;

- Ensure education is a force for gender equality, for example, by removing discriminatory policies that prevent girls from going to school, prohibiting gender discrimination in textbooks, equipping teachers to examine, challenge and change harmful gender norms and teaching about non-discrimination and gender equality;

- Revise curriculums so that girls gain the knowledge and skills to cope with and address 21st century challenges like climate change and digitalisation;

- Make education systems resilient to the impacts of shocks such as extreme weather events, pandemics and conflict;

- Collect and increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable gender-disaggregated data; and

- Leverage the National SDG4 Benchmark process to adopt further benchmark values on gender targets as well as committing to monitor progress against agreed benchmarks and common standards.

Methodology note

The SDG 4 benchmark indicators are drawn from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics database. We include the following categories:

- **Pre-primary:** Girls' enrolment rate in pre-primary and gender parity. Rates are converted to scores and where parity is greater than 1, the maximum score of 100 is awarded.

- **Out-of-school rates:** Girls' out-of-school rates for girls in primary, lower and upper secondary. The rates are inverted and then converted to scores between 1 and 100.

- **Completion rates:** Girls' completion rates in primary, lower and upper secondary. Rates are converted directly to scores, for example, a completion rate of 75% is equivalent to a score of 75.

- **Teachers:** As above, we consider the proportions of qualified teachers at all levels and convert these directly to scores.

- **Expenditure:** Expenditure as a proportion of GDP is converted to a score expressed as a percentage of 6 and expenditure as a proportion of total budget is converted to a score expressed as a percentage of 20%. The maximum score awarded is 100.

- **Quality and quantity:** Here we use learning-adjusted years of schooling, scored out of a possible 13 years, which includes one year of-pre-primary.

- **Climate education:** We include Climate Change Ambition Scores from Educational International, on a 42-point curve, with 100 being the maximum score.

- **Gender and wealth inequality:** We consider the wealth and gender parity indices for completion rates across the board. The indices are converted directly to scores between 1 and 100 and where the index is greater than 1 the maximum score of 100 is awarded.

Data gaps are filled using World Bank and UNESCO computed income group averages where available. A simple average is calculated across indicators for each category, and a simple average is taken across categories. This constitutes the SDG 4 score.

The policy score is adapted from the Center for Global Development's Girl's Education Policy Index.[20] Indicators are standardised around a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Component scores are the simple average of each indicator within the component and the overall score is a simple average of the component scores. These are then transformed to percentages.

The overall score is taken as a simple average of the SDG 4 benchmark indicator score and the policy score.

Donor scores are calculated as percentages against the following targets (with a maximum score of 100):

- Aid as a proportion of GNI — 0.7%

- Proportion of aid spent on education (excluding post-secondary) — 15%

- Proportion of aid spend on education with gender equality as a principal objective — 10%

- Proportion of total aid to education to Least Developed Countries — 25%

The overall score is a simple average of these scores.

The main limitation is outdated policy data where the policy databases do not reflect recent efforts by governments on girls' education.

Acknowledgements

Citations

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2. Calculated as countries that spend less than 15% of aid on education (excluding post-secondary) and less than 10% of this on projects that specifically address gender inequality.

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5. World Bank and International Monetary Fund (2020) *Niger - Joint World Bank-IMF Debt Sustainability Analysis.* https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/595901607656641870/niger-joint-world-bank-imf-debt-sustainability-analysis

6. African Development Bank Group (2022) *South Sudan Economic Outlook.* https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/south-sudan/south-sudan-economic-outlook

7. International Monetary Fund (2022) *IMF Executive Board Completes Fifth Review Under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangement and Concludes the 2022 Article IV Consultation for Sierra Leone.* https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2022/06/28/pr22234sierraleone-imf-executive-board-completes-fifth-review-ecf-and-2022-article-iv-consultation

8. World Bank and International Monetary Fund (2019) *Chad - Joint World Bank-IMF Debt Sustainability Analysis.* https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32580

9. Calculated as the number of girls enrolled in secondary school as per the Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020 and the number of days lost since secondary schools reopened for boys through to 26 August 2022.

10. See methodological note.

11. Least developed countries are low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets.

12. OECD *The 0.7% ODA/GNI target - a history.* https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/the07odagnitarget-ahistory.htm

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14. OECD (2021) *COVID-19 spending helped to lift foreign aid to an all-time high in 2020.* https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2020-detailed-summary.pdf

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16. Malala Fund (2021) *Stop the setback: Addressing the girls' education financing gap after COVID-19.* https://malala.org/newsroom/stop-the-setback-addressing-the-girls-education-financing-gap-after-covid-19

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19. SDRs are a global reserve asset issued by the IMF. Member states that receive them can swap them against hard currency, and in doing so they gain new liquidity, which they can use to finance expenses and service external debt. https://www.imf.org/en/About/FAQ/special-drawing-right

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