



# Beyond Basics: Making 12 Years of Education a Reality for Girls Globally

Based on research by Results for Development



Malala Yousafzai walks to a meeting with a member of the US Senate in Washington on June 23, 2015 to advocate for girls' education.  
Photo credit: Malala Fund

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## THE AMBITION

Fifteen years ago, the world faced a similar moment. We could choose bold and ambitious goals rooted in equality and a vision of the world we truly want to see. Or, we could choose imminently “achievable” goals that improved the world, but stopped short of the world we want. We chose the latter.

Today, we can make a different choice. The Malala Fund is encouraged by the fact that the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are measured by full achievement rather than the half-measures that defined the Millennium Development Goals. The SDGs are rooted in universal ambition and full realisation of rights. Twelve years of quality, fee-free primary and secondary education, building on a year of pre-primary, is one of those rights that must be realised for all by 2030, beginning with the most marginalised girls.

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By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. ”

**PROPOSED TARGET 4.1 OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

However, the Malala Fund is concerned that action will not match the ambition. Current financing discussions and mechanisms are geared towards the achievement of education through lower secondary school, not a full course of primary and secondary education. Once again, the world is in danger of creating a global plan for development that falls short. In doing so it will be sending the message that girls from poor countries do not deserve primary AND secondary schooling. **It's unacceptable that we would set a standard for the world's children which is less than we would accept for our own.**

“The world can no longer accept that a basic education is enough. Why do leaders accept that for children in developing countries, only basic literacy is sufficient, when their own children do homework in Algebra, Mathematics, Science and Physics?”

**MALALA, NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE LECTURE, OSLO**

Girls have big dreams for their lives, no matter where they live. These dreams start and — sadly for millions — end with education. The poorest girls in the poorest countries get just three years of schooling. Over the past 15 years the international community has worked to get them six, then nine.

But this is still not enough. It is not enough to meet the challenge of empowering women and girls. It is not enough to realise the full ambition of the new sustainable development agenda. And it is not enough for the millions of girls demanding more for their lives.

Without fully funding universal access to 12 years of good quality primary and secondary education, in line with proposed Target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the vision of the sustainable future to be agreed in September cannot be achieved and the world will be robbed of the tremendous potential of girls eager to learn and to lead.

“Let us become the first generation to decide to be the last that sees empty classrooms, lost childhoods, and wasted potentials.”

**MALALA, NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE LECTURE, OSLO**

This paper proposes a way forward that can marry our ambition with action and ultimately lead to the achievement of universal education for all girls defined by 12 years of primary and secondary school. **At this moment, we must collectively choose to accept nothing less. We cannot again let the practical define the possible and enshrine inequality in our shared plans for development.**

## THE COST

Twelve years of universal fee-free primary and secondary education, building on a year of pre-primary, is estimated to cost an average of US\$340 billion a year between 2015–2030 or 5.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The poorest countries face the greatest burden, with costs estimated to be on average around 6.5% of GDP.

	All		Low-income		Lower-middle income	
Total public costs, US\$ billions						
	2012	2015–2030 average	2012	2015–2030 average	2012	2015–2030 average
Preschool	4.8	31.2	0.4	4.4	4.4	26.8
Primary	68.1	129.4	7.3	19.9	60.8	109.5
Lower secondary	38.0	81.8	3.6	11.6	34.5	70.2
Upper secondary	37.7	97.1	3.1	14.5	34.5	82.7
Second chance youth literacy programs	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2
ALL levels through secondary	149	340	14	50	134	289
External finance needs (finance gap), US\$ billions						
Preschool, primary, lower secondary + literacy	5.7	23.5	1.4	13.2	4.3	10.3
Upper secondary	3.4	16.0	0.6	7.8	2.8	8.2
ALL levels through secondary	9.1	39.5	2.0	21.0	7.1	18.4

**Figure 1:** Total public costs and external finance needs for preschool, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary

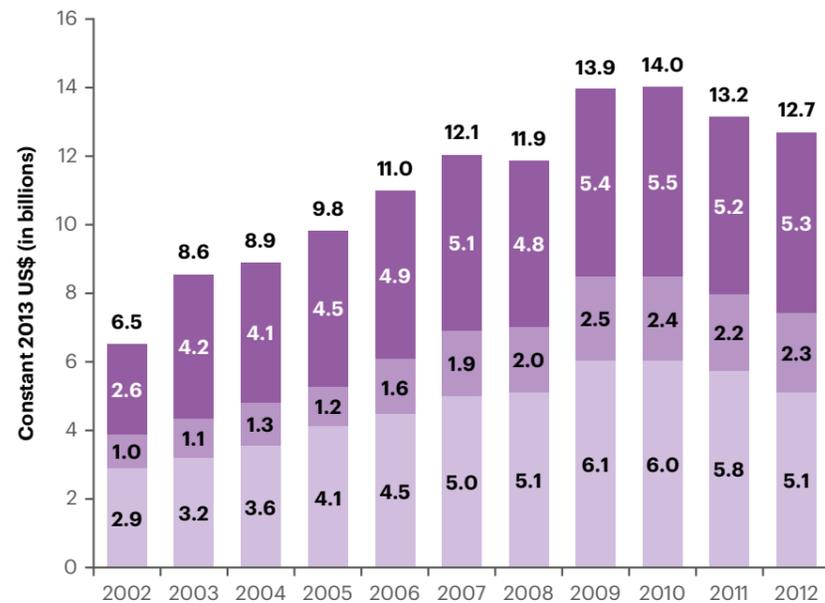
Source: Wils, A. 2015. *Reaching education targets in low and lower middle income countries. Costs and finance gaps to 2030.*

While US\$340 billion is significant and seems overwhelming, the current funding shortfall for achieving it, once domestic commitments have been taken into account, is US\$39 billion according to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report. That is the collective amount world governments spend on their military in just eight days. The world's largest economy spends that much on its space programme alone.

“Why is it that countries which we call ‘strong’ are so powerful in creating wars but are so weak in bringing peace? Why is it that giving guns is so easy but giving books is so hard? Why is it that making tanks is so easy, but building schools is so hard?”

MALALA, NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE LECTURE, OSLO

More money is needed if we are to achieve the ambition of universal fee-free secondary education. But this can be found. It can be found in governments increasing the size of their often-low education budgets; it can be found in donors reversing their recent decreases in aid to education and increasing overall aid levels; it can be found if we are willing to look beyond “business as usual” and find new ways to meet our responsibilities.



■ Total aid to post-secondary education  
 ■ Total aid to secondary education  
 ■ Total aid to basic education

Figure 2: Aid to education by level  
 Source: Education for All Global Monitoring Report. 2014. Aid reductions threaten education goals. GMR Policy Paper 14. June 2014.

# THE IMPOSSIBLE?

“Girls, despite all the obstacles, show up. We are desperate to learn and to lead. All we need is leaders with courage and bold vision to match. All we need is for them to show up too.”

MALALA, TIME MAGAZINE

Malala’s journey and the founding of the Malala Fund is an “impossible” story. In the past two years we have encountered girls with equally improbable paths to education and future success. They encounter incredible obstacles including war, poverty, even personal attacks. Yet, their yearning for knowledge is never overwhelmed.

These stories teach us that girls are desperate to learn, grow and become leaders in their communities. **The world’s collective response to this determination has been wanting. Our leaders have not shown the resolve that these courageous girls deserve.**



Mezon,  
 The Future Journalist

Now in the 11th grade, Mezon is referred to as the “Malala” of the Syrian refugees because of her passion for education. Mezon is also a storyteller who knows that words can bring change and light in the darkness of conflict.

Mezon feels a responsibility towards her community to provide guidance to girls and parents who believe that early marriage, instead of education, is the way to a better life. She hopes to tell empowering stories and stand up for girls’ rights as a journalist.

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It is with girls like Mezon that we must start if we are to achieve 12 years of good quality education for all by 2030: girls who face the greatest hardship to achieving education, but also the greatest determination to get it. It is time that our commitment and action mirrors and honours theirs.

“Leaders must seize this opportunity to guarantee a free, quality primary and secondary education for every child. Some will say this is impractical, or too expensive, or too hard. Or maybe even impossible. But it is time the world thinks bigger.”

**MALALA, NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE LECTURE, OSLO**

Government commitment and political will to expand access and improve quality of education, coupled with careful planning to ensure no one is left behind, is the critical success factor for realising the right to free, good quality primary and secondary education for all. With committed and collective effort, we can educate all girls, starting with those most in need and least likely to access a primary and secondary education without our support.



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## THE BENEFIT

“While basic education begins to unlock potential, it is secondary education that provides the wings that allow girls to fly.”

**MALALA, TIME MAGAZINE**

Achieving universal access to 12 years of fee-free, quality primary and secondary education is an investment in overall development and growth for countries. The world cannot hope to achieve the SDGs without unlocking the potential of millions of girls who have been locked out of education.

Girls need leaders to make and keep bold commitments to provide universal primary and secondary education. The world needs girls to solve our most pressing problems and provide leadership in their home communities and countries.

**IF ALL GIRLS HAD 12 YEARS OF EDUCATION...**

**CHILD MARRIAGE WOULD DROP**

**64%**

**EARLY BIRTHS WOULD FALL**

**59%**

**CHILD DEATHS UNDER 5 WOULD DECREASE**

**49%**

**Credit:** Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/14

## THE PATH

### STEP 1:

**Governments make phased, implementable plans aimed at achieving the ambition of access to 12 years of free, good quality primary and secondary education for all by 2030, starting with the most marginalised girls.**

Commitments to provide universal primary and secondary education should be accompanied by concrete implementation plans identifying how a phased approach to the introduction of fee-free provision of secondary education could support the progressive realisation of a full course of free secondary education being available to all by 2030, whilst mitigating against any negative impacts on equity and quality at lower levels.

These plans should identify interim “stepping stone” targets to serve as benchmarks of progress between now and 2030, ensuring that every successive government is held accountable for achieving them. These interim targets, set at stages over the 2015–2030 period, should identify desired outcomes for participation and learning across basic and upper secondary education for those who have traditionally been left behind, especially the poorest girls. This would lead to the introduction of targeted measures towards these groups.

National plans of action should be complemented by a global roadmap to achieve the ambition of proposed SDG Target 4.1, particularly with regards to delivering more and better external funding for education over the period 2015–2030.



Motivated by our significant achievements in expanding access to education over the last 15 years, we will ensure the provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education... leading to relevant learning outcomes. ”

**THE INCHEON DECLARATION: EDUCATION 2030: TOWARDS INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ALL**

<b>2015 – 2020</b>	Phase 1: Fee-free access extended to certain marginalised demographics, including girls and those in the lowest quintile.
<b>2020 – 2025</b>	Phase 2: Fee-free access extended to a broader demographic, including those in rural areas and those in informal urban settlements.
<b>2025 – 2030</b>	Phase 3: Fee-free access extended to all citizens.

**Figure 3:** Illustrative phased approach to fee-free universalisation by 2030

### STEP 2:

**Expand the mandate of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support resource mobilisation and national action on upper secondary.**

The core commitment of the GPE is to basic education. An expansion of its scope to fund upper secondary education will be needed to help mobilise and coordinate the additional funding needed to support 12 years of quality primary and secondary education for all, building on a year of pre-primary. This expansion should be in support of nationally driven education sector plans which focus on the full course of education from pre-primary to upper secondary.

### STEP 3:

**Countries increase the size of their overall budget and allocate a minimum of 20% of their public budgets to education.**

Low income countries will, on average, need to pay around 6.5% of GDP, and lower-middle income countries around 4.3% of GDP, for universal fee-free education through upper secondary level. Much of this cost can be met by both expanding the size of overall budgets and allocating a greater portion to education.

Revenue generated from taxes remains inadequate in many low income countries, where it accounts for just 10–14% of GDP, compared to tax to GDP ratios of 20–30% in high income countries. Expanding the tax base fairly is a crucial strategy for increasing the size of national budgets and, with this, funding for education. But countries also need to prioritise education more in their budgets. Governments in low income countries could raise an additional **US\$15 billion for education** just by increasing the share of the national budget for education to 20%.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Education For All Global Monitoring Report, if governments in low and middle income countries “modestly increased” their tax-raising efforts and allocated 20% of their public budgets to education, they could increase the average share of GDP spent on education from 3% to 6% by 2015.<sup>2</sup>

### STEP 4:

**Traditional and non-traditional bilateral donors commit to meeting a target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and increasing the share of aid to basic and secondary education<sup>3</sup> to at least 10% of total aid budgets.**

In 2005, 15 Member States<sup>4</sup> of the European Union (the EU-15) pledged to increase ODA to 0.7% of GNI by 2015. Only four have done so.<sup>5</sup> If all the EU-15 donors met the 0.7% target in 2015 (or 1.0% and above in the case of Denmark, Luxembourg and Sweden) they would raise an additional US\$1.5 billion for basic and secondary education.<sup>6</sup>

However, if the EU-15 donors met the 0.7% target, and education was prioritised in aid budgets — with at least 10% of total aid directed to basic and secondary education for low and lower-middle income countries — an additional **US\$7.7 billion** could be raised in 2015.

1. Based on findings in Education For All Global Monitoring Report. 2013. *Education for All is affordable — by 2015 and beyond*. Policy Paper 06. February 2013.

2. Education For All Global Monitoring Report. 2014. *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality Education for All*. p.116. Paris: UNESCO.

3. In line with OECD-DAC definitions, in this section we use the term “basic and secondary education” to refer to pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.

4. These are: Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark, UK, Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece.

5. These are: Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark, UK.

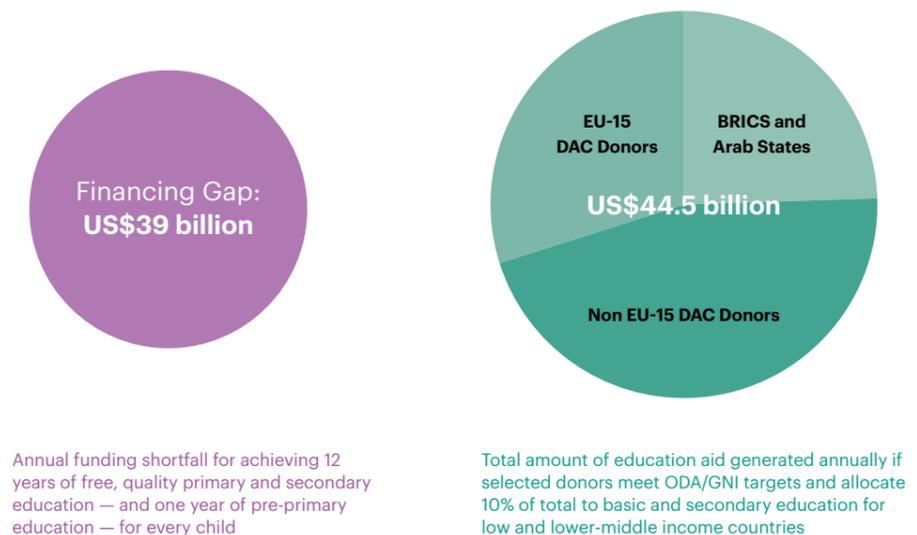
6. Based on previous trends in share of ODA allocated to basic and secondary education.

This is in addition to the US\$3.2 billion expected should trends in aid to education stay the same and countries meet projected ODA/GNI ratios in 2015. **This totals a possible US\$10.9 billion in education aid, representing a quarter of the annual financing gap.**

Evidently, filling one quarter of the gap is not enough. However, the responsibility to fill this gap does not just fall on the EU-15 donors: the United States, Canada and other donors who have not reaffirmed their commitment to the 0.7% target must also contribute. New donors, including the BRICS and Arab States, also have a role to play.

A further **US\$20.3 billion — around half the annual financing gap** — could be raised annually if seven non DAC EU-15 donors<sup>7</sup> make and meet the commitment to 0.7% (or in the case of Norway 1.0%<sup>8</sup>) of GNI in ODA and re-prioritise 10% of total ODA to basic and secondary education for low and lower-middle income countries. This represents an US\$18.6 billion increase to the US\$1.7 billion expected from these donors in 2015 should trends in aid to education remain the same and countries meet projected ODA/GNI ratios.

Commitments to 0.7% of GNI in ODA by the emerging BRICS and Arab donors,<sup>9</sup> with just 10% of total ODA allocated to basic and secondary education for low and lower-middle income countries, could raise an additional **US\$13.3 billion**,<sup>10</sup> **closing the annual financing gap completely.**



**Figure 4:** Filling the funding gap through official development assistance

7. These are: US, Japan, Korea, Australia, Canada, Norway, Switzerland.

8. This is based on ODA/GNI ratios for Norway from 2014 levels.

9. These are: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait.

10. Based on the projected size of their economies in 2015 multiplied by 0.7% (the overall target for ODA) multiplied by 10% (assumed as the minimum necessary to support basic and secondary education for low and lower-middle income countries).

An indicative benchmark of 70–80% of education aid<sup>11</sup> to support pre-primary through upper secondary education could be helpful in directing and monitoring donor spending in support of the 12-year ambition. A number of donor countries disproportionately target education aid towards post-secondary education, which is often spent in donor countries through post-secondary scholarships and in-country student costs. Reallocating some of this spending — estimated to be about one-quarter of total direct aid to education<sup>12</sup> — towards lower levels of education could also increase the funding available for basic and secondary education.

### STEP 5:

#### Make every effort to identify and capitalise on new sources of funding.

A number of new financing mechanisms for education, with the potential to generate significant funds, merit further investigation. For example, it is estimated that an International Finance Facility for Education, based on similar initiatives in the health sector, has the potential to raise **US\$3–4 billion a year**; and the introduction of mandatory corporate responsibility schemes in India is estimated to generate up to US\$2 billion a year in additional revenues toward the country's public services.

The ambition articulated in proposed Target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals — that by 2030 all girls and boys should complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education — is the right one for young people everywhere. But, without strong political commitment, careful planning and significant increases in funding, it could be another 100 years before all girls in sub-Saharan Africa have the opportunity to complete 12 years of education.

The challenge is significant but the world does not lack the funds to achieve universal primary and secondary education. It should not lack the will. Every day, girls like Malala go to incredible lengths in order to attend and complete school. So must we.

## ABOUT THE MALALA FUND:

Malala Fund is a non-profit organisation that empowers girls globally through education to achieve their potential and be agents of change in their communities. Co-founded in 2013 by student, education activist and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai and her father and teacher Ziauddin Yousafzai, the Malala Fund invests in and advocates for girls' secondary education and amplifies the voices of adolescent girls globally.

Please visit [www.malala.org](http://www.malala.org)



This paper is based on research by Results for Development, commissioned by the Malala Fund. The full research is available here: [www.malala.org/report](http://www.malala.org/report)

For further information, please contact: [info@malalafund.org](mailto:info@malalafund.org)

<sup>11</sup> This builds on the EFA Global Monitoring Report's recommendation that at least 50% of all education aid be channelled to basic education.

<sup>12</sup> Education For All Global Monitoring Report. 2013. *Education for All is affordable — by 2015 and beyond*. Policy Paper 06. February 2013.

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Leaders of the 21st century must deliver on their promises to invest in the future and start investing in books, education and hope, rather than in weapons, war and conflicts. ”

— Malala Yousafzai