

# INVESTING IN GIRLS: MARKET OPPORTUNITIES BY SECTOR

## Education

### Scale of education-related issues facing girls

Girls have greater opportunities for education than ever before, largely due to supportive national policies and a growing social value placed on girls' education. Still, progress is mixed between countries and between rural and urban populations. Although many more children (both girls and boys) are attending school, low educational quality remains a persistent barrier to effective learning. Teacher absenteeism is a major issue, especially in South Asia, with rates generally ranging from 15% to 25%.

While the majority of girls and boys in East Africa and South Asia complete primary school, girls' attendance in secondary school drops significantly. As a result, literacy rates are significantly lower for females than males across both regions. Many factors cause girls to drop out of school, including parental attitudes towards girls' education, poverty, girls' own demotivation and the location of schools (exacerbated by girls' restricted mobility). There is also a strong association between early marriage, poverty and education.<sup>1,2</sup> When faced with supplemental costs for school attendance, parents often choose to prioritise the education of boys over girls.<sup>3,4,5</sup> Gender-biased practices are more prevalent in rural areas, where widespread inequality persists, and a higher priority is often placed on marriage over education. Girls, especially in rural areas, may also face time poverty that restricts their ability to attend school and study (see also the energy sector brief of this series).

### Key statistics<sup>6</sup>

Country	Attend primary school (% of primary-age children)		Persistence to last grade of primary (% of cohort)		Completed lower secondary or higher (% of pop. aged 25+)		Literacy rate (% of pop. aged 15+)	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
<b>Ethiopia</b>	83	89	39	37	8	18	29	49
<b>Kenya</b>	85	81	71	74	26	32	74	84
<b>Rwanda</b>	96	95	61	55	9	15	65	72
<b>Tanzania</b>	80	78	71	76	9	14	73	83
<b>Uganda</b>	92	90	35	35	17	32	62	79
<b>Bangladesh</b>	93	88	71 <sup>a</sup>	62	37	46	70	76
<b>Myanmar</b>	89	90	74	77	11 <sup>b</sup>	23	72	80
<b>Nepal</b>	93	96	73	74	17	39	49	72
<b>Pakistan</b>	71	82	75	79	27	47	44	69

<sup>a</sup> Most recent Bangladesh data available is from 2009.

<sup>b</sup> Most recent Myanmar data available is from 1983.

## Market opportunities in the education sector

The private sector is emerging as a major provider of education, especially in South Asia. Today, around one-third of primary and secondary students in the region attend private schools.<sup>7</sup> Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in East Africa is also an opportunity to provide practical solutions, particularly to girls who are currently unemployed and out of school. If strong opportunities exist to generate supplemental income, then even the poorest families are likely to be willing to pay modest amounts for education. In Tanzania, TVET is financed through a public–private collaboration. Kenya operates an informal TVET system that provides apprenticeships to students and is currently thriving. These informal systems may not cater specifically for girls, however, and the formal TVET sector cannot currently keep up with demand. Other opportunities may include innovations to improve the quality of education through pedagogical training programmes for teachers and through strengthening school curricula.

### Ensuring girls' safety in education

Innovations in education need to be careful to address girls' safety (both real and perceived) on the way to and from school, and at school itself. Studies of gender-based violence in schools indicate that the fear of sexual violence – by peers or by teachers – is often an important factor discouraging adolescent girls from continuing their education.<sup>8</sup> For solutions in this sector to succeed, girls will need to be afforded greater safety and security, and parents will have to perceive that girls' participation will not harm their reputations in any way.

## Impact of education investments on adolescent girls

Girls' education has long been identified as an extremely powerful developmental force, a key route out of poverty, and a critical pathway to women's advancement. Equal access to education is a key component of equal access to employment, positive health and birth outcomes. Staying in school is associated with later marriage, later childbearing, lower maternal and infant mortality rates, lower birth rates, lower HIV/AIDS incidence, and likely greater educational attainment of the next generation. An analysis of 142 demographic and health surveys from 56 countries between 1990 and 2009 found that for each additional year of a mother's education, the average 15–18-year-old attained an extra 0.32 years of education, and the benefit for girls was slightly larger than for boys.<sup>9</sup>

An investment in education could therefore help girls to:



**EARN:** Education is an enabler that allows girls and women to pursue safer and more productive livelihoods. Each extra year of education that a girl receives increases her income by 10–20%; completion of secondary school brings a return of up to 25%.<sup>10,11</sup> Furthermore, the returns to education are often higher for girls than they are for boys.



**LEARN:** Education is important for enabling girls and women to shift discriminatory attitudes, norms and values. It is a critical building block for other assets, such as economic assets, health, safety and rights.<sup>12</sup>



**STAY SAFE:** Adolescent girls enrolled in school are substantially less likely to have had sexual relations than non-school-going girls and, if they are sexually active, they are more likely to use contraception.<sup>13</sup>



**STAY SAFE:** Girls' education is associated with increased self-confidence, mobility, aspirations and stronger social networks,<sup>14,15</sup> all of which are key factors underpinning the exercise of rights. A WHO multi-country study<sup>16</sup> found that women with education are less likely to experience violence than those with less education, even when controlling for age and income.



**BE HEALTHY:** Higher levels of education enable mothers to better care for themselves and the health of their children, leading to improved nutrition and vaccination rates, and greater awareness of health risks associated with unsafe water and food.<sup>17</sup>

## Example from **SPRING** education businesses

**AcceleratED** is an EdTech business in Ethiopia that provides teacher training, educational content and support via data analytics to improve learning outcomes. Through **SPRING**, the company developed a prototype called TeachEasy, a personalised teacher coaching service that helps teachers improve their pedagogy skills by promoting active learning techniques in the classroom. Through better classrooms and more motivated teachers, the company aims to improve learning outcomes for students from grades K–12, including girls.

Case study from **SPRING's Impact Report: Building Businesses for Girl Impact**

**LearnOBots** is a Pakistani edtech business that aims to turn students into inventors and makers of tomorrow and is expanding globally. LearnOBots designs curricula, educational kits and software to deliver experiential, technology-enabled STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) school workshops and afterschool programmes. Their business is currently developing a new product, RobotWala, which is a mobile e-learning teaching platform that delivers STEAM based hands-on workshops at low cost that requires no STEAM specific teacher expertise – making technology-based education accessible those in the base of the pyramid. **SPRING** helped LearnOBots to further develop their online learning platform and delivery model through a self-guided app and educational kits. While their STEAM curriculum is designed for both boys and girls, the business recognised that there was a need to design activities that specifically encourage girls (including at low income schools and girls-only schools) to participate in their workshops. These activities include a wearable electronics project and a solar dollhouse kit.

*This brief is a combined summary of the **SPRING** East Africa and South Asia region-specific education briefs, which are due to be published in September 2019.*

## Notes

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