

GUIDELINES UNESCO



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Introduction

Unesco stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. This agency of the United Nations works for the cooperation between nations through education, science, culture.

As reminded by UNESCO constitution “Since war begins in the mind of men and women, it is in the mind of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed”. To maintain peace, economic and political agreements are not enough. It is necessary to share knowledge between nations to ensure mutual understanding.

Thereby, in order to achieve these steps toward peace, UNESCO was founded after the Second World War in 1945, and has been active since 1946.

Since June 2023, the organ gathers 194 countries.

In this guideline, we present to you what are the stakes of two main themes for which UNESCO is acting : heritage and in particular the one in areas of conflict, and women’s education in developing countries. We hear forward to hear your nations debate of solutions to tackle these two issues.

Topic 1 : How to Protect Cultural Heritage from Armed Conflicts?

After the Second World War, noticing the amount of cultural objects and sites destroyed, multiple nations decided to pool their resources to protect their heritage as effectively as possible. Some objects were declared as belonging to humanity, due to their status of « outstanding universal value ». Preserving cultural heritage, was keeping track of a long historical development with values linked to monuments, works of art, buildings, artefacts... a track of humanity. UNESCO fought actively in this way to implement concrete measures. Actions were slowly taken on the international scale, beginning mostly with the 1954 Hague Convention, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the first major international treaty dedicated to the safeguard of heritage in time of conflict but also during the periods of peace.

What is Heritage?

Heritage is the legacy that the past passes on to us and what we transmit to future generations. Cultural heritage in particular takes various forms, it can be tangible or intangible. The debates will be here focused on the tangible cultural heritage, that is to say the movable or immovable heritage. The movable heritage includes for instance paintings, sculptures, furniture... In the immovable heritage there are the historical buildings, monuments, archaeological sites.

Why is Cultural Heritage Crucial?

IA Symbol of the Identity of a Nation

Cultural heritage represents the history of a country. The world is permanently changing, and preserving heritage means keeping the identity of a country, in order to never forget what a country has been through, or what has importance. Heritage is thus a pillar of the conservation of the collective identity. Protecting heritage is crucial for remembering the cornerstones of a nation, the historical evidence of civilization.

Sharing a Culture

It is also a way to highlight the beauty of a culture in the eyes of the whole world. Preserving heritage helps nations to see each other favourably, and thereby it is an essential step toward peace and mutual understanding. Keeping various heritage enhances the diversity and equality of different cultures all around the world. Cultural heritage is at the heart of a country's soft power.

An Economic Pillar

On a more material level, heritage is also a source of income for the country, as it attracts tourists. For instance **in 2014 in Yemen**, tourism represented **2.2% of its gross domestic product**, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. Unfortunately, the number of international arrivals to Yemen decreased by 60% from 2014 to 2015 due to the military operations in the country, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It led to the loss of more than six billion U.S dollars since 2015 for the tourism sector. In the same idea, safekeeping cultural pieces and places can create new jobs. It is an entire economy that can develop around heritage.

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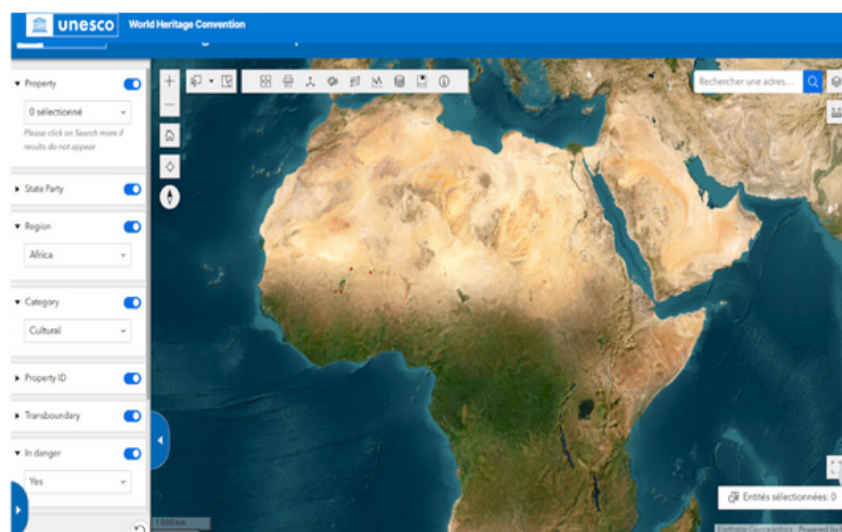
Another striking example is Syria : since the beginning of its civil war the country's tourism revenues fell by 94%. Bombarded by its own forces, the city of Aleppo was damaged by Bashar al-Assad's bombs to break the resistance. Other beautiful sites that attracted tourists have fallen, such as the magnificent remains of Palmyra.

A Geopolitical Importance

Often the heritage classified by UNESCO has geopolitical stakes. Indeed, most of the time that are states that are directly asking UNESCO to classify an archaeological site. It is therefore because they deem that a place is relevant to be shown to the eyes of the world that they wish to classify it, heritage takes a symbolic value.

Versailles is a prime example of this. It was the residence of royalty for centuries, and was an important political place: it welcomed the **first National Assembly in 1789**. It was then the Republic's Capital until the IIIrd Republic. Thus it stands as a political heritage.

On UNESCO website, you can find the list of protected cultural artefacts and areas, and endangered ones.



World Heritage Centre - World Heritage Online Map Platform ([unesco.org](https://whc.unesco.org/en/whcmap/)).

Heritage is Threatened by Armed Conflicts in Various Ways

To destroy heritage, means to sap the foundations of one's culture, and thus a direct attack toward a nation's identity. It is why UNESCO chose to classify some archaeological sites or pieces at the states request. To act it follows the World Heritage Convention, ratified in 1975 and which gathers 195 countries. This Convention works on five pillars:

- **Credibility:** the World Heritage List must contain places that hold a significant importance at an international level and must be equally divided between the different geographic places.
- **Conservation:** Once inscribed on the World Heritage properties, UNESCO will make sure that the cultural work will be safeguarded.
- **Capacity-building:** To implement effective measures and realistic ones.
- **Communication:** The committee communicates for raising awareness of the public, to have the greater community helping.
- **Communities:** The action requires the help of multiple actors, on different scales : national, international, NGO, states...

Heritage as a Collateral Damage of Armed Conflicts

Heritage is fragile and during attacks on a territory it can be a collateral damage.

The Old City of Dubrovnik, called **"The Pearl of the Adriatic"** in Croatia, was damaged in **1991** after Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia, by the shelling of the city made by the Yugoslavians. The Yugoslavian army was not aiming directly to destroy the town, but it was nevertheless a damage resulting from the war.

A more recent example is the one of Ukraine: in June was destroyed the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Station, in an area of Kherson controlled by

Russians. It provoked a flood that engulfed the famous home of Rayko, an Ukrainian artist. It also submerged the Tyagyn Fortress, an old monument from the 14th and 15th centuries. In addition to these collateral damages, the destruction of the power station resulted in a loss as it was a very unique structure in Ukraine with deep European roots.

A Political Destruction

Heritage is also often a target for terrorist groups. In particular when an artefact has some geopolitical, historical or religious importance for the values of a nation, destroying it is a way to send a message.

A prime example is the blowing of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan. These three statues of Buddha in the wall of a cliff were the most colossal standing statues in the world and a famous stop on the Silk Road, in the region of Bamiyan. The Taliban destroyed it in 2001 with artillery fire and explosives. The destruction was a deliberate act, decided by the Taliban government because in the Islamic doctrine, human representation is forbidden. It was therefore a message, a way for the Taliban government to express that only their way of practising was the right one.

Destroying Heritage to Erase a Culture

Attacking heritage can also be **a deliberate attempt to erase a culture**. For instance, the destruction of the cultural heritage of the Cham community in Cambodia contributed to the weakening of this already fragile community. Indeed, in 1975, the Cham community was Cambodia's largest minority group, with an Islamic religious practice.

Their heritage was the target of the Khmer Rouge, who demolished almost

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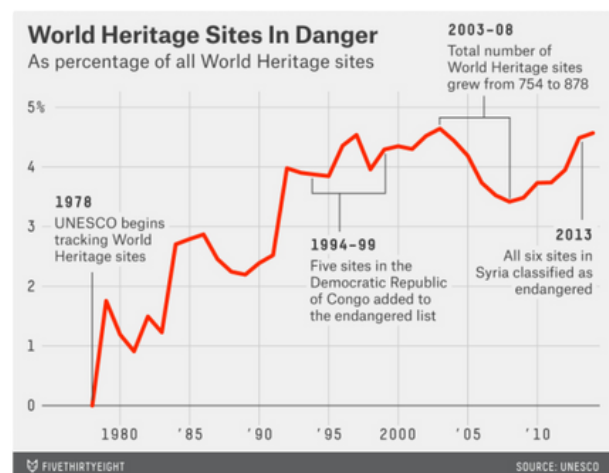
130 mosques during their regime in Cambodia, between 1975 and 1979. They also targeted the culture by destroying religious items such as the keitap (a book teaching Islam and explaining the Qur'an), or the makhma (a prayer garment for women). If the places of worship of a population are destroyed, it cannot be entire as it cannot practise its religion.

Looting

One of the worst threats to cultural property during conflicts is illicit trafficking. Some countries are particularly targeted by pillage: for instance **Syria and Iraq**. In Syria there is a whole market of blood antiquities (archaeological artefacts that have been stolen during war and used as a source of funding). The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) practised looting in each area it controlled, and even implemented a tax on robbed artefacts. Hundreds of pieces were for example stolen from the Museum of Raqqa, one of the first cities ISIS took control of, and in 2015, when ISIS arrived in Idlib, nearly **10 000 artefacts were robbed** from the museum.

Paradoxically, it begets another issue since cultural stolen goods have become one of the biggest sources of income for the terrorists: up to 15% to 20% of ISIS's revenue sources in November 2015.

These last years the World Heritage list of sites has grown, but the list of protected areas too:



[Dangerous Times For The World's Cultural Heritage | FiveThirtyEight](#)

The Hague Convention

The Hague Convention, also called **“The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of armed conflict”**, was signed in 1954. It was **the first convention** defining precisely in the law how to protect heritage from armed conflict.

It was adopted after the destruction provoked by the Second World War. What is especially interesting is that states are advised to implement measures not only when a war is started, but also in times of peace : thus the protection of cultural heritage is something that has to be done on the long term.

The impact of this convention is striking, particularly in terms of the number of states that have signed it : by 2022 it had been ratified by 134 states.

Different Kinds of Solutions

Depending on how the cultural heritage of your country is threatened, there can be various kind of solutions. Here are some leads of solutions:

Before the Destruction

- **Preventing the destruction**
- **Regulations:** Protecting heritage is registered in the United Nations sustainable goals number 11 : [“sustainable cities and communities”](#) and 16 [“Peace justice and strong institutions”](#). It is also inscribed in International Humanitarian Law, where the destruction of cultural heritage is regarded as an unlawful attack on the past and present of society. There are also numerous conventions organised and signed on the initiative of UNESCO on the topic.
- **Working on the saving of data**

After the Beginning of the Conflict

- **Reconstructing**, restoring after destruction, taking into account the economic aspect of cultural heritage.
- **To stop the fight against the traffic of cultural pieces, stolen artefact (against looting)** : UNESCO is mobilized to stop illegal trafficking in cultural properties from countries at risk of pillage, warning regularly art market to check the source of works. For instance, since 2011, about a hundred objects looted in Yemen have been sold in auction houses in Europe and the United States for an estimated \$1 million.
- **Developing the diplomatic way** to save heritage once the conflict has started
- **Emergency measures**
- To have **safe places** to safeguard the cultural material
- **Working in partnership** with organisations: UNESCO collaborates with other organisations of the United Nations, such as the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drug and Crimes) , NATO but also International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property... etc
- **Restoring exactly the heritage or changing it** while rebuilding?

Who are the Actors Involved in the Protection of Heritage?

Multiple actors are involved in the protection of cultural heritage. Indeed, to damage cultural property constitutes an attack on the cultural heritage of all humanity, since each people contributes to the world's entire culture.

States

The world heritage fund has a compulsory amount to be paid for each member states. The initiatives to protect do not always come from the country whose artefacts are threatened. Sweden for instance was an active member in the fight against the illegal trafficking of stolen Syrian artefacts. It has created especially a police unit to deal with the issue. Similarly, the United States enacted a law in 2016 to reduce the business of antiquities stolen from Syria in their markets. Thus these two countries are acting even if the endangered heritage is not in their country, because cultural heritage is the heritage of humanity.

Sometimes, conventions signed by actors have not been respected: for instance the Russian Federation is part of the World Heritage Committee, but it is not stopping the annihilation of cultural sites in Ukraine. In 2022, Russia was even supposed to host the annual meeting of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in the city of Kazan in its Tatarstan region. Finally, Russia decided to end the mission of its ambassador in the UNESCO Committee.

Local Actors

Besides, the inclusion of the people living next to the protected sites is vital to ensure the procedures will be respectful of their culture. For example, to restore the city of Timbuktu in Northern Mali, UNESCO worked in partnership with local communities. During the 2012-2013 conflict, more than 4 000 manuscripts were lost, a real loss for this essential center of learning in Africa. UNESCO also rebuilt mausoleums, ensuring that the reconstruction respected the traditions of construction, under the aegis of local craftsmen.

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Companies can also play a part in protecting our cultural heritage, notably through the patronage system. In France in 2021, 105 000 companies were involved in protecting the country's cultural heritage, for a big total of 2.3 billion euros in donations.

Non- Governmental Organizations

On the international scale, there is not only UNESCO that works on this protection. A lot of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) focus on preserving cultural objects and sites. Some examples:

- **ICA**: International Council on Archives
- **ICOM**: International Council of Museums
- **WMF**: World Monuments Fund

Their work is fundamental for UNESCO to have a precise vision of what it can implement on a national scale, but also for collecting donations and funds to achieve their projects.

Key Questions

To guide your research in order to write your position paper, here are the crucial questions to keep in mind to choose which solutions your nation will propose.

- Is your country torn by a conflict ? If not, what can your country do to help protecting heritage in conflict areas ?
- Is the heritage of your nation already protected ?
- Do you think some areas of your nations should be classified in the World Heritage List, or benefit from more protection ?
- What kind of danger should your heritage be protected of ? (Could it be

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a collateral damage of an armed conflict, is it especially targeted for its meaning ?)

- Why should this particular artefact be preserved (is it for an historical question, a political, economical one ?)
- Is your country part of an international convention to protect cultural heritage ? Does it abide by its commitments ?

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Topic 2 : Guaranteeing Women the Right to Education In Developing Countries

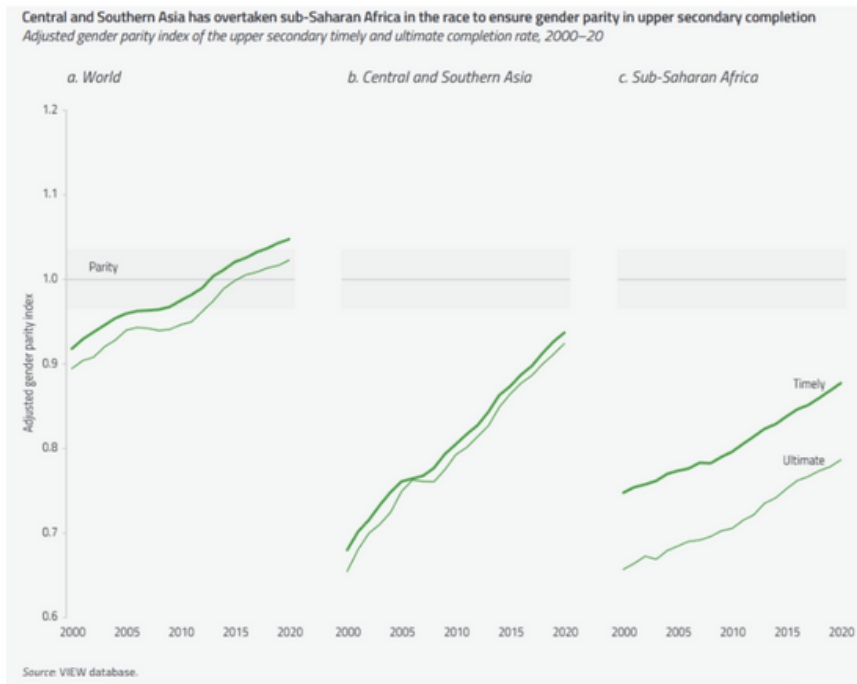
Education is a tool of choice, and choosing one's life should be offered equally to all, boys or girls. The access to education for women is evolving : **since 2015, 50 millions more girls have been accessing school**. Nevertheless, a lot of inequalities and obstacles are still preventing girls in various developing countries from getting a deserved education. In October 2023, there are still 122 million girls who are not enrolled in school. This issue is especially prevalent in developing countries.

Ensuring girl's right to education is part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015, at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York. It corresponds to **the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4** of this agenda, that is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Crucial Areas

Some regions are particularly affected by obstacles to gender parity in education, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where in 2022 more than one in four young women did not yet know how to read or write, and Central and Southern Asia, even though progress has been made. North Africa and West Asia have yet to achieve parity, as in 2022 they had made no further progress since 2012 in either primary or secondary education.

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There are still what is called **"Pockets of exclusion"**. In sub-Saharan Africa, Guinea and Togo are among the countries with the widest gender gaps to the detriment of young women of upper secondary school age, with girls out of school 20 percentage points more than boys. Cameroon, Uganda, Chad and Zambia show a gap of around 15 percentage points.



unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381329/PDF/381329eng.pdf.multi

The perpetuation of gender inequalities in the access to education is also often provoked by Non-State actors, such as private schools reserved to boys.

Furthermore, some areas where progress had been made, notably Afghanistan, saw their efforts crumble with the arrival of the talibans in power and the ban on women's access to universities. If the right to education for girls depends on a mere change of regime, it is not achieved enough.

The obstacles to Education

Cultural Obstacles

Gender Stereotypes

In 2022, a World Data Base report denounced the fact that girls between 5 and 14 years old spend **40% more time on doing household chores and care work compared to boys their age**, meaning less time dedicated to education.

In some cultures, parents don't even see the interest in sending their girl to school, as they will marry and stay at home.

Impact of Non-State faith based schools

For instance, the **madrasas** : Muslims theological schools, have both positive and negative impact on women's access to education. The increase in girls' enrolment in madrasas favoured by conservative families at least has the advantage of **increasing their chances of schooling in conservative rural areas**, since these are often the only schools nearby. (Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2012).

In Indonesia for instance, madrasas have been accessible to girls for around a hundred years.

However, the curricula and textbooks of madrasas are not always respectful of gender equality. On the contrary, they can sometimes even reinforce traditional discourses on gender roles, as shown by studies carried out in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (Asadullah 2018; Ghalib 2017; Suwardi 2017). Thus it is an access to education, but not always the education needed to guarantee young girls as many chances as young boys.

Beliefs-based reasons

In Afghanistan in 2022, **60% of girls are not in primary school and 74% in lower secondary school**, when it is the case for only 46% and 50% of boys. There has been a regression in this region since girls were banned from secondary schools in Afghanistan. Prior to these restrictions, rapid progress had been made in terms of completion rates. The primary school completion rate for girls, for example, had risen from 8% in 2000 to 56% in 2020, although the gender gap had stagnated at 20 percentage points.

In 2022, **Talibans banned Afghan women from higher education**, forbidding them to enter into universities, even though they were already denied secondary education, although the number of women in higher education in the country had increased almost 20-fold between 2001 and 2018, and before the recent suspension, one in three young women was enrolled at university.

This closure of Afghan universities at a time when so much progress had been made shows that women's right to education has not been achieved everywhere, and that stricter regulations are needed to prevent a change of regime from calling this right into question, as in the case of Afghanistan.

Companies can also play a part in protecting our cultural heritage, notably through the patronage system. In France in 2021, 105 000 companies were involved in protecting the country's cultural heritage, for a big total of 2.3 billion euros in donations.

Poverty

Poverty is the most important factor that determines whether or not a girl can access education, according to the World Bank. Even in areas where parents don't have to pay school fees, they need to fund the transport, school equipment, and uniforms.

Poor families often choose to invest in a boy's education rather than their girl's one, when confronted with a choice due to their lack of money. Thus UNICEF denounced in a 2020's paper the fact that nearly 1 in 3 adolescent girls from the poorest households around the world has never been sent to school.

Only 1% of the world's poorest girls will complete secondary education.

This is also linked to child labour, another impediment on girls education, as in areas of the world with few restrictions on this issue, families often choose to send their daughters to work.

Child Marriage

In some countries, boys are allowed to persevere with their education, whereas girls are leaving school more early, under the pressure to marry young. Even more problematic, some families are marrying their children really young, hampering them from going to school, even more once girls are forced into childbearing, another obstacle to education. For instance, 21% of adolescents in Nigeria, and 10% of adolescents in Sierra Leone are losing out on education to marriage and pregnancy.

Institutional barriers

Some areas simply lack schools nearby homes, and teachers. This issue is affecting as much boys than girls, nevertheless some parents will be less confident in letting their girls take a long trip to go to school compared to their boys. Data from the Global Women Institute estimates that approximately 60 million girls are sexually assaulted on their way to or at school every year. This violence and lack of safety in their path toward school is discouraging many to attend lessons.

Conflicts and natural disasters

In conflict areas, schools are often closed, hampering children from going to school. In South Sudan, 1 in 3 schools is closed due to the conflict, and **59% of children cannot benefit from primary education, with 72% of primary school-aged girls that do not attend school, in contrast to 64% of primary school-aged boys.** War and violence drastically reduce opportunities for girls to continue their education. In areas of conflict, girls and women are the most vulnerable. Indeed, **girls are 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than those living in areas without violence,** according to a GEM report of UNICEF in 2015.

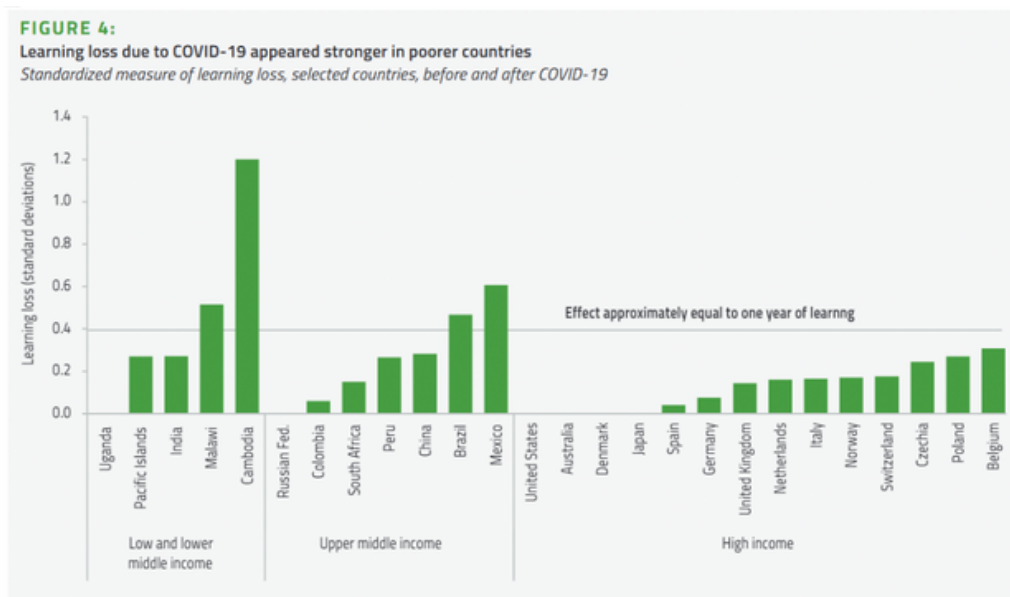
According to Global Citizen, nearly *39 million girls and adolescent girls* in countries affected by armed conflict or natural disasters lack access to quality education. **Refugee girls are half as likely to be in school as refugee boys.**

The impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic had negative outcomes on children's education, including girl's one. It compounded the original problems and threatened progress that had been made.

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It caused the closing of multiple schools worldwide between approximately March 2020 and October 2021, and devastated numerous economies. Thereby, many households could not afford to enrol their children in school. Parents will thus give more chances to their boys if they can only afford one child schooling.



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COVID-19 did not have the same effect on girls and boys in terms of education. Depending on the country, boys and girls faced different challenges in terms of access to devices, time use and risk of early pregnancy. According to UNESCO in 2021, in Bangladesh, Jordan and Pakistan, parents were more reluctant to give their daughters access to a telephone, which was also used less than expected to ensure learning when the physical presence in school was not enabled. Less access to technology means less lessons online.

Time allowed for education during the pandemic was thus restricted for some girls in developing countries, as they were more encouraged to do household chores or to take care of their families.

A report conducted among 19-year-olds during the pandemic showed that 70% of young Ethiopian women spent more time on household chores than before the pandemic, compared with 35% of young Ethiopians, and 42% of young Peruvian women took more care of children, compared with 26% of young Peruvians (Ford, 2021).

Consequences of the inequality of access to education

Not educating women leads to a large part of the population uneducated and thus unfitted to work. Thus the failure to educate a country's women has a major impact on its development. According to UNICEF, in Afghanistan, the ban on women's access to universities is likely to worsen the country's economic situation. The organisation already noted that the ban on girls' access to secondary education had resulted in an economic loss of \$500 million in one year, and that depriving girls of access to secondary education costs Afghanistan 2.5% of its annual gross domestic product (GDP). UNICEF also estimates that if the three million girls currently deprived of secondary education were able to complete their studies and enter the job market, girls and women would contribute at least \$5.4 billion to the Afghan economy.

A girl who has not been offered an access to education is condemned to face other inequalities while growing : as noted by UNESCO, of the 750 millions adults without basic literacy skills, two thirds are women. The biggest gender gap in adult literacy was in 2022 in Central and Southern Asia (15 points) and sub-Saharan Africa (13 points). In Benin, Central African Republic, Guinea, Liberia and Mali, there were 60 literate women for every 100 men.

The case is especially concerning women living in rural areas. In rural Guinea, about **14% of women were literate in 2018** compared with 39% of

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men, while in urban areas about 52% of women were literate compared with 77% of men. There is progress but it remains too slow.

Education is not only for children, and adult women should also have a right to a free access to education. Having the whole society, men and women alike, with basic literary and writing skills is indispensable for the proper functioning of society, if only to acquire the knowledge necessary for the proper functioning of the health system (a crucial element during the pandemic as noted in the UNESCO 2022 report). A study in India revealed that women who had participated in an adult literacy program - conducted before the spread of COVID-19 and including no documents dealing specifically with the pandemic - had considerably higher knowledge of COVID-19 than their illiterate counterparts.

Chad, for example, integrated adult education into its plan to fight COVID-19 consequences.

Moreover, if every little girl was enrolled into school, it would reduce the number of forced marriage for children : UNICEF deems that 12 years of education for every girl would result in a 64% drop in child marriage and that secondary education also helps to prevent early pregnancy.

Key Questions

- Is your country a developing country ? If it is a developed country, how can it help other nations ? Did it already help in any way ?
- What kind of actors can be involved in this issue ? National, international ones, on the local scale ?
- What are the priorities, which actions should be implemented first ?
- What was already implemented by UNESCO, UNICEF ? Did it work ? How can your nation or a group of countries improve it ?
- Does the barriers to education for girls affect your country in some way, because of your history, of your values ?

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A good picture of the actual situation : [2022: Deepening the debate on those still left behind | Global Education Monitoring Report \(unesco.org\)](#)


Example of actions taken by a Non-Governmental Organisation : [UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education](#) → on this website you can find data on the topic for various countries : [Dossier de presse | Fonds Malala](#)


You can be inspired by the work of **the World bank and its partners** : [Girls' Education Overview \(worldbank.org\)](#)


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