
The Toughest Places For A Girl To Get An Education



**POVERTY
IS SEXIST**

Educating girls can change the world

Girls who get a complete, quality education are more likely to be healthier and better prepared to enter and succeed in the workforce. Education can give girls more opportunities to advocate for their own rights, contribute to their families and communities, and grow local and global economies.

But over 130 million girls didn't go to school today.¹ Millions more braved long distances, often in dangerous conditions, to get there. Other girls arrived at school

to sit in a classroom where a teacher never arrived, or where there were no textbooks or other materials that help students learn. Because of this, in 2017, nearly half a billion women worldwide still cannot read.²

To make sure every girl has the chance to get a good education, we need to understand where girls are being left behind. That's why ONE has created the Toughest Places for a Girl to Get an Education Index.

The Index: 10 Toughest Places for a Girl to Get an Education

	COUNTRY	SCORE (OUT OF 100) ³
1	SOUTH SUDAN	15.93
2	CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	17.75
3	NIGER	21.50
4	AFGHANISTAN	23.51
5	CHAD	27.16
6	MALI	29.28
7	GUINEA	30.35
8	BURKINA FASO	33.03
9	LIBERIA	36.20
10	ETHIOPIA	36.79

Index Insights:

Index findings reveal that to make meaningful progress in getting all girls into school and learning, we need to pay special attention to the poorest countries and those experiencing conflict – especially in Africa.

1 THE TOP 10 toughest countries for a girl to get an education are all fragile states and among the poorest in the world.

2 NINE OF THE 10 toughest countries are in Africa.

3 POVERTY IS SEXIST. Within the toughest 10 countries, girls are 57% more likely than boys to be out of school at the primary level (from about ages 6–11), and this disparity only gets worse as girls get older (83% at upper secondary level).

4 GIRLS FACE SOCIAL, cultural and economic barriers to accessing and staying in school.

In most of the 10 toughest countries, over half of girls are married before their 18th birthday.⁴ On average across the 10 toughest countries, one in four girls are child labourers.⁵ In eight of the 10 toughest countries, about one in three children are stunted from poor nutrition.⁶

5 MORE MONEY is needed – but is not enough – to ensure girls get a quality education. Niger and Ethiopia report spending over 20% of their domestic budgets on education (exceeding the Global Partnership for Education’s recommended target) but still perform poorly on other indicators and are among our 10 toughest countries. To achieve meaningful change and improve the quality of girls’ education, policy reforms are needed alongside increased financing.

6 THERE ARE GAPS in global education data, so we don’t have all the information we need to get all girls into school and learning. Traditional sources don’t give us data on, for example, how many girls complete primary school in Sri Lanka or how much the government spends on education in Haiti. Of 193 UN member states, 37% were missing data for four or more indicators for the period 2010 to 2016. Just 58 of 193 UN member states (30%) had complete data across the indicators included in our index.

7 EVEN WHEN countries’ overall scores are fairly high, they may mask regional disparities. For example, while Nigeria as a whole doesn’t make our list of the 10 toughest countries, at a regional level North East Nigeria is a tougher place for a girl to get educated than other regions in the country. In Nigeria’s South-South geopolitical zone, 5% of girls have never been to school, whereas this figure increases more than 10-fold (to 52%) in the North East.⁷



A Focus on Africa

To improve girls’ education globally, we need to pay special attention to Africa. No African countries are among the best-performing 25% of all countries ranked, and only four African countries (7%) are in the best-performing 50% of ranked countries. Overall, African countries had a median score of 52, compared with the Americas at 79, Asia also at 79 and Europe at 87.

But there is hope.

WE ALSO FOUND THAT:

1 **POOR COUNTRIES** aren't destined to perform poorly. Burundi has the world's lowest national income per capita at \$286 USD, but it outperforms 18 other wealthier countries.

2 **WHEN MORE GIRLS** are in school, countries' adolescent fertility rates are likely to be lower. This has knock-on benefits, as women who wait until adulthood to have children are less likely to experience health risks and are often better able to provide for their children.

3 **BEING IN SCHOOL MATTERS:** our research shows a strong relationship between girls' primary school completion rates and their literacy rates.⁸ On a global level, addressing the gender gap in education could yield between \$112 billion and \$152 billion USD a year in developing countries.⁹



Regional Differences in Nigeria

Nigeria ranked as the 27th toughest place for girls to get an education. But this ranking hides regional disparities. In North East Nigeria, for example, the violent extremist group Boko Haram (which translates as 'western education is forbidden') poses increased obstacles to girls completing their education. Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014. As of 2016, over 1,000 schools in the region had been damaged or destroyed and 1,500 schools had closed.¹⁰ This means that while Nigeria as a whole doesn't make our list of toughest countries, at a regional level North East Nigeria is a tougher place for a girl to get educated than other regions in the country. In Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, 5% of girls have never been to school, whereas this figure increases more than 10-fold (to 52%) in the North East.¹¹

Zeroing in on the Toughest 10 Countries

MALI:

In Mali, less than half (38%) of girls have completed primary school.

CHAD:

Chad is ranked as one of the 5 worst-performing countries in the World Economic Forum's 2016 Global Gender Gap Report, indicating that women and girls in Chad face a broader range of legal, social and economic barriers.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC:

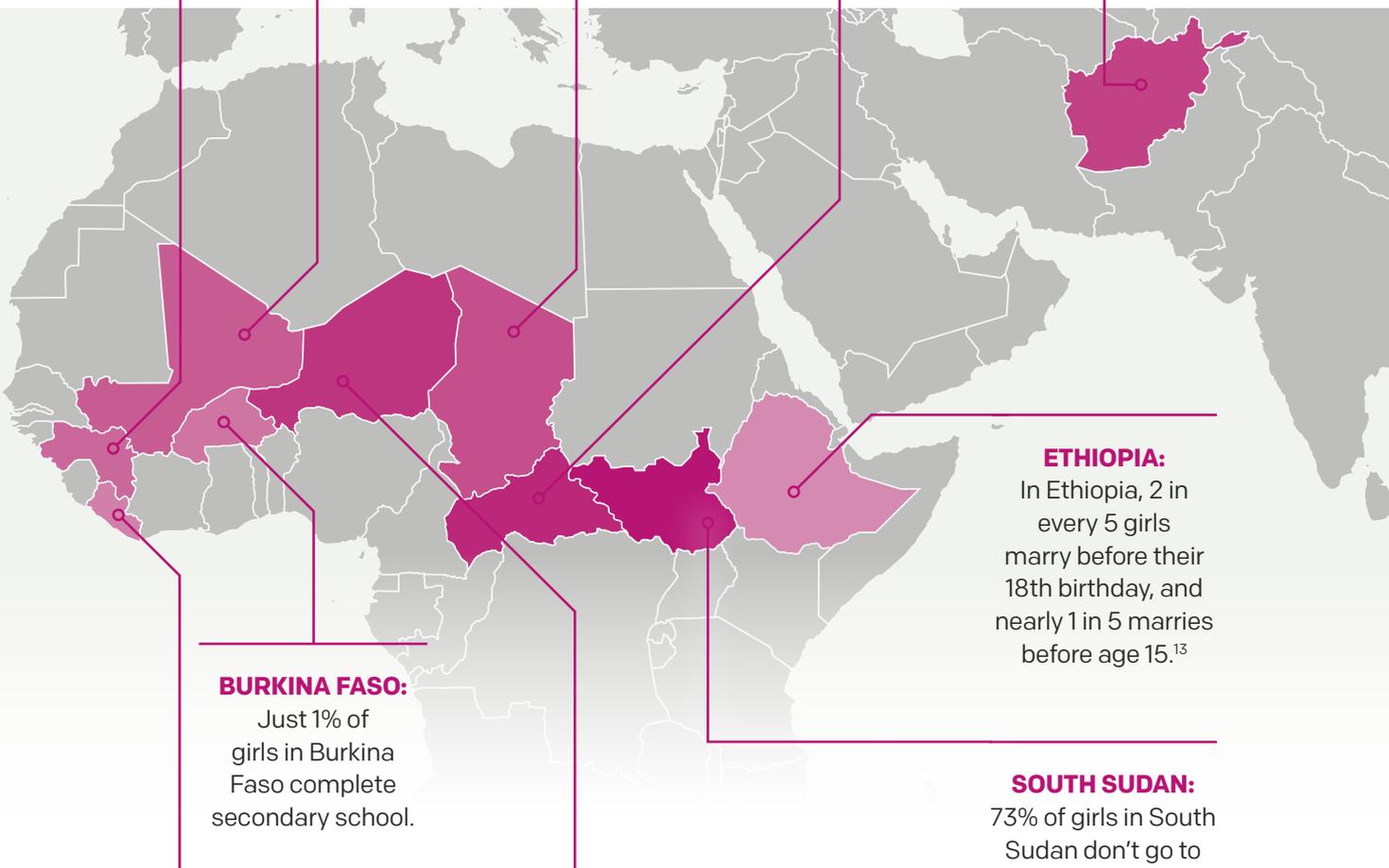
In the Central African Republic, there is 1 teacher for every 80 students (as opposed to 1 teacher for every 12 students in the Netherlands and for every 15 students in the United States).

AFGHANISTAN:

As of 2014, Afghanistan had the highest level of gender disparity in primary education, with only 71 girls in primary school for every 100 boys.¹²

GUINEA:

In Guinea, women (aged 25 and above) have on average attended school for less than 1 year.



BURKINA FASO:

Just 1% of girls in Burkina Faso complete secondary school.

LIBERIA:

Nearly two-thirds of primary school-aged girls in Liberia are out of school.

NIGER:

Only 17% of girls and women (aged 15–24) in Niger are literate.

ETHIOPIA:

In Ethiopia, 2 in every 5 girls marry before their 18th birthday, and nearly 1 in 5 marries before age 15.¹³

SOUTH SUDAN:

73% of girls in South Sudan don't go to primary school. And South Sudan's government spends just 2.6% of its total budget on education.

A Global Opportunity

Ensuring all girls get the education they deserve will take a global effort – and will require increased financing and policy reforms. ONE is advocating for:

- Governments to work towards allocating 20% of transparent national budgets to education. Only two of the 10 toughest countries for a girl to get an education meet this target proposed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).
- Donor governments to increase global education financing. This includes fully funding existing multilateral mechanisms such as the GPE and Education Cannot Wait, and establishing

the proposed International Finance Facility for Education. GPE operates in all the 10 toughest countries and has a proven track record of success.¹⁴

- National governments to implement an education policy agenda that will break every barrier to girls' education, invest in every teacher, monitor every outcome and connect every classroom.

The year ahead presents critical and unique opportunities for global education progress, including the GPE replenishment in 2018. More details on our proposals can be found in ONE's 2017 report [Poverty Is Sexist: Why educating every girl is good for everyone](#).

How the Index was Compiled

To create the index, we chose 11 factors that reflect girls' access to and completion of school, the quality of education in a country, and the broader enabling environment. The factors selected with available data are: rate of out-of-school girls of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary age; school completion rate for girls of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary age; mean years of schooling for women aged 25 and over; female literacy rate for population aged 15–24; percentage of primary school teachers trained; pupil–teacher ratio in primary schools; and

spending on education as a percentage of total government expenditure.

Of 193 UN member states, we excluded countries that were missing four or more data points (out of 11) to allow for reliable comparison. This left us with a list of 122 countries. Data was primarily drawn from [UNESCO's Institute for Statistics \(UIS.Stat\) database](#). We filled gaps in administrative data with data from household surveys, either available through separate indicators on the UIS. Stat site or through the [World Inequality Database on Education \(WIDE\)](#).



A Note on Data Gaps



The countries missing from these rankings are just as important as the ones you see ranked. Of 193 UN member states, 37% were missing data for four or more indicators for the period 2010–2016. This left us with 122 countries, and over half (52%) of these were also missing data points. This meant that just 58 of

the 193 original countries (30%) had complete data. Among the countries with insufficient data to include in the index are Canada, France, Germany, Somalia and Syria.¹⁵ Our analysis of data gaps underscores the need for improved education sector data, particularly gender-disaggregated data.



End Notes

1. This includes primary, lower and upper secondary school; UNESCO, 2016, Leaving no one behind. Policy Paper 27. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/imagenes/0024/002452/245238E.pdf>.
2. Out-of-school and illiteracy rates from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2017. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>.
3. Using 11 indicators (such as out-of-school rate, literacy rate), we first normalised countries' scores according to each individual indicator. Once countries' scores were computed for each individual indicator, we calculated the average of these scores to get countries' overall scores (weighting each indicator equally). All indicators are coded positively (that is, higher scores indicate better performance).
4. Child marriage rates from UNICEF, 2016, Global Databases: Child Marriage, based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys, 2008–2014. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>.
5. Child labour rates from UNICEF, 2016, Global Databases: Child Labour, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys, 2009–2015. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/#>.
6. UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank Group, 2017, Joint malnutrition country dataset. <http://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/>.
7. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2013, World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE). <http://www.education-inequalities.org/>.
8. ONE conducted a simple regression analysis to find that 78% of girls' literacy rates can be explained by girls' primary completion rates within a given country. This analysis is limited in that it did not account for primary completion rates as a proxy for other variables, like household income.
9. ONE Campaign, 2017. Poverty is Sexist: Why educating every girl is good for everyone. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/one.org/pdfs/making-the-connection-report-en.pdf>.
10. UNOCHA, 2016, Nigeria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha_nga_2017_hno_13012017.pdf.
11. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2013, World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE). <http://www.education-inequalities.org/>.
12. EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2013-14, http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/GMR/pdf/Afghanistan_Factsheet.pdf.
13. Girls Not Brides, 'Ethiopia,' accessed August 28, 2017, <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/ethiopia/>.
14. Global Partnership for Education, 'Developing Country Partners,' <http://www.globalpartnership.org/about-us/developing-countries>.
15. Though the data underlying the index does not allow us to confirm, missing data in Canada, France and Germany may be explained by the fact that out-of-school rates are so low, or completion, literacy, and teaching training rates are so high that countries have decided not to prioritize measuring them.

**To explore the index
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