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## Translating evidence into impact: Advancing global girls' education

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## RESEARCH UTILIZATION AND IMPACT BRIEF

# Translating Evidence into Impact: Advancing Global Girls' Education

**Summary:** Over the past two decades, the Population Council has advanced girls' education through generation and use of evidence at global, national, and sub-national levels. Today, it continues to lead and shape agendas, as well as respond to the education community's demand for rigorous research. Its new Evidence for Gender and Education Resource aims to drive better education results around the world by improving access to data and evidence on who's doing what, what's working where, and where girls' needs are greatest.

## EVOLUTION OF THE GIRLS' EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

The Population Council's work on [global girls' education](#) started in the late 1990s, from a growing recognition in demography and population health circles that contextual factors, including education, influence reproductive health outcomes. By the 2010s, influential [publications](#), robust [research projects](#) in multiple countries, enhanced [organizational investments](#), and dedicated staff allowed the Council to expand its education capabilities. Today, across a diversity of settings, Council researchers continue to leverage their unique combination of research and evaluation expertise to fill evidence gaps and advance girls' education.

# KEY MILESTONES IN COUNCIL'S GIRLS' EDUCATION RESEARCH

For over two decades, the Population Council has contributed to the girls' education field through its robust application of novel research methods, embrace of an interdisciplinary approach, and commitment to assessing the structural challenges marginalized populations face.



**1998: The [Uncharted Passage](#) spotlights role of education in girls' transitions to adulthood.**

This landmark publication contributed to the introduction of now established education approaches, such as engaging girls before puberty, reaching out-of-school girls, and supporting development of girls' protective assets.



**2001–2002: Council advances novel analyses examining gendered aspects of the school environment.**

Research from [Kenya](#), [Pakistan](#), and [Egypt](#) contributed to widespread recognition of the ways gendered aspects of the school environment, such as the availability of female teachers and the extent to which boys and girls are treated equitably, influence enrollment, retention, and other outcomes.

**2007: Launch of [Malawi Schooling and Adolescent Study](#) supports key evolutions in girls' education research.**



This longitudinal study provided a rich data set (including biomarkers) that continues to inform analyses exploring relationships between schooling, educational, and health outcomes.

**2005: Council staff lead expert panel in examining global adolescent experience.**



This panel convened by the U.S. National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine led to the publication of [Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries](#), which provided a widely cited theoretical framework for examining adolescence in an era of globalization.



**2009: [New Lessons: the Power of Educating Adolescent Girls](#) report reinforces focus on education quality and identifies key evidence gaps.**

This review of over 300 girls' interventions reinforced the importance of [education quality](#), which is now widely accepted as a critical component of education programs and [research agendas](#).



**2017: Council research and programming on girls' education spans three continents.**

Across Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, [this work](#) has advanced rigorous evaluations examining program effectiveness, including impacts on longer-term life outcomes, with many of these long-standing projects and partnerships continuing to this day.

**2021: [EGER database](#) spotlights key needs and evidence for global girls' education.**



The Evidence for Gender and Education Resource equips the global gender and education community with evidence to inform their program, policy, research, and investment decisions, including a new [Girls' Education roadmap](#).

**2017: Council launches [GIRL Center](#) to enhance evidence synthesis and translation to transform the lives of adolescent girls.**



This global Girl Innovation, Research, and Learning Center conducts rigorous research to advance investment in evidence-based approaches that support adolescents' healthy transition to adulthood, including girls' education.

## INFORMING PROGRAMS

**In India, Ethiopia, and Kenya, Council-generated education evidence has informed programming and influenced investment decisions, providing opportunities for girl-level change.**

**In India**, the [UDAYA study](#) has generated state-representative data on the status of adolescents in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, home to a quarter of the country's young people. Informed by years of Council research on transitions to adulthood, UDAYA is the largest longitudinal survey of its kind, providing evidence on multiple facets of adolescents' lives, including an array of [educational and economic outcomes](#). By generating novel data around health and educational assets in these two states, UDAYA has provided important [baseline indicators](#) that are already being used to better understand the reach of state and national-level programs to support primary and secondary education, as well as adolescent well-being. UDAYA has also partnered with civil society organizations (CSOs) in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to foster data use in advocacy efforts around girls' education. Through collaborative relationships with the Government of India and CSOs, UDAYA's publicly available [datasets and analyses](#) are well positioned to inform existing and future adolescent education interventions.

**In Ethiopia**, [Biruh Tesfa](#) ("Bright Future") has emerged as one of only a few rigorously evaluated programs in sub-Saharan Africa to support girls living in forced domestic servitude, girls who are trafficked, and girls living with disabilities. Utilizing adult female mentors to provide non-formal education and link girls to health services, [the intervention](#) significantly improved literacy and numeracy and increased girls' reports of social support and use of health services. Biruh Tesfa has reached over 75,000 out-of-school girls in urban areas across the country, and with additional



**In India**, UDAYA's novel and publicly available datasets are informing government education programs and supporting local advocacy efforts.



**In Ethiopia**, 'Biruh Tesfa for All' is expanding evidence-based safe spaces programming for girls living with disabilities or in domestic servitude.



**In Kenya**, the success of AGI-K's package of health and education interventions has generated government interest in scaling this initiative in Wajir County.

funding, "[Biruh Tesfa for All](#)" has scaled the intervention to reach an additional 10,500 girls in the cities of Addis Ababa, Adama, Bahir Dar, and Shashamene. The program continues to create inclusive public meeting spaces and learning materials for girls living with disabilities, and at the end of participation girls receive support to enroll in formal education and enter safer forms of work.

**In Kenya's Nairobi and Wajir counties**, the [Adolescent Girl Initiative-Kenya](#) (AGI-K) evaluated packages of multi-sectoral interventions, including a cash transfer to households conditioned on girls' school enrollment and attendance, to identify effective approaches for supporting marginalized

girls' healthy transitions to adulthood. The [randomized controlled trial](#) comprising girl-, household-, and community-level interventions found overall positive effects on health, wealth, and girls' education, including primary school completion and schooling self-efficacy (e.g., self-confidence to perform school-related tasks). Cost-effectiveness calculations demonstrated that delivering interventions as packages was better value for money than delivering them individually, and [two-year follow-up results](#) largely confirmed that targeted, timely investments in adolescent girls supported longer-term impacts on delayed childbearing. Acknowledging these successes, there is demonstrated interest from the senior level of government in Wajir County in scaling up AGI-K interventions through local delivery channels.

## LOOKING FORWARD

At the global level, the Council's [GIRL Center](#) has emerged as a coordinating hub for generation, [synthesis](#), and dissemination of research to support evidence-based programs and policies for girls' education. The Council continues to provide critical guidance on [measuring](#) gender equality in education and [evaluating](#) education-related

interventions for girls. The GIRL Center's [Evidence for Gender and Education Resource](#) (EGER) is the first-ever free, searchable database for practitioners, researchers, donors, and decisionmakers to drive better education results around the world. EGER has mapped hundreds of programs and reviewed the evidence on what approaches improve girls' education outcomes, identifying where research gaps exist.

Informed by this work, EGER recently launched its 2021 [Girls' Education Roadmap](#), a detailed plan to support alignment of demonstrated needs, evidence, and practice. [New programs](#) and evidence are constantly being added to the EGER database, and as the number of users who work on and invest in education policy, programming, and agenda-setting grows, it will increasingly be possible to trace its use.

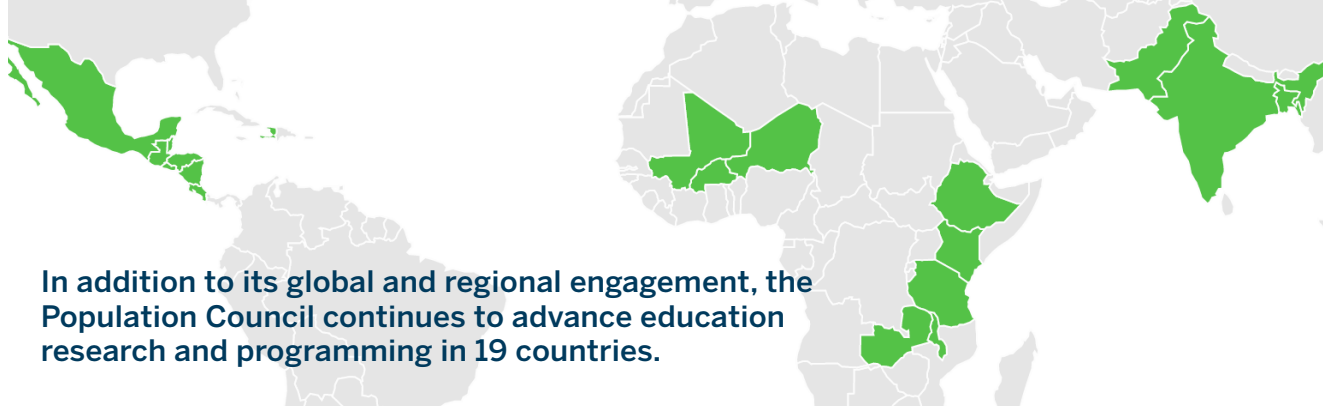
The Council and its partners also rapidly responded to evolving data needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Across multiple countries real-time evidence already indicates severe education disruptions for adolescent girls as well as boys, and Council researchers are pursuing global analyses to understand longer-term impacts (see text box for additional information).

### EDUCATION & COVID-19

**Country-Specific Surveys:** Between March and October 2020, the Council conducted a combined nine rounds of rapid phone-based surveys with more than 5,000 adolescents across [Bangladesh](#), [India](#), [Kenya](#), and [Mexico](#) to understand the effects of COVID-19 on their lives. Across all four countries, adolescents, particularly girls, reported challenges to learning at home due to competing responsibilities such as household chores and lack of access to learning materials, digital technologies, or the internet.

**Global Analyses:** The Council is conducting a UNESCO-funded study to understand how COVID-19-related school closures have affected outcomes in education, health, nutrition, and well-being among children and adolescents. The study will leverage EGER to understand how programs are addressing the gendered effects of school closures.

## LOCATIONS OF CURRENT GIRLS' EDUCATION WORK



In addition to its global and regional engagement, the Population Council continues to advance education research and programming in 19 countries.

For more information:



[Visit the Girls' Education Portfolio](#)



[Explore the EGER Database](#)



[Learn About the Council's Country-Level Work](#)



[Read the Girls' Education Roadmap](#)

## SELECTED RESOURCES

<b>Expansion of the Evidence Base for Girls' Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Girls' Education at the Population Council: Building Evidence to Accelerate Progress</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Measuring Gender Equality in Education: Lessons from 43 Countries</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Delivering Results in Girls' Education: How to Evaluate What Works, What Doesn't, and What We Don't Know</a></li> </ul>
<b>Country-Level Girls' Education Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Adolescent Girls Initiative-Kenya: Endline Evaluation Report</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">UDAYA: Education, Employability, and Economic Inclusion</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Biruh Tesfa: Evaluation of a Safe Spaces Program for Girls in Ethiopia</a></li> </ul>
<b>COVID-19 and Girls' Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Remember the fundamentals as we build back better in girls' education</a></li> <li>• Adolescent Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Surveys from <a href="#">Bangladesh</a>, <a href="#">India</a>, <a href="#">Kenya</a>, and <a href="#">Mexico</a></li> </ul>

The Population Council collaborates with program implementers, policymakers, researchers, and funding partners to advance evidence-based solutions to critical health and development challenges. Its [research utilization and impact briefs](#) feature recent highlights of our ongoing work to ensure evidence is translated into meaningful actions to improve lives from community to national, regional, and global levels.

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