

aid cuts have deprived women and girls of education in Afghanistan



30%

expected decline
in international
aid to education
by 2027, following
devastating cuts

167M

adolescent girls
in countries with the widest
gender equality gaps are
among the worst hit by
global aid cuts, impacting
their ability to go to school

85M

children living in
emergencies are out
of school globally

less than one-third

of total funding for
education in emergencies
in 2024 had been
allocated by June 2025

Investing in education is one of the most effective ways to prevent violence, reduce poverty, and improve women and girls' health outcomes. But education was one of the hardest-hit sectors by aid cuts in 2025. Practically, this means that **millions of children have lost their access to quality education and are no longer in school learning.**

As one of the world's largest out-of-school crises, Afghanistan has been hit particularly hard by education funding cuts, which has disproportionately affected women and girls. Afghanistan already experiences immense education inequality fuelled by the Taliban's system of gender apartheid, in which women and girls are systematically barred from education beyond primary school.

In this context, **international aid has been a lifeline.** USAID previously funded programs that supported women and girls' education under the radar of the Taliban, but these opportunities have been lost to aid cuts.

- **in 2025, USAID cut all aid programming to Afghanistan**, removing some of the only alternative spaces for women and girls' education beyond primary school.
- USAID cuts led to the closure of a midwife program in Kabul, which ended the only higher education option for women and girls in the entire country.

- as of December 2025, 2.2 million adolescent girls in Afghanistan were excluded from secondary school, with another 400,000 blocked each year.
- by 2026, these bans are estimated to cause a 25% increase in child marriage, a 45% increase in early pregnancy, and a 50% increase in maternal death.

Education advocates in Canada are also pushing us to do more. After initially spearheading the 2018 Charlevoix Declaration to support education for women and girls in crisis contexts, Canada did not renew its support once the commitment ended in 2023.

If Canada continues to cut international aid, it will contribute to this devastating downward spiral for global education. Aid cuts have long-term consequences for the millions of children who have lost access to education, and for the development and advancement of whole communities and countries.

We are facing an unprecedented crisis for global education — now is not the time for Canada to back away.