



## Solutions for Addressing the Education Crisis in Afghanistan

Over the last two decades, Afghan women and girls made tremendous gains in education, making up almost 38 percent of the students in the country by 2018 and increasingly pursuing higher education. In a consequential reversal, the Taliban have severely restricted education for women and girls – barring women from universities, banning girls’ secondary schooling, and preventing even younger girls from attending school in many provinces. Despite claims that schooling will eventually resume, the quality and type of education under their extreme Islamic views has remained an open question.

Afghan women are calling for an urgent global response to the education crisis in Afghanistan. Their top recommendations to the international community include:

- **Coordinate and condition engagement with the Taliban on their providing education to women and girls, including publicly releasing new policies on girls’ education.** Failure to act should be met with targeted punitive measures that preserve education for the Afghan people.
- **Monitor and hold the Taliban accountable for implementation of educational reforms with clear benchmarks** i.e. the percentage of girls in school, sustained access to higher education including re-opening public universities, and provision of teacher salaries.
- **Match commitments to girls’ education with robust financing.** The education sector must be prioritized in any international donor package. The sustainability of an inclusive education sector requires aid to be closely coordinated with local government and NGOs implementing projects on the ground. International agencies and institutions should also re-open educational assistance offices in Afghanistan and provide scholarships for women and girls seeking higher education.
- **Finance and train Afghan women teachers, especially at the village and local levels, to address the critical teacher shortage.** This effort should be matched by pressure on the Taliban to amend their requirement that girls can only be taught by women teachers. Internationally-provided stipends to Afghan teachers are key, but they must be monitored to ensure successful transfer and tightly coordinated with local actors who seek to use payment to legitimize their authority.
- **Support and scale Afghan women-led alternative educational models, including technology and online learning systems, to reach a wider range of girls.** The [SOLA](#) model of private girls’ boarding schools run by educated Afghan women can be scaled to expand access to rural provinces. [LEARN](#) uses offline applications, solar panels, digital community spaces, and widely-distributed radio lessons to address the digital divide that often prevents girls’ education.
- **Enable girls’ economic empowerment through holistic and skills-based education.** General studies curricula should include practical lessons, courses, and learning opportunities that can translate into economic empowerment. Education for girls must be oriented toward financial

independence, and include courses that can increase earning potential, such as in STEM, economics, freelancing, web development, and journalism.

- **Collaborate with religious and community leaders to break down harmful gender norms that restrict girls' education.** [The Afghan Women's Educational Center \(AWEC\)](#) works to implement community-based educational programs that include an Islamic perspective on the right to education for women and girls, which builds trust between mullahs, village leaders, and community members to counter resistance at the local level.
- **Leverage the influence of Muslim-majority countries to model positive examples of women's education, leadership, and agency in an Islamic framework.** Qatar and Pakistan's mutual condemnation of the Taliban for denying girls access to secondary education is a welcomed measure.
- **Meaningfully include Afghan women leaders in the development of education assistance policy and implementation.** Afghan women demand a seat at the table and must have the agency to lead educational efforts in their home country.

These recommendations were compiled from Afghan women leaders speaking at a GIWPS-hosted event on “Afghanistan’s Education Crisis Under the Taliban: Ensuring Access for Women and Girls.”

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