

24.06.2025

An Open Letter to the Prime Minister: Keep Supporting Girls' Education

Dear Prime Minister,

Your government's decision to reduce the aid budget will have serious consequences for children around the world whose futures depend on education. The most severe cuts, in the words of International Development Minister Baroness Chapman, are "[likely to be on education and gender](#)": it is girls' futures, in other words, that are most at risk.

Education transforms lives. It gives children the tools to shape their own futures. It is also a smart investment: every £1 spent on girls' education and rights brings an [estimated return of £2.80](#). Just one additional year of school can boost a girl's [future earnings by 20%](#). Education is a global public good that is also firmly in Britain's interest: it reduces conflict, builds resilience against climate change, and helps our partners build their human capital and their economies. For girls like Mapenzi in the Democratic Republic of Congo - whose schooling was only possible thanks to a UK-funded project - education is the difference between poverty and possibility.

The UK was widely respected for its decades-long leadership on global education, from helping to set up global funds and partnerships to expand access to education to supporting 19.8 million children to gain an education over the last decade. You promised to put Britain "back on the world stage". Yet this decision risks doing exactly the opposite, at a time when [272 million children](#) are still out of school around the world. In Afghanistan, girls' secondary education remains banned altogether. Now is hardly the time for the UK to deny millions more children an education.

Public finances are tight. It is true too that aid accounts for only a small share of countries' education spending, and is no silver bullet. Certainly, more must be done to help lower income countries escape debt traps and spend properly on their own public services. But in the past, modest investments in global education from Britain's aid budget have led to far greater domestic spending by lower income countries, as well as mobilising additional finance. They can do so again. And in emergencies, education is not a luxury - it's a lifeline.

We urge you, Prime Minister, not to step back now. Please, do not turn your back on the millions of children who still need a chance to learn.

Signed:

Malala Yousafzai

Annie Lennox (Singer-songwriter, activist & Co-Founder of The Circle)

Joely Richardson (Actor, Save the Children ambassador)

Richard Curtis (British filmmaker, director & producer)

Myleene Klass (Musician & Broadcaster, Save the Children ambassador)

Natasha Kaplinsky (Broadcaster, Save The Children Ambassador)

Helen Fielding (Creator of the Bridget Jones novels and movies, Save The Children Ambassador)

Nick Hewer (TV Presenter, Street Child Patron)

Siobhan McSweeney (Actor & Presenter)

Misan Harriman (Photographer, filmmaker & Save the Children ambassador)

Dr Raj Arora

Vee Kativu (Education activist)

Foday Dumbuya (Founder & Creative Director of LABRUM, Winner of Queen Elizabeth award for British design)

Helen Arney (Science communicator & presenter)

Yasmin Ali (Chartered Engineer and Author)

Gabrielle Lemaire (Vice President, Didier Drogba Foundation)

Andrea Bradley (General Secretary, Scottish Trades Union Congress)

Daniel Kebede (General Secretary, National Education Union)

Matt Wrack (Acting General Secretary, NASUWT)

Professor Sir Myles Wickstead KCMG CBE

Barbara Payne OBE (Former DFID Senior Education Adviser)

Dr Peter Colenso (Former Head of Human Development, DFID)

Andy Brock (Former Managing Director, Cambridge Education)

Martha Lane Fox (Entrepreneur)

Raaki Shah (CEO, The Circle)

Laura Savage (Executive Director, International Education Funders Group)

Lesley-Anne Long (Chief Strategist, Wonderfuture)

Kevin Watkins (Visiting Professor, Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, London School of Economics)

Maggie MacDonnell (Former winner of the Global Teacher Prize)

Tassew Woldehanna (Addis Ababa University, & Ethiopian Policy Studies Institute)

Dr Kwame Akyeampong (Professor of International Education & Development, The Open University)

Noam Angrist (Academic Director, University of Oxford)