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# SDG4: QUALITY EDUCATION

SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT UNDER  
THE ESC RESOLVE: VOLUNTEERING FOR PEACE PROJECT



## WAR AND THE EXACERBATION OF GENDER EDUCATION INEQUALITIES IN SYRIA

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Globally, 250 million children are living amongst armed conflict. The effects of this are immeasurable and overarching, with the destruction of their homes and psychological trauma. Consequences on education are often overlooked despite them being innumerable, with 1 in 4 out of school, partially due to 1/3 of school buildings being damaged or destroyed and families fleeing. Within Syria, this is exemplified by the destruction of the only girl's intermediary school within a community in 2016, leaving female students without any access to education. Less direct factors also exacerbate gender inequalities, leading to increases in patriarchal policies and child marriage, penalising girls' education more so.

Prior to the war starting in 2011, education levels in Syria were above regional average, with gender not impacting enrolment. 97% of primary-aged children were in school and literacy rates

were over 90%. Parents were legally obligated to send their children to school, facing punishment if they failed to do so. However, by 2015, 2.2 million out of the 4.8 million children in Syria and over half of refugee children from the country were not in school. This severely limits opportunities for children's futures, with a Save the Children report concluding that maintaining educational access is essential for young people's protection and development during conflict. Consequences of this are not proportional, with girls more vulnerable to being removed from education for various reasons.

Child marriage has become increasingly common for Syrian girls. In 2006 approximately 13% of Syrian girls were married before 18, now, it is 41% for those who are displaced. This means they are highly vulnerable to childhood and teenage pregnancy and significantly less likely to attend school, feeding into a dangerous cycle as they are unable to learn the skills and knowledge to advocate for themselves against this. Poverty and economic hardships caused by war have been the primary driving forces and the government working to decrease female teachers through denying them payment in conflict zones amplifies this. Consequently, girls lack female role models, heightening the risk of displacement from the education system and subsequently, economic, and sexual exploitation. The quality of education also declines as there are fewer qualified teachers. Girls in regions controlled by extremists are even more endangered, with the curriculum discouraging women from attending school and marriage promoted by age 16.

Safety fears also prevent girls from accessing education. Although sexual assault and enslavement has been reported amongst boys and girls, it is significantly

higher for girls, causing parents to prevent their daughters from travelling long distances to school. The United Nations (UN) state this sexual assault by soldiers has become systemic and is used as a "weapon of war" in Syria. As this becomes increasingly common, traditional gender roles are reinforced, furthering parental prejudices about their daughters' education. Whilst some progress is happening within conflict zones like Syria, it is frequently criticised for being too slow and failing to meet the commitments of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is therefore essential that charities and governments centre on the SDG4 of Quality Education to ensure that children become more so protected from the consequences of war.

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#### **Story of solidarity:**

Malala Fund - Positive and effective actions have been implemented to better educational opportunities for Syrian girls. This fund works to provide technology that does not require internet so that Syrian girls are able to continue their schooling abroad as refugees. In collaboration with other organisations, they have created accelerated learning programs, allowing children to reach the educational standards of local schools.

#### **Sources:**

1. [Far-reaching Consequences of Wartime Attacks on Education | Human Rights Watch](#)
2. [10 Facts About Girls' Education in Syria - The Borgen Project](#)
3. [Loss of Access to Education Puts Well-being of Syrian Girls at Risk - Our World](#)
4. [UNICEF MENA](#)
5. [save-our-education-report.pdf](#)