

Every Girl's Right

Leonard Cheshire's holistic approach to ensuring every girl receives a quality education

Executive summary



Leonard
Cheshire



About Leonard Cheshire

Leonard Cheshire supports individuals to live, learn and work as independently as they choose, whatever their ability. Led by people with experience of disability, we are at the heart of local life – opening doors to opportunity, choice, and support across the globe.

With our partners in Africa and Asia, we provide inclusive education and livelihoods programmes that support people with disabilities in 15 countries. We also research disability and poverty, and work with the United Nations, World Bank, International Labour Organization, national governments, disability organisations and development actors to influence policy and make sure everyone can live as they choose.

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Executive summary

2021 signals a year of global commitments on education where countries come together to build a fairer and more resilient world post COVID.

Yet in 2021 girls with disabilities still make up the majority of out of school children and are denied their right to education. Girls with disabilities are less likely to enrol in education and have lower rates of attendance and completion, making disability and gender two of the most prominent factors in educational marginalisation.¹ It is also estimated that a girl's disability status has a bigger impact on her likelihood of going to school than her location or ethnicity.² Overall, girls with disabilities face a harder struggle to access and succeed in education than both boys with disabilities and girls without disabilities.

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Yet, all children, regardless of gender, race, class, disability, and displacement status, have an equal right to receive an education. This is specifically included as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our shared global blueprint to achieving a better, inclusive, fairer, and more sustainable future for all. **And yet we have just 9 years left to deliver on SDG 4 on quality education for all children everywhere.** It is also a right as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This inequality has widened with COVID as many girls with disabilities who were previously enrolled in inclusive education programmes have been unable to access remote learning platforms and are now likely to drop out of education entirely. The future of millions of girls with disabilities is at stake. However, education policies are still failing at mainstreaming disability in their budgets and targets. **As countries define re-enrolment strategies and decide on the future of their education policies and finances post COVID, it is critical that girls with disabilities are not left behind and become front and centre of education reconstruction efforts.**

Gender equality (SDG 5) and inclusive quality education for all (SDG 4) cannot be achieved without putting girls with disabilities at the heart of education policy efforts.





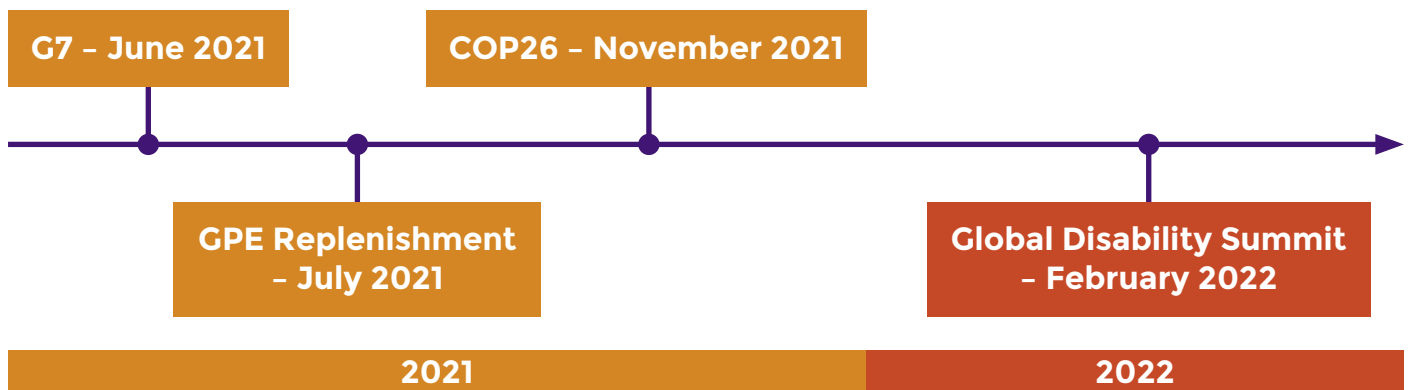
Gender equality (SDG 5) and inclusive quality education for all (SDG 4) cannot be achieved without putting girls with disabilities at the heart of education policy efforts. Decisions made this year will have a profound and long-lasting impact on the lives of millions of girls with disabilities. This year the world can lead the way in fulfilling every girl's right to 12 years of quality education and ensure girls with disabilities are not left behind in those plans.

In 2021, the UK will be President of the G7, co-host the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Replenishment, host the crucial COP26 climate summit, and host the Secretary General's visit marking the UN's 75th anniversary. The UK will also co-lead the new global Generation Equality Action Coalition on gender-based violence. **The UK Government, G7 countries, donor countries, UN agencies and developing countries all have a role to play in ensuring education policies reach the most marginalised, including girls with disabilities.**

In presenting the Leonard Cheshire Inclusive Education model, this report highlights the promising outcomes of this model among girls with disabilities from a resource-poor region of a Low-to-Middle-Income Country (LMIC). It also demonstrates the potential of the model to reach the most marginalised girls, and tackle additional barriers created by the intersection of gender, disability, and poverty. The report draws upon the lived experiences of people with disabilities, their family members, and teachers participating in Leonard Cheshire's Inclusive Education projects. These stories illustrate how inclusive education systems based on a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model³ can ensure successful inclusive education opportunities for students, and greater teacher, family, and community participation.

World leaders, UN agencies, donor countries, as well as national and local governments have a duty to ensure every girl with disabilities gets an education by 2030, and to prioritise them in post COVID education and gender policies. As the world prepares for the second Global Disability Summit, to take place in February 2022, it is vital that policy-makers send a strong signal that they are committed to ensuring that every girl with disabilities will have her right to education fulfilled.

Timeline of key influencing opportunities



Recommendations

This report highlights current challenges preventing girls with disabilities from being in school, and solutions to ensure every girl can have access to a quality education. **In particular, this report outlines the benefits of an inclusive education model developed by Leonard Cheshire and implemented by our programme teams across Africa. The model comprises six interventions that support the inclusion of girls with disabilities within and outside school by addressing both physical and attitudinal barriers.** Based on the positive outcomes linked to the implementation of those interventions, we urge policy-makers to adopt the following measures:

International Development Partner and UN Agency level actions

- Girls with disabilities must be recognised as a priority group for targeted education funding, programming, research, and commitments in the context of the UN's Decade of Action (the ten years between 2020 and 2030), and post 2030.
- Future education financing pledges, including GPE and Education Cannot Wait (ECW) must prioritise girls with disabilities.
- Re-enrolment strategies must include specific provisions for girls with disabilities, in recognition of their heightened vulnerability to drop-out of school following COVID-19 related school closures and considering the limited access they had to learning materials during lockdowns. Data collected on the effectiveness and impact of re-enrolment strategies must be disaggregated by gender and disability.

National government level actions

- National education targets on attendance and learning must contain specific indicators disaggregated by gender and disability, with specific and time-sensitive sub-targets for girls with disabilities.

For instance, the global targets outlined in the 2021 Girl's Education Declaration to get 40 million more girls in primary and secondary school in developing countries by 2026 would need disability-centric sub-targets, such as ensuring that 10% of the 40 million girls reached in this commitment are girls with disabilities (as 10% of women worldwide have a disability).⁴

- Inclusive education policy must maximise learning and efficiency, create environments for all children including girls with disabilities, and ensure no child is left behind. These policies should be underpinned by strong accountability mechanisms involving Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).
- Inclusive education policy must ensure girls with disabilities have access to quality Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education, have autonomy over their own bodies, and are able to manage menstruation with safety and dignity.⁵

Community and local government level actions

- Thorough school accessibility and inclusion assessments should be financed and conducted to identify physical, training, and attitudinal barriers preventing girls from disabilities from receiving a quality education.
- Child-to-child school activities should be developed to promote integration and socialisation between all children inside and outside of school.
- Schools should be equipped with in-service training for teachers on inclusive methods of teaching and disability rights so that they can respond to the widest range of diversity in classrooms and teach children with disabilities about their rights.
- Community-based inclusive education training should be implemented, which involves stakeholders inside and outside the school to become drivers of change towards social and educational inclusion.
- Children and young people with disabilities, particularly girls, must be safeguarded from all forms of abuse, exploitation, and harmful practice.

For the full report, please visit leonardcheshire.org/EveryGirlsRight

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Endnotes

1. International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (2016). **The Learning Generation – Investing in education for a changing world.**
2. Federation of Disability Organisations of Malawi, University of Malawi, SINTEF (2004). **Living Conditions Among People with Activity Limitations in Malawi – A National Representative Study.**
3. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model is a framework which ensures that all students can take part in the same lesson at different levels and through adapted materials.
4. **Human Rights Watch – Women and Girls with Disabilities.**
5. Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) are fundamental human rights that allow a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. SRHR implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so.

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