

It's time to invest in girls' education

"When you have that light of knowledge through education and make yourselves strong economically, you have got to prepare yourselves for your defense against external aggression and to maintain internal security." These are the words of [Quaid-e-Azam which he shared during a presidential address at a conference at the Punjab Muslim Students Federation on March 2, 1941.](#)

According to a study conducted by the [World Bank](#), more than 150 million children in developing countries have little or no access to early childhood education(ECD). Despite Pakistan's fast-growing economy, many people in rural areas discourage their daughters from attending school due to cultural norms. They still believe that women should stay home and care for the home.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, challenges in education worsened. The country began to face severe economic challenges. Due to lockdowns implemented everywhere, many educational institutions had to close, which led to the introduction of online learning. While this still provided an excellent opportunity to continue learning for students, women's education was never a priority in our society.

Girls face many educational challenges, including social attitudes and differing socioeconomic challenges. During the pandemic, we saw a shift in the education system and the government enforcing a partial shutdown of educational institutions, transitioning from in-person to remote mechanisms. Students, especially the female students, were floundering to withstand this sudden shift.

Girls from low-income households were severely affected due to this remote learning mechanism. We learned that only the privileged could continue their education. On the other hand, those severely affected by the pandemic had no choice but to compromise their children's education and engage them in household chores to generate income to feed the household.

This new way of life resulted in threats to their education and heightened their risks of gender-based violence, forced child marriages, and teenage pregnancy. The economic effects on the families led many girls to forced transactional exchanges. The impact was seen significantly in the communities. As the country started to open, many girls did not return to school.

While dropouts are increasing quickly, it is also essential to ensure that female students receive access to technological resources to improve their digital skills. It is vital to equip them with the skills and knowledge to use technology.

In her book [Hope in the Dark](#), Rebecca Solnit says, "To hope is to give yourself to the future, and that commitment to the future makes the present inhabitable."

This is the future we aim for girls. Despite all the odds, there is a ray of hope. We dream of a new world where girls are empowered and where they can make the impossible possible. Hope calls us to act and come forward to play our roles, ensuring a better future where people are valued and feel equal regardless of their attributes.