



10 October 2024

Kuyenda Collective Press Statement on the eve of International Day of the Girl

As the world prepares to celebrate the potential of tomorrow's girls, the Kuyenda Collective reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that every girl can unlock their full potential through improved education service delivery that addresses inequality.

Background

In 1995 at the United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women in Beijing, countries unanimously adopted the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) – the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing the rights of not only women but girls.

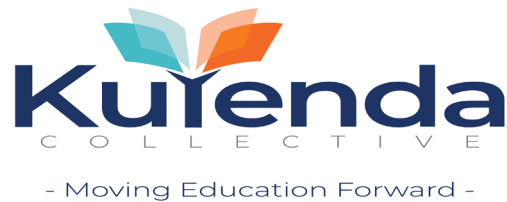
On December 19, 2011, the United Nations adopted [Resolution 66/170](#) to declare October 11 as the International Day of the Girl, to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world and to promote girls' empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.

A reminder from the United Nations – “Adolescent girls have the right to a safe, educated, and healthy life, not only during these critical formative years, but also as they mature into women. If effectively supported during the adolescent years, girls have the potential to change the world – both as the empowered girls of today and as tomorrow's workers, mothers, entrepreneurs, mentors, household heads, and political leaders. An investment in realising the power of adolescent girls upholds their rights today and promises a more equitable and prosperous future, one in which half of humanity is an equal partner in solving the problems of climate change, political conflict, economic growth, disease prevention, and global sustainability.”

Some hard-hitting facts shared by the UN from around the world -

- Nearly 1 in 5 girls are still not completing lower-secondary and nearly 4 in 10 girls are not completing upper-secondary school today.
- Around 90 percent of adolescent girls and young women do not use the internet in low-income countries, while their male peers are twice as likely to be online.
- Globally, girls aged 5-14 spend 160 million more hours every day on unpaid care and domestic work than boys of the same age.
- Adolescent girls continue to account for 3 in 4 new HIV infections among adolescents.
- Nearly 1 in 4 married/partnered adolescent girls aged 15-19 have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.
- Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 100 million girls were at risk of child marriage in the next decade. And now over the next ten years, up to 10 million more girls worldwide will be at risk of marrying as children because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theme of this year's International Day of the Girl is '[Girls' vision for the future](#)'. The theme draws on findings from [UNICEF analysis](#), which shows that girls are not only courageous in the face of challenges, but hopeful for the future. Every day, they are taking action to realize a vision of a world in which all girls are protected, respected and empowered.



If you are interested in exploring possible solutions for accelerating progress towards a future in which every girl can obtain the quality health care, education and skills she needs to succeed; then check out this brief prepared by UNICEF which summarises [5 game-changing solutions with and for adolescent girls](#). Given the Kuyenda Collective's focus, we are particularly interested in solution 3 of the brief which emphasises:

For Every Girl... a quality education that provides learning, relevant skills, and agency to chart her own course.

Despite major gains in girls' primary and secondary education over the last two decades, a learning crisis for girls still exists – particularly when girls reach secondary school age and pressures to earn an income, start a family, or work at home may take priority. Research estimates that investments of \$1.53 per day per girl to achieve universal secondary school completion can help developing economies expand their GDP by an average of 10 percent by the year 2030. A quality education with access to relevant skills opens the doors for adolescent girls to exercise agency and be confident about their futures

The UNICEF brief advocates for the following Programme Investments which the Kuyenda Collective endorses:

Promote adolescent girls' access to skills and learning opportunities through multiple pathways, including:

- Expand access to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), vocational and financial skills, green skills, mental health literacy, and socio-emotional skills.
- Promote access to services such as safe and dignified water, sanitation and hygiene, including menstrual health and hygiene services, to enable access, and content on gender equality in learning spaces.
- Increase access to digital devices, literacy and skills to address the gender digital divide for girls

UN WOMEN have noted and emphasised that: "More girls may be in school today than ever before, but they do not enjoy the same opportunities as boys, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). [Women make up only 35 per cent of STEM graduates](#) and [just 29 per cent of STEM workers](#). Jobs of the future are missing girls, and at great cost. [Closing the digital gender gap in the next five years could yield \\$524 billion for the global economy.](#)"

The [Kuyenda Collective](#) agree with [UNESCO's](#) call for the breaking of education access barriers, especially in the STEM fields and that: "Supporting girls, their training, and their full ability to make their voices and ideas heard are drivers for sustainable development and peace. In too many cases across the globe, adolescent girls drop out of school, due to forced marriages or child labor."

There is also increasing amounts of [evidence](#) that investing in girls is not only the right thing to do for girls, but it will also have positive impacts on their families, their communities, and their societies - now, in the future, and even into the next generation.



We call upon policymakers, educators, and leaders to join us in breaking down barriers to education for girls to ensure 'Girls' vision for the future' becomes a reality.

**#HerEducationOurFuture #DayOfTheGirl. #GirlsEmpowerment. #GenderEquality #GirlsRights.
#GirlChildEducation. #EndChildMarriage. #EqualityForGirls.**

ENDS

ABOUT US: The [Kuyenda Collective](#) equips rural youth to advocate for better quality, access, and relevance in their education system delivery. We work across four countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe) and in transnational education spaces of sub-Saharan Africa. The Collective receives funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and consists of the [Public Service Accountability Monitor \(PSAM\)](#), [Policy Forum](#), [Teach for Zimbabwe](#), [Forum for African Women Educationalists - Malawi \(FAWEMA\)](#) and the [Center for Civil Society Learning and Capacity Building \(CESC\)](#).

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