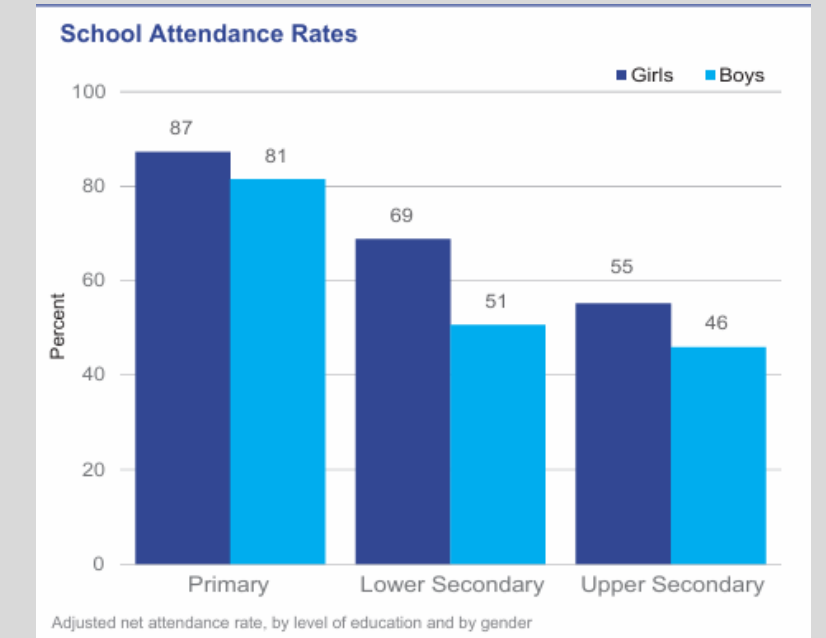


UNICEF and the Challenge of Girls' Education in Bangladesh

- MICS (2025) findings show that girls' attendance drops sharply at secondary level, with the steepest decline among poorer and girls who live in rural areas.



(UNICEF Bangladesh, 2025)

- Barriers include poverty, domestic labour, safety concerns, climate related disruptions and marriage - 71% of female dropouts stated marriage as the reason for leaving school (BBS, 2023).
- Girls remain discriminated. Research highlights, harassment, poverty, marriage and childbirth as the key social exclusion factors that prevent girls from completing their education (Schurmann, 2009).

UNICEF's Strategies to Improve Girls' Secondary Education in Bangladesh

- UNICEF works to address **gender specific barriers** and create safer, more inclusive learning environments for girls (UNICEF Bangladesh, n.d.).
- **Community programmes** that provide life-skills training, tutoring/mentoring significantly reduce child-marriage norms and keeping girls in secondary school (Ainul et al., 2022).
- **Cash transfers and stipends** help families overcome financial barriers to girls' education (UNICEF, n.d.).
- UNICEF promotes **inclusive policies** that address poverty, gender norms, and climate-related risks (UNICEF, 2024).



(UNICEF Bangladesh, n.d)

- Skills programmes help adolescent girls build **confidence, safety awareness and future opportunities** (UNICEF Bangladesh, n.d.).

UNICEF's Strategies Vs Persistent Structural Barriers

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- UNICEF's strategies support girls' secondary education, but **gender based barriers continue to limit progress** - Studies show that Bangladeshi families favour and invest more in the boys' secondary education than for girls (World Economic Forum, 2021).
 - Cash transfers and community programmes help reduce early marriage, yet **gender norms and financial pressure still push girls out of school** (UNICEF, n.d.; UNICEF Bangladesh, n.d.).
 - Policy reforms aim to improve equity, but **girls in rural and climate-affected areas face greater disadvantages** due to uneven implementation (UNICEF, 2024).
 - Skills and safety programmes strengthen girls' confidence, but **access remains unequal** - Many girls still face restrictions such as living in remote rural areas and poverty (UNICEF Bangladesh, n.d.).
 - **Retention gaps persist**, showing that gender inequality intersects with poverty, climate risk and social expectations, requiring more targeted action (UNICEF, 2024).

UNICEF Pathways to Improving Girls' Secondary Education

UNICEF's 'All Means All Report' highlights that action is needed to tackle the structural barriers, which means not just improving access but ensuring girls can genuinely participate - e.g, Tackling safety concerns on the way to school, locks on toilet doors, soap and water so they can feel safe in school and complete their education.(UNICEF, 2024).

UNICEF's current strategy aims to expand gender-responsive and equity focused programmes. The entire focus is to address the barriers faced by girls in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2024).

UNICEF has created policies such as 'Reimagining Girls' Education Solutions' to keep girls learning in emergencies. This provides safe learning spaces, emergency cash support for families, community lessons or digital lessons at home and protection for girls preventing early marriages so even in emergencies girls can continue learning (UNICEF, 2021).





Key Actions Needed

- **Strengthen community engagement to challenge restrictive gender norms and reduce child marriage** - increasing the ability for girls to remain in secondary education (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2025).
- **Expand cash transfers and stipends for the poorest households** - reducing the financial pressures that affect girls' schooling (UNICEF, 2024).
- **Improve school safety, such as buildings structures** - reducing the effect of unsafe routes and climate related disruptions (UNICEF, 2024).
- **Increase access to skills and life-skills programmes for adolescent girls** - which will support their confidence and long-term opportunities (UNICEF, 2024).
- **Ensure there is consistent policies in rural and urban areas** - creating equal access to education, increasing the retention of girls in secondary schools (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2025).

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