**The Impact of Girls’ Education: Trends and Economic Outcomes**  
*An Analysis Using World Bank Data*  
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**1. Introduction**

Girls’ education is widely recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable development. It is explicitly addressed in global targets such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Investing in girls’ education is not only a fundamental human right but also a proven strategy to foster healthier, more equitable, and prosperous societies. This report analyzes global progress in girls’ education over the past two decades, with a particular focus on economic and social outcomes, using data from the World Bank.

**2. Global Trends in Girls’ Education**

Between 2000 and 2020, significant disparities in girls’ education persisted across regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the primary education completion rate remains low, indicating ongoing challenges in achieving universal access to basic education. By contrast, many Asian countries have shown strong progress, with many shifting their policy focus toward improving secondary education completion rates.

This divergence reflects both historical inequities and varying policy priorities across regions.

**3. Country-Level Improvements: Top Performers**

Over the past two decades, some countries have achieved remarkable improvements in girls’ education. The top 10 performers include Türkiye, Thailand, Nepal, Bhutan, and others. Each country has addressed its specific challenges through tailored reforms.

**Case Study: Türkiye**

Türkiye’s success can be attributed to a series of major policy reforms:

1. **Introduction of the "4+4+4 Education System" (2012)**  
   Türkiye restructured its education system from an "8-year continuous education" model into "4 years primary + 4 years lower secondary + 4 years upper secondary," making lower secondary education legally mandatory.
2. **Extension of Compulsory Education Age**  
   The compulsory education age was raised from 15 to 17, effectively making both lower and upper secondary education compulsory.
3. **Infrastructure and Access Improvements**  
   Investments in new schools and classrooms—especially in rural areas—significantly improved access to education. There was a strong focus on reducing gender disparities, with girls’ education a key policy goal.
4. **Increased Education Spending**  
   Türkiye increased education spending as a share of GDP, ensuring that reforms were supported by sufficient resources.

**4. Health and Social Impacts**

Girls’ education has a well-established link to critical health outcomes. Countries with higher levels of girls’ education tend to have:

* **Lower under-5 mortality rates**
* **Higher life expectancy**

This reflects how education empowers women to make informed health decisions, promotes healthier families, and strengthens community well-being.

**5. Economic Impacts**

The relationship between girls’ education and economic outcomes presents a nuanced picture:

* **GDP per Capita:**  
  There is a clear positive association between girls’ education (specifically, lower secondary education completion rates) and GDP per capita. Countries with higher education levels tend to enjoy greater economic prosperity.
* **Labor Force Participation and Unemployment:**  
  The relationship between girls’ education and female labor market outcomes is more complex. At a global level, improvements in girls’ education do not always translate directly into higher female labor force participation or lower unemployment. In upper middle-income and high-income countries, cultural and economic factors may allow many women to opt out of the workforce despite high education levels.

However, in low- and lower-middle-income countries, girls’ education appears to play a crucial role in enabling women’s participation in the labor force and contributing to economic growth.

**6. Focused Analysis: Low- and Middle-Income Countries**

A deeper look at low- and middle-income countries reveals important trends:

* Countries with significant improvements in female education over the past two decades tend to maintain **lower female unemployment rates**, regardless of GDP per capita.
* By contrast, countries that have made little progress in girls’ education often exhibit **higher unemployment rates**.

These findings suggest that investing in girls’ education is particularly impactful in these countries and should be a key part of economic development strategies.

**7. Conclusion**

This analysis highlights that girls’ education is a critical lever for social and economic advancement. While notable progress has been made globally, challenges remain—especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and other low-income regions. Continued efforts to expand access to quality education for girls will be essential not only for achieving gender equality but also for fostering healthier societies and more resilient economies.

In particular, for low- and middle-income countries, improving girls’ education should remain a top priority in development agendas to unlock broader economic and social benefits.