

Educating Girls

An Essential Component of Any Climate Plan

CFUW's vision is to ensure that all girls and women have equal opportunities and equal access to quality education within a peaceful and secure environment where their human rights are respected. In a world where climate change and its consequences lead to existential problems, this vision becomes increasingly significant in the protection of our environment and its resources for future generations.



A few weeks ago, our Advocacy committee invited the club and members of the community to an online viewing of the internationally acclaimed [documentary 2040](#). The information provided in this documentary is based on the findings of [Project Drawdown](#). As part of this project, a multinational and multidisciplinary research team of experts was tasked with identifying the top 100 projects and activities currently in place around the world that will help reach the point in the future when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline, thereby stopping catastrophic climate change – as quickly, safely, and equitably as possible.

The significance of each project is measured by the [ND_GAIN Index](#) which summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience. It aims to help governments, businesses and communities better prioritize investments for a more efficient response to the immediate global challenges ahead.

Educating girls sits sixth (6) on this list of climate solutions and just beneath it come issues of family planning. When combined, these issues move to first place in the fight against climate change. Here are the facts that lead to this conclusion:

- A 2017 Brookings Institute study suggests that for every additional year of schooling a girl receives on average, her country's resilience to climate disasters can be expected to improve by 3.2 points (as measured by the ND-GAIN Index).
- The education of girls could result in a massive reduction in emissions by 2050.
- An educated girl is better equipped with the skills to withstand and overcome the shocks of extreme weather events and changing weather cycles.

- The education of girls has an impact beyond the individual, cascading into her family and her community.
- Women with higher levels of good quality education marry later and have fewer and healthier children, live longer and enjoy greater economic prosperity.
- An increase to a woman's income of \$10 has the same beneficial impact on her children's nutrition and health as an income increase to a man of \$110
- The education of girls is ranked as a more effective climate solution than electric cars, various types of solar, offshore wind, wave and tidal power, yet gets typically overlooked in favour of technological fixes.
- The education of girls brings broad benefits to a wider society as well as improving efforts to tackle the climate emergency.
- The United Nations currently projects that the world's population will grow from 7.3 billion today to 9.7 billion by 2050, with most of that growth being in developing countries, including regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. But recent research shows that if girls' education continues to expand, that number would total 2 billion fewer people by 2045.

We have known for a long time that getting more girls into school and giving them a quality education reduces incidence of disease, increases life expectancies, ensures economic prosperity, reduces the incidence of forced marriages, and decreases birth rates. Added to all these benefits, the evidence of a link between educating girls and a smaller carbon footprint is overwhelming.

These findings should drive home the significance of CFUW's mission and advocacy for education and gender equality. It also reminds us how important it is for all of us to donate what we can to projects that support these goals.



Photo from Teachers for Rural Futures, graduatewomen.org

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUPPORT:

- our local CFUW Scholarship fund for young women and mature students going on to post-secondary education > cfuwstratford.ca
- Change Her World - the charitable organization CFUW Stratford has chosen to support in recent years for their work with a girls school in Malawi > changeherworld.ca
- Graduate Women International - our global sister organization which has many projects and scholarships including a teacher training program in Uganda > [Teachers For Rural Futures](http://TeachersForRuralFutures)
- Or any other efforts to educate girls and empower women