

ACARA D-PRIZE CHALLENGE

2015-2016 Academic Year

Scale Up Educational Scholarships

Female education rates are highly correlated with a variety of positive social, economic, and health outcomes, and targeted scholarships can eliminate prevalent financial barriers for many women to complete secondary school. In three months, create an online fundraising program to raise scholarship funds for 100 girls to attend secondary school as a pilot, then scale up to 10,000 girls over two years.

The Problem: Educating women is widely accepted as a crucial path toward development. “There is clear and convincing evidence, amassed over the past two decades, that investing in girl-specific resources leads to better educated, safer, healthier, and economically powerful adolescent girls. This can contribute to a substantially better future not just for the individual girls, but for their families, communities, and our world”.¹ Educated girls increase their earning potential by 25 percent, and will reinvest 90 percent of that into her family.² Girls who complete education are also 3x less likely to become infected with HIV, and will have children who are 40 percent more likely to be healthy and live past the age of 5.³ A 1 percent increase in female secondary school attendance single handedly grows a country’s average annual per capita income by 0.3 percent.⁴

Yet financial constraints remain a major barrier to education for young women.⁵ Public primary school in Kenya is tuition-free, while tuition costs for high school are substantial. Fewer than 50 percent of girls in sub-Saharan Africa will complete high school because they cannot afford these school fees.⁶ A quality public high school in Kenya can cost up to \$1500 per child, and with per capita income of \$755 most Kenyan families cannot afford the cost to send a child to school.⁷ As a result, 84 percent of Kenyan girls attend primary school, while only 48 percent enroll in secondary school.⁸

¹ Why invest in adolescent girls? United Nations Foundation and the Clinton Global Initiative.
http://www.clintonglobalinitiative.org/ourmeetings/PDF/actionareas/Why_Invest_in_Adolescent_Girls.pdf

² <https://camfed.org/what-we-do/>

³ ibid

⁴ Girls Grow: A Vital Force in Rural Economies. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.
http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/files/Studies_Publications/TaskForcesandStudies/Girls_and_Rural_Economies.aspx.
Original research available: Knowles, S., P.K. Lorgelly, and P.D. Owen. 2002. “Are Educational Gender Gaps a Brake on Economic Development? Some Cross-Country Empirical Evidence.” Oxford Economic Papers 54: 118-149.

⁵ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml>

⁶ Girl’s Education in Africa, Programme Insights: Education and Gender Equality Series. Oxfam.
[http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/files/oxfam_edPaper8\(1\).pdf](http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/files/oxfam_edPaper8(1).pdf)

⁷ <http://www.akilidada.org/about/the-challenge/>

⁸ More data on school enrollment by gender is compiled by the World Bank, and is available on Gapminder:
<http://www.gapminder.org/data/>

The Proven Solution: Scholarships offered to smart girls can solve this problem. It costs as little as \$250 to send a girl to high school for a year, which will significantly improve her economic and health opportunities. A girl who completes secondary school will on average marry 3 years later compared to a non-graduate, and will have two fewer children on average.^{9, 10}

The benefits extend past the scholarship recipient. Randomized control trials have shown that merit-based scholarships for girls led to increased attendance and test scores in classrooms overall.¹¹ In one Kenyan school, a scholarship program raised test scores of girls who were eligible for scholarships – but scores also improved among boys who were ineligible. Student absenteeism was also reduced by 25 percent, and teacher attendance was increased by nearly 5 percent.¹²

Your Challenge: We will award up to \$20,000 to a social entrepreneur who creates a fundraising website with profiles of the smartest yet poorest girls entering high school in order to raise money from developed-world donors. The best entrepreneurs will have a vision to fund scholarships for 10,000 girls over two years. A successful three-month pilot will raise funds for at least 100 girls.

Additional Information:

- One major challenge is connecting with donor communities. Simply building a website is not enough – you will also need to identify a donor base, and explain how you will inspire them to donate.
- Another potential barrier is selecting a proper school partner. Studies have found that scholarship programs are only successful if girls attend quality school.¹³ Providing a scholarship to a poor quality school will not lead to real impact. Operationally, school administrators may be wary of partnering with a startup organization, and will likely need assurance that any scholarship promises will be fulfilled.¹⁴ A proposal which includes criteria for selecting partner schools to ensure positive impact will be particularly attractive.
- This intervention is appropriate throughout many countries. According to UNESCO, 31 countries in Africa have gender parity indices of less than 1.0 (i.e., girls' enrollment is measurably less than boys) in primary school enrollment.¹⁵ Identifying smart girls with high potential can be done by accessing existing national test scores.
- Past winners of this challenge include [Watch Me Go](#), [YouthGlobe](#), and [SponsorHer!](#).

Ready To Apply?

Visit the Acara Challenge website to get started.

<http://acara.environment.umn.edu/acarachallenge/>

⁹ National Statistical Office of Malawi: Gender Report 2008. <http://www.nsomalawi.mw/index.php/site-map/40-malawi-in-figures.html>

¹⁰ National Statistical Office of Malawi: Fertility Report 2008. <http://www.nsomalawi.mw/index.php/site-map/40-malawi-in-figures.html>

¹¹ http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=748644

¹² <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/incentives-learn-merit-based-girls-scholarship-program-kenya>

¹³ www.givewell.org/international/education/detail

¹⁴ <http://ageafrica.org/about/why-girls-education/>

¹⁵ <http://mdginafrica.wordpress.com/2012/09/19/why-many-girls-drop-out-of-schools-in-africa/>

