

PRESSEMITTEILUNG

“Please open the school to my sisters”: Afghan boys skip school until girls can return to the classroom

Kabul, 19 October – Thirteen-year-old Sayed* dreamed of becoming an engineer when he left school. Now, he has put those dreams on hold, staying home from school until his sister is able to return to the classroom.

Across Afghanistan, boys like Sayed are skipping school in solidarity with their female classmates, who have not yet been allowed to return to secondary schools.

“I know you are sad because schools are closed. I know you wanted to become a doctor but now you are tailoring at home. So I decided until girls’ schools open, I will not go to school and I won’t have wishes for my own future too,” wrote Sayed in a letter to his sister.

It has been a month since the announcement that secondary schools were reopening only for boys. [Yesterday, de-facto authorities in Afghanistan said that girls will be able to return to schools](#) and universities soon, but did not confirm when this will happen.

Until it does, Save the Children said it has been hearing from boys who are refusing to go back to school in solidarity with their sisters. The agency said it encourages all children who can do so to return to the classroom, but said that the boys were sending an “important” message by choosing to support their female classmates.

Hassan Noor, Asia Regional Director for Save the Children, said:

“We want every child to be in the classroom, but the incredible resolve of these boys stands as an important reminder that when girls are held back, we are all held back.

“We welcome the assurances given yesterday by Afghanistan’s de-facto authorities that girls will soon be able to return to their classrooms, but this commitment must now be acted upon as a matter of urgency.

“Without access to school, girls in Afghanistan face an incredibly uncertain future. Missing out will have a life-long impact on their health, prosperity and security. Without an educated female workforce, Afghanistan will see the economic growth it needs to move beyond its dependence on aid. In short, without a future for girls there is no future for Afghanistan.”

Prior to the Taliban taking control of the country, Afghanistan’s education system was the eighth most ‘at risk’ in the world, according to analysis by Save the Children^[1]. Data from before the current crisis showed that 3.7 million children remain out of school, at least 60% of whom are girls.

Afri*, a 12-year-old girl from Faryab, told Save the Children:

“I feel very worried and think of the bad situation I will be in in the future. If I am stopped from going to school none of my dreams will come true. I will be a useless person my whole life, and in future I will not be able to help my children either.”

The education system in Afghanistan is highly dependent on funding from international donors. The World Bank – a major funder of education in the country – recently halted its financial support to the country, leaving many teachers without salaries.

“Any progress that has been made in getting children into school over the past two decades is at risk of unravelling completely if funding isn’t resumed urgently,” Mr. Noor said. “The international community has a critical window of time to act to ensure that all Afghan children, girls and boys, can go to school. A failure to act now will be devastating for Afghan children and for the country as a whole.”

And that progress has been huge. In 2001, only 900,000 students were enrolled in school, all of whom were boys. By 2020 this had increased to 9.5 million students, 39% of whom were girls.

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[1] https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/19526/pdf/build-forward-better.pdf?_ga=2.145344756.1503932248.1633585842-1445310076.1633585842

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Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor

dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.