

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Day of the Girl: Tearing down barriers to education

Report reveals impact of empowering girls in one of the world's most difficult places to be born female

October 2018 // Australian not-for-profit, One Girl, dedicated to supporting young girls without access to education, has today released a report assessing the impact of its scholarship programs on the scholars and the wider local community in Sierra Leone, one of the most difficult places in the world to be born a girl.

With over 130 million girls denied access to education across the globe, One Girl's scholarship programs provide access to education for young girls in Sierra Leone and Uganda who would otherwise continue to experience poverty, become pregnant or be sold into marriage before they turn 18. Access to education allows girls to tear down these barriers and shape their own narrative.

The report ***WHO ARE YOU CALLING VULNERABLE? How girls in Sierra Leone are using a scholarship program to overcome their circumstances and shape their own future***, surveyed 147 participants comprising of scholars from seven schools, their principals and school administrators, members of their families and communities, One Girl staff, staff from partner organisations, and former program alumni. The report reveals the incredible positive outcomes of receiving an education and how it can impact a girl's life and change perceptions of her role within her community.

The report also shows that, since the implementation of the scholarship program, One Girl scholars remain in school 44% longer (13 years vs. 9 years) than the average student in Sierra Leone. The national average of girls graduating high school is 16% compared with over 88% of One Girl scholars graduating in 2017, and as high as a 96% graduation rate of scholars in 2016.

One Girl scholars cited the barriers to attending school as poverty, teenage marriage and pregnancy, violence and discrimination and negative pressure from their peers, family, school and community. In Sierra Leone, parents often can't afford to provide for their children, particularly girls, resulting in up to 40% of girls as young as age 12 ending up in early marriages.

As a result of these barriers, more than 70% of people in Sierra Leone earn less than \$2 a day, with a recent World Bank report revealing that globally only three in four girls complete their lower secondary education, resulting in countries losing between \$15 trillion to \$30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings.

For every year a girl stays in school, her income will increase by 10-20%; she'll marry when she's ready, her children are 50% more likely to live past the age of five and for

every dollar she earns, she will invest 90% of it back into her family, impacting the wider community.

“My grandmother wanted me to get married, but with One Girl sending me to school, that has closed the marriage conversation in my family. They have seen the importance of education,” one scholar shared when asked the difference One Girl has made in her life.

One Girl CEO, Sarah Ireland, says the report shows that scholars in Sierra Leone are beginning to feel empowered and create change within their communities and their own lives: “Girls are smart, they are strong, and they’ve got big ideas. But without the proper support, they won’t get the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Through One Girl’s scholarship programs we are helping to break down the barriers they’re experiencing as well as helping girls increase their confidence, decision-making and problem-solving skills.”

Since 2009, One Girl has reached more than 33,000 women and girls through education, supporting 431 girls with education scholarships. Through these scholarships, One Girl provides yearly tuition fees, class expenses, a food Lunch Fund, day-to-day school materials, sanitary and hygiene education and supplies through its LaunchPad program as well as business support and education through its Business Brains program (designed to provide girls with yearly business skills training).

The impact of sending girls to school is undeniable and has been highlighted by Malala Fund co-founder and Nobel laureate, Malala Yousafzai.

“When 130 million girls are unable to become engineers or journalists or CEOs because education is out of their reach, our world misses out on trillions of dollars that could strengthen the global economy, public health and stability. If leaders are serious about building a better world, they need to start with serious investments in girls’ secondary education,” said Malala.

Through One Girl’s annual Do It In A Dress program, now in its seventh year, Australians raised over \$930,000 last year alone, providing support for this global issue, with every \$300 raised enough to send a girl to school, with all the supplies she’ll need, for an entire year.

This year, One Girl is calling on all Australians once again to stand up for every girl’s right to an education through its Do It In A Dress campaign, asking them to sign up, get creative and do anything in a school dress to raise awareness and much-needed funds.

Since launching this year’s efforts on August 15th, the campaign has already raised over \$257,122, with Australians hiking, pulling stunts, snowboarding, surfing, cycling and more, which is enough to educate 857 girls.

The campaign will run for the duration of October, including International Day of the Girl on the 11th of October, a day which aims to address the needs and challenges girls face across the globe.

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About One Girl:

One Girl is an Australian not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting the millions of girls without access to education in two of the worst places in the world to be born a girl: Uganda and Sierra Leone. One Girl raises funds and awareness through national campaigns like Do It In A Dress to provide thousands of girls and young women with access to education. Since 2009, One Girl has reached over 32,000 women and girls with access to education.

Working with well-established local organisations One Girl has a long history of delivering high-quality education programs.