

SUPPORTED BY  
**MALALA**∞  
FUND



# HER VOICE, HER VISION

A Collection of Essays by Nigerian Girls  
on Education and Empowerment





# TABLE OF CONTENT



Introduction	iii
About Malala Fund	v
About YouthHubAfrica	vi
List of Judges & Essay Evaluators	vii
Her Voice, Her Vision ( What Girls want in Education) by Okiemhenbhoya Veronica	1
Her Voice, Her Vision ( What Girls want in Education) by Fatima Abubakar	3
The Girls Dream Too by Nicole Rapu	5
Her Voice, Her Vision by Ebieri Nancy Kenneth	7
Her Voice, Her Vision by Oladunni Beatrice	9
Her Voice, Her Vision by Hafsat Aminu	11
Her Voice, Her Vision by Ajibero Toluwanimi	12
Beyond the Books: Girls Want Safety, Voice, and Purpose in Education by Kamsi Igwe	14
Her Voice, Her Vision ( What Girls want in Education) by Abasifreke God'stime Godwin	16
Her Voice, Her Vision ( What Girls want in Education) by Ramatu Abubakar	18



# INTRODUCTION

**“Her Voice, Her Vision: What Girls Want in Education”** is more than a collection of essays; it is a manifesto of hope and a charter of demands written by young women navigating Nigeria’s education system today. It captures their unfiltered realities and aspirations, offering policymakers and stakeholders a direct line to the voices that have too often been excluded from decision-making.

From Kaduna to Imo and Edo State, these essays chronicle the challenges girls face and the possibilities that emerge when they are truly heard.

For too long, decisions about girls’ education have been made for them, not with them. This publication shifts that narrative, placing the voices of girls at the centre of Nigeria’s educational reform agenda.

Nigeria currently faces significant challenges in education funding, exacerbated by a pronounced gender gap that disproportionately impacts girls. Despite progress in increasing basic education access, Nigeria still holds the unenviable status of having more out-of-school children than any other country, with about 18.5 million children currently out of school according to UNICEF. Worryingly, the dropout rate for girls in both primary and secondary schools is higher than for boys, often due to intertwined issues like poverty, child marriage, inadequate female teachers, and gender-based violence (GBV).

The essays in this volume translate statistics into lived experiences, painting vivid portraits of resilience, frustration, and hope. Three recurring demands emerge: The Demand for Safety and Dignity: The girls confirm that safety is the “foundation of a good education”. They describe schools where they fear bullying, harassment, and assault, and where basic dignity is threatened by the lack of secure fences, clean toilets, and steady water. They call for protective policies, trained female counselors, anonymous reporting systems, and strict enforcement against perpetrators.



**The Need for Relevant Skills:** The authors are tired of education that focuses "only on passing exams". They demand learning that moves beyond survival to significance, equipping them with practical life skills, mentorship, and career guidance, including coding, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, mental health, and financial literacy. They particularly stress the need for a stronger foundation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), which currently sees limited female participation due to substandard facilities and stereotypes.

**The Right to Be Heard:** A recurring theme is the necessity of institutionalizing their input. Girls want to be active participants in shaping their learning environment, suggesting platforms like Girls' Advisory Panels, student councils, and community councils.

This publication is intended to be a powerful advocacy tool, formally launching and presenting the perspectives of girls to government representatives, education advocates, and community leaders. It is central to a broader strategy aimed at catalyzing systemic change by fostering collaboration among citizens, government, and stakeholders to improve girls' education in Nigeria.

The challenges outlined in these essays directly inform the core objectives of the Malala Fund project they support: The project advocates for a 10% increase in the education budget and promotes gender-responsive policies. It aims to enhance citizen participation in education planning and budgeting processes. Key efforts include addressing poor funding for girls' education and ensuring transparency and accountability.

When girls rise, nations rise. By reading and acting upon these voices, we commit to building an education system that not only teaches facts but also protects, empowers, and believes in the ability of every girl to transform our societies. This book is our call to action: listen to their voices; invest in their vision.



*Executive Director*



## ABout MALALA FUND

Malala Fund is an international, non-profit organization that advocates for girls' education. It was co-founded by Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate, and her father, Ziauddin. The stated goal of the organization is to ensure 12 years of free, safe and quality education for every girl. As of July 2020, the organization has 48 staff and supports 58 advocates working across Afghanistan, Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.



## CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

[facebook.com/malalafund](https://facebook.com/malalafund) 

[@MalalaFund](https://twitter.com/MalalaFund) 

[@MalalaFund](https://www.instagram.com/MalalaFund) 

[youtube.com/malalafund](https://youtube.com/malalafund) 



## ABout YOUTHUBAFRICA

YouthHubAfrica was founded in 2011 and legally registered in 2014 in Nigeria as the Youth Foundation for Development, Education & Leadership. It was founded as a platform for young people in Africa involved in social change to interact, learn and collaborate in new, creative and easy ways. As a youth advocacy and policy-oriented organization, the organization has worked with stakeholders to provide advisory and technical support for development communications. In line with this principle, YouthhubAfrica has staff and volunteers, who are mainly young people, working at the head office in Abuja, and with volunteer presence in Lagos, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana.

With its programs centered on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Education and Girl Child Literacy and Democracy and Governance, YouthhubAfrica envisions young people as catalysts of Africa's sustainable development. Our Mission is to empower Young people with Knowledge and skills to harness their potentials and take center stage for Africa's development.

## CONNECT With US

     youthhubafrica

 [www.youthhubafrica.org](http://www.youthhubafrica.org)

 No 26, Massenya Street, off Cotonou Street, Wuse Zone 6, Abuja





## LIST OF JUDGES AND ESSAY EVALUATOR

- **Ashifa Agede**  
Programs coordinator , CHESID
- **Hassan Nurudeen**  
Programs Manager, Hope Behind Bars Africa Initiative.
- **Lydia Gara**  
Gender Advisor, Eureka Idea Co.



# HER VOICE, HER VISION (WHAT GIRLS WANT IN EDUCATION)

A hundred years ago in Nigeria, what did girls want in education? Probably the simple chance to go to school, since they needed to be educated to even know what to want from it. Back then, a girl's bride price mattered more than her dreams. 'The knowledge of the white men,' many scoffed, 'will not make her a good wife.' Papa would rather spend his money marrying another wife than 'waste' it on her school fees. After all, it was said, 'A woman's education ends in the kitchen.'

While those barriers belong to a different era, their shadows stretch into the present.

Today, the girl child is still rising, and she is not free while any woman is not free. So, what do girls want now? Many still seek not only the right to sit in a classroom but also the right to learn in peace. We want free education, not just financially, but also free from fear, intimidation, and harassment. Yes, we naturally attract the opposite sex, but no girl should ever have to choose between her dignity and her degree.

Yet, for too many girls, education remains a privilege, not a right. Their struggle is no longer just about escaping bride prices. It is about defending their childhood from theft. According to UNICEF, four out of every ten girls in Nigeria is married before the age of eighteen, ending their hopes of education (UNICEF 2024). Before they become adults, they are turned into brides, immature custodians of households they are too young to understand.

While some celebrate women who shaped history, countless girls can only peer through the cracks, barred by the iron doors of poverty, culture, tradition, and lack of basic and higher education. Their dreams remain just that - dreams. Can child marriage be stopped? Yes. But ending it is not just about changing laws; it's about changing minds.

Poverty is a major driver of child marriage. But when 12 states out of Nigeria's 36 have yet to adopt the Child Rights Act of 2003, which prohibits child marriage and betrothal, it feels like a Sisyphean task. Even as the government drafts laws, scholars speak eloquently, and activists rally for reform, if today's girl child does not see herself as full of potential, and continues to be seen by others as a burden or bride price, then all our effort is in vain (Child Rights Act 2019).

The girl child must understand her rights in order to defend them. That is why the Ministry of Education should expand the Girls' Education Challenge, launched in 2012 and ended in 2024, by building on its foundation. This initiative empowered over 20,000 girls through training and educational support, and it can still do more. Let the girl child see that education is more than a stepping stone. It is her weapon, her voice, her light (Girls' Education Challenge 2022).

We cannot cherish what we do not understand, however; and we cannot grasp the value of education if we do not know the price our mothers paid. We must not forget, as philosopher George Santayana famously said, 'Those who forget their history are bound to repeat it' (Santayana 1905). Our educational curricula must spotlight Nigeria's trailblazing women, those who defied odds and opened doors. Learning their stories will empower today's girls to walk in their footsteps.

When we limit a girl's education, we dim the nation's future. An uneducated girl is like a blindfolded soul in a cave, aware of her being but not her possibilities. Education removes the blindfold and shows her the world she has the power to shape. This is the freedom, dignity, and opportunity girls truly want in education.

### Works Cited

- Akau, Sakau and Adewole Ajao. "Nigeria Takes Bold Steps to End Child Marriage and Protect the Rights of Children." UNICEF Nigeria, 16 Feb. 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/press-releases/nigeria-takes-bold-steps-end-child-marriage-and-protect-rights-children>.
- "Child Rights." Nigeria National Human Rights Commission, 24 Apr. 2019, <https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/focus-areas/child-rights.html>
- "Girls' Education Challenge." Girls' Education Challenge, 2022, <https://girlseducationchallenge.org>
- Santayana, George. The Life of Reason: The Phases of Human Progress. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905.

**- OKIEMHENBHOYA VERONICA**



## HER VOICE, HER VISION (WHAT GIRLS WANT IN EDUCATION)

In a small town like Ashaka, I once sat beside a girl who whispered to me, 'I wish I could go back to school, but my wedding is next month.' She was just 15.

This is the reality for millions of Nigerian girls. We have voices. We have dreams. But often, we are not allowed to speak or even try. 'What do girls want in education?' We want more than classrooms. We want a chance.

Across Nigeria, many girls are denied access to education because of poverty, child marriage, menstrual health challenges, or outdated beliefs. In some states, like Bauchi and Jigawa, over 70 per cent of girls are married before age 18. That is not culture; it is a crisis.

But the barriers run deeper. Many families believe investing in girls is a waste. They say girls belong in the kitchen, not in the classroom.

Schools in rural areas often lack female teachers, safe toilets, or even dignity kits. In such conditions, how can a girl feel valued?

Even when girls make it to higher education, they remain underrepresented. At Ashaka Cement, only nine of the 300+ staff are women. At Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), female participation in engineering is still low. This inequality doesn't reflect our ability; it reflects a broken system.

We want that system rebuilt. Girls want schools that understand our needs. That means clean toilets, free sanitary pads, and menstrual education so we don't miss classes in shame. We want laws that protect us from child marriage and violence – with real enforcement, not just words on paper.

We also want equal opportunities –,scholarships for girls in STEM, mentorship from women leaders, and safe learning spaces with female role models. We want to be encouraged to lead, to question, and to innovate.

But education must also teach boys to respect girls. It should challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote mutual understanding. A better education system must build not just knowledge, but equality.

Let us also be part of the change. Girls want to participate in decision-making, in school leadership, in community councils, and in national conversations. We don't want to be seen as weak. We want to be seen as powerful, because we are.

What we're asking for isn't too much. We're asking for fairness. For opportunity. For a future that includes us.

If you invest in girls' education, you lift entire communities. You reduce poverty. You delay early marriage. You build stronger economies. When girls rise, nations rise.

O)But first, we must be heard. So listen to our voices. Listen to our vision. Because what girls want in education... is everything Nigeria needs for a better tomorrow.

**- FATIMA ABUBAKAR**



## THE GIRLS DREAM TOO

For as long as Simi could remember, she had dreamt of being a famous journalist. She loved to write and tell stories. Everyone said she was great at it too, and any time the cramped classrooms and peeling walls of Ikorodu Grammar School became too depressing, she closed her eyes and fell into fantasies of travelling the world, writing and reporting stories. Some days, she dreamt of being an engineer. Others, a lawyer. She wasn't sure yet – she was just thirteen – but she knew she wanted to be great.

Simi's mother didn't get an education. It would have been a waste, her mama says, recounting her own father's words. So when Simi told Mama about her dreams, she didn't understand, but Simi's sheer excitement made her smile. I'm going to make it out and make it big one day, Simi always thought. Until the day at the hospital when the doctor uttered the words, 'You're pregnant.' Simi's world died that day. Mama wept. Simi was expelled the next day; she would stay home until the baby was born, and after, join Mama to sell things in the market.

If only anyone at school had listened when she reported Mr Ola, her science teacher, for leering at her and touching her weirdly. Maybe she wouldn't be here. But she was. And so are many of the 7.5 million other out-of-school Nigerian girls – 1 in 4 assaulted, and 200,000 teenagers made mothers through unplanned pregnancies, just like Simi.

Girls dream of an education system that protects them from the Mr Olas of the world. Girls want trained female counsellors in schools providing a listening ear and support, and anonymous reporting systems that actually hold perpetrators accountable. They want laws to be enforced that terminate whispers and bullying from adults and peers when they speak out.

Girls envision an education system that doesn't demonize teen mothers but provides re-entry policies and on-site creches. We desire comprehensive sex education in curricula, teaching girls about their bodies, rights and safety, and how to prevent pregnancies. Tiptoeing around such topics because they are taboo doesn't protect innocence but fuels ignorance, enabling abuse.

We long for menstrual health education for all. Hygiene products and clean toilets with water should be provided for free. No student should feel ashamed or confused about their body's natural processes. Students understanding their bodies dismantles stigma and shame taught by society.

We crave equal opportunities with male peers, especially in STEM. We want teachers who don't say we're 'better in the kitchen' than in labs, offices, and leadership. Sensitizing training must rid teachers of stereotypes because a careless comment can kill a dream. We need safe STEM clubs and camps prioritising female enrollment, mentored by women in STEM, normalising ambition, and defeating stereotypes. We need STEM grants for girls from low-income backgrounds, and government quotas and incentives encouraging female enrollment in universities.

We, the girls of Nigeria, want to feel free, safe, supported, and strong in our femininity as we go to school. Our femininity is important, boundless, and powerful, and we want an education system that sees and celebrates this.

**- NICOLE RAPU**

An illustration of a young girl with dark skin and long black hair, wearing a pink cardigan over a blue shirt and blue pants, sitting cross-legged and reading a black book. A circular text overlay in orange and red reads "LISTEN TO OUR VOICES. LISTEN TO OUR VISION". The background is white with scattered black dots, a blue paper airplane flying over a yellow ground area at the bottom left, and a blue starburst shape to the right of the girl.

**LISTEN TO OUR VOICES. LISTEN TO OUR VISION**

# WHAT GIRLS WANT IN EDUCATION

In times past, the fight was to get girls into classrooms. Well, we are here now – front rows, top grades, leading the charts. So, what's next? The question is no longer, 'Can girls learn?' It is, 'What can girls do with what they've learned?' My name is Ebieri Kenneth. As a girl, let me show you what we want in education.

Now that we've proven we can ace tests, lead class rankings, and break national records, what's next? It's time for learning to move beyond enabling survival to enabling significance. We can excel in our current system. What we need is learning that prepares us for leadership, innovation, and healthy influence in our ever-evolving, fast-paced world. At present, exams and grades are the major yardsticks to judge our capacities and future, yet many girls struggle to translate good grades into practical skills. Our education should connect theory to real life; teach resilience, confidence, and emotional intelligence. These are as critical as any academic subject in facing life's challenges. We want math meeting financial literacy, science tackling environmental problems, literature building effective communication, and government nurturing positive societal influence.

We want education that equips us for the future. Learning must go beyond memorizing facts and formulas. We want coding alongside literature, entrepreneurship alongside commerce, craftsmanship alongside history. We want to graduate not just with great WAEC and JAMB results but with skills that make us innovators, leaders, and change-makers.

We are tired of lifeless routines. We want wholesome learning that drives contribution, not just competition. From Nursery 1 to SS3, a girl feels the endlessness of grade competitions. What we need is to be taught how to practically use knowledge, to help people, innovate solutions, impact communities, and be guiding lights to the next generation of girls after us. Not just book smart but life smart!

We want academic strength to meet mental strength. Many girls have report cards filled with A's but still battle identity crises, stress, and self-doubt. Education should nurture not only our minds but also our emotions. We are not robots; we are whole beings, and our hearts, minds, and bodies need to be in sync.

Sports, too, deserve attention. Girls in sports should not be limited to a brief season of inter-house competitions every second term. Grassroots scouting has nearly gone extinct, yet sports hold entire career paths that can be nurtured. Why neglect them?

This is what girls want in education. The future should not be us catching up with the world, but the world keeping up with what we can do. We are not the future waiting to happen. We are the future, and right now, we want to be seen shaping our world in all spheres with wholesome formal education.

**- EBIERI NANCY KENNETH**



# HER VOICE, HER VISION

They say a child without education is like a bird without wings. If that is true, then every girl deserves the chance to fly. For too long, girls have been told that education is not for them, that their dreams must stop where tradition begins. But I believe education is not a privilege; it is a right.

My vision as a girl is a school system that listens to us, values us, and creates space for us to dream big. Education, to me, is not just about passing exams; it is about preparing for life. It is the light that shows us who we are and what we can become. That is why girls must raise their voices, because if we stay silent, the policies that shape our future will never change.



So, what do girls want in education?

First, we want equal opportunity. In many places, boys are still given the first chance to go to school while girls are left behind. A girl's dream should not be cut short simply because of her gender. We want governments and communities to create laws and policies that ensure every girl can learn without barriers.

Second, we want safety. Many girls drop out because the road to school is unsafe or the classrooms are places of harassment. How can a girl focus on her studies when she fears for her dignity? A safe learning environment, free from bullying, abuse, and discrimination, is not too much to ask.

Third, we want support for our unique needs. Girls face female challenges like menstruation, which can affect school attendance. Providing sanitary products, private restrooms, and understanding teachers can make the difference between staying in school and dropping out. We want policies that remember we are human beings with needs, not machines for grades.

Fourth, we want our voices to count. Too often, decisions about our education are made without our consent being sought. But who understands the struggles of girls in school better than the girls themselves? Student councils, mentorship programmes, and platforms for girls to share ideas should be part of every school system.

Finally, we want to be seen beyond stereotypes. We are not just future wives or mothers; we are also future doctors, engineers, writers, and leaders. Our education must encourage us to explore science, art, technology, leadership, and every field where women are underrepresented.

My vision is to see a world where no girl has to choose between her dreams and her identity. A world where her voice matters, and her vision shapes tomorrow. When girls are educated, they become unstoppable forces of change.

**- OLADUNNI BEATRICE**



# HER VOICE, HER VISION

I am Hafsat, a boarding school student in northern Nigeria. Every day, I wear my school uniform with pride, but behind that uniform is a girl with dreams, challenges, and a vision for better education.

Boarding school has given me opportunities: I can focus without home distractions, make friends from different places, and learn independence. But being in boarding school also shows me what girls truly need to thrive in education.

First, we want safe and healthy learning environments. Some of our hostels are overcrowded, with poor toilets and no steady water. During their periods, many girls struggle due to lack of sanitary pads and privacy. This makes some girls feel ashamed or even skip class. We want schools that take our health and dignity seriously.

Second, we want teachers who understand us – not just academically, but emotionally. In boarding schools, we live away from our families. Some girls cry at night due to homesickness or pressure. When teachers are kind and supportive, it changes everything. We learn better when we feel seen and heard.

Also, girls want to be protected. Some girls fear punishment, bullying, or harassment. We want school policies that protect our rights and give us a voice when something is wrong.

We want education beyond the textbook. Teach us leadership, digital skills, mental health, and how to face the real world. Let us debate, speak out, and express our ideas freely.

Some girls in my school dream of becoming doctors, journalists, or engineers. But dreams don't grow in silence. Girls need an education system that listens and responds.

Girls in boarding schools are strong, determined, and full of potential. With the right support, we will not just pass exams, we will lead, create, and inspire.

**- HAFSAT AMINU**

# HER VOICE, HER VISION



What would the world look like if every girl received an education that not only taught facts, but also inspired her to dream and lead? Education is more than a classroom and a board; it's a foundation for confidence, creativity, and courage. Yet, for many of us girls, our education is incomplete, focused only on passing exams instead of on equipping us to shape the future. Girls everywhere are raising their voices for learning that reflects their realities, fuels their ambitions, and prepares them for a rapidly changing world.

The strength of girls' voices can transform education and change society. A voice is the ability to speak and be heard; a vision is the power to imagine a better tomorrow. When we combine both, we can influence policies, inspire peers, and improve our schools and communities. Historically, girls' voices in education have been silenced or ignored, limiting our opportunities. In the past, many were discouraged from studying subjects like science or technology. Today, more girls are speaking up, taking leadership roles, and excelling in once male-dominated fields. This progress is inspiring, but there is a lot more to be done.

First, we want safe and inclusive schools, free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. A safe space allows us to focus, build confidence, and aim higher.

We also want equal opportunities. Girls are capable of becoming scientists, engineers, leaders, and innovators. We need teachers and school leaders who believe in us, mentor us, and create chances for our talents to shine.

Finally, we need relevant and practical learning. Education should prepare us for life, not just exams. Skills like public speaking, digital literacy, financial management, and leadership should be taught alongside academics to help us face the future with confidence.

Barriers like poverty, early marriage, gender stereotypes, and poor infrastructure still silence our voices. If removed, more girls will finish school, contribute to society, and break cycles of poverty.

We are not asking for permission to dream, we are demanding the tools to make those dreams real. The classroom should be a launchpad, not a waiting room. Girls want education that challenges us, represents us, and believes in our ability to transform our societies. Our voices will not be silenced, and our vision will not fade. When girls are educated as we deserve, the whole world changes.

**- AjiBERo ToluwaniMi**

**OUR VISION WILL NOT BE SILENCED**  
**OUR DREAMS WILL NOT FADE**



## BEYOND THE BOOKS: GIRLS WANT SAFETY, VOICE, AND PURPOSE IN EDUCATION

When Amina, a quiet 15-year-old from Kaduna, stopped attending school, it wasn't because she didn't love learning. It was because the corridor to her classroom had become a war zone – a place where laughter turned into mockery, and silence was safer than speaking. 'They teased me every day,' she said, 'and the teachers just looked away.' Her story is not rare. Girls like Amina are speaking up in whispers, across Nigeria and beyond, asking for more than textbooks and grades. They are saying, 'We want to feel safe. We want to be heard. We want education that prepares us for real life.' What girls want in education is simple – safety, voice, and purpose. And until we deliver on that, we're only offering part of the promise.

School is supposed to be a place of learning, yet for many girls, it's a place of fear. In some rural communities, schools lack fences, toilets, or female teachers, leaving girls exposed to harassment and even assault. In cities, girls face online bullying, menstrual shame, or the pressure to exchange good grades for silence. How can a girl concentrate on equations when her self-worth is threatened in the very space meant to empower her? Safety is not a privilege; it is the foundation of a good education. Girls want classrooms where dignity is respected and complaints are taken seriously, not dismissed or doubted. This requires schools to have trained counselors, anonymous reporting systems, and strict punishment for abuse, because when girls feel protected, they can finally learn in peace.

But girls are not asking only for protection – they are asking to be heard. In most schools, policies are handed down without student input. Rules about uniforms, bathroom breaks, or even subject choices are made by adults who rarely ask girls what they need. What if girls could sit on school boards or form Girls' Advisory Panels that work with teachers and principals? What if we listened to the students who walk those halls every day? In my school, when a female student suggested we hold menstrual hygiene talks, she was ignored. A month later, a girl fainted from period-related complications – something that could have been prevented. When girls are given a voice in shaping their education, they do not just speak up – they change lives.



And perhaps most overlooked is the need for purpose. Too often, education focuses only on passing exams. Girls memorise facts about ancient wars but leave school without knowing how to protect themselves online or how to manage money. We want life skills, mentorship, and career guidance. We want to see ourselves reflected in what we're taught, and we want to know how to navigate the real world. I once met a girl in Lagos who started a soap-making business using skills she learned in a weekend workshop, not school. Imagine the potential if such knowledge were part of our curriculum.

To truly respond to what girls want in education, we must amplify their voices and turn their stories into policy. That means hosting 'Girls Talk' forums, creating anonymous feedback boxes, training teachers in gender sensitivity, and integrating life skills into every classroom. It means building education systems that girls help design – systems that honour their fears, dreams, and lived realities.

Because girls don't want to just study history – they want to make it.

When we move beyond the books and listen – really listen – to girls like Amina, we begin to build an education system that does more than teach. It transforms. It protects. It empowers. And that's what girls want in education – not someday, but now.

**– KAMSI IGWE**

**GIRLS  
DON'T  
WANT to just  
STUDY HISTORY –  
THEY WANT to  
MAKE it.**



# HER VOICE, HER VISION (WHAT GIRLS WANT IN EDUCATION)

Every individual deserves access to high-quality education. For girls, quality education lays a solid foundation for their personal development and their nation's development as well. A good education involves acquiring relevant information and skills needed to succeed in various aspects of life. Investing in girls' education has transformed many communities around the world. Successful Nigerian female leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs, like Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Yemisi Iranloye, and Enwongo Cleopas have been able to contribute to national development, and provide solutions with high social and economic impact. This shows that investing in girls' education can have a multiplier effect on societies.

In spite of the numerous benefits of education, many girls around the world still encounter multiple obstacles to acquiring valuable knowledge and reaching their full potential. According to UNICEF, over 122 million girls worldwide are out of school. Beyond this, other girls attend substandard schools that lack well-equipped libraries, ICT facilities, and science laboratories. This greatly reduces the percentage of girls who can compete with their contemporaries around the world.

Due to limited access to quality facilities, many girls prefer 'simpler' and 'more interesting' subjects like the arts and social sciences. Only a few actively participate in subjects related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). This troubles me as a young girl who loves mathematics and science.

Currently, many parents and other individuals advocate for students to learn digital, vocational, or entrepreneurial skills. They believe that these skills reduce the high rate of unemployment, underemployment, and crime amongst Nigerian youths. However, how many girls devote time to mastering physics and mathematics?

In today's fast-moving world and with the rise of artificial intelligence, we need more females who truly understand how the world works. Girls need a stronger foundation in science so they can invent better technologies. Also, it opens up more lucrative career opportunities for them.



I believe that inspiring girls to pursue STEM subjects and embrace innovative thinking can truly benefit our society. Acquiring a deeper understanding of science from secondary school will not only help us pass WAEC exams, it will also help us solve various pressing problems in our communities. If more Ada Lovelaces, Bertha Benzes, and Dora Akunyilis have access to high-quality education and facilities, who knows? We may have female doctors who develop sustainable solutions that end childbirth mortality; entrepreneurs who solve the issues that cause food insecurity; and science professionals in advanced areas like engineering who invent cleaner and cheaper energy sources to combat the epileptic light situation in Nigeria.

Our educational system needs to provide Nigerian girls with the basic knowledge and skills required for the future. This includes renovating schools and providing equipment, especially in public schools. Also, there is a need to reform the current educational policy to match learners' needs; develop alternative learning opportunities for girls who cannot access formal education; and hire more female science teachers who will serve as role models and mentors for girls. Great leaders do not grow alone; they need assistance, advice, and mentorship. By accessing high-quality education and facilities, more females will move from being consumers to being creators, from being observers to being leaders, and from being students to being change makers.

**- ABASIFREKE GOD'STIME GODWIN**



## HER VOICE, HER VISION: WHAT GIRLS WANT IN EDUCATION

My name is Ramatu Abubakar. I am 17 years old and a JSS 1 student at Government Junior Secondary School, Kurmin Mashi, Kaduna State. My dream is to become a teacher. I want to help children in rural areas who do not have good schools. I believe education is very important for changing our world.

As a girl, however, it is hard for me to achieve my dream. My parents think girls should only take care of the home. They do not want me to further my education. They are worried about girls going to school because they think it is not safe for the girl child, as we are unprotected from abuse and harassment. They believe girls should get married and stop going to school after elementary. Because of this, I do not get the same opportunities as boys.

We girls want an education that helps us become leaders and change-makers. We want to learn about our rights and how to make a difference. We need education that helps us reach our full potential. We want to learn about technology and get the resources we need to succeed. We need teachers who believe in us and help us grow.

We also want education that addresses real issues affecting girls, such as early marriage and health. By giving us the knowledge and skills, we need, we can create a better future for ourselves and our communities.

We want to be seen as capable and intelligent individuals, not limited by our gender. I urge everyone to support girls' education. We need to work together to make sure girls get the education they deserve. We can do this by providing girls with access to quality education and supporting them to achieve their dreams. Let us work together to create a brighter future for girls.



We can make a difference by

- giving girls access to good schools and resources.
- encouraging girls to pursue their dreams.
- supporting girls who face challenges in their education.
- creating safe and inclusive learning environments.

By working together, we can help girls become leaders and change-makers. We can create a world where girls can thrive and make a positive difference. I believe in the power of girls' education. With the right support and resources, we can achieve great things.

In addition, we need to challenge societal norms and expectations that limit girls' potential. We need to change the way people think about girls' education and the roles girls can play in society. By doing so, we can create a more just and equitable world where girls can reach their full potential.

In conclusion, girls' education is crucial for creating a better future. By investing in our education, we can unlock our potential and make a positive difference in the world. I urge everyone to support girls' education and help us achieve our dreams.

**- RAMATU ABUBAKAR**





**Her Voice, Her Vision** is a collection of essays written by secondary school girls across Nigeria who participated in the “Her Voice, Her Vision” Essay Competition

Through their words, these young writers share honest, hopeful, and powerful reflections on education, equality, and the dreams that shape their futures.

Each essay is more than a story, It is a call to action. Together, they highlight the urgent need to empower girls through access to quality education and opportunities to lead.

This publication, supported by **Malala Fund**, serves as both an advocacy tool and an inspiration, reminding us that when girls are given the chance to speak, the world must listen.

**Her Voice Is Her Power,  
Her Vision Is Our Future.**

